

THE STUDY OF TERF DEBATE IN THE CONTEXTS OF US, UK &  
TURKEY & THE EMBRACEMENT OF INTERSECTIONAL FEMINISM  
FOR RECONCILIATION PROPOSAL

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PINAR TANRIVER

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submitted by **PINAR TANRIVER** in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of **Master of Science in Political Science and Public  
Administration, the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East  
Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI  
Dean  
Graduate School of Social Sciences

\_\_\_\_\_

Prof. Dr. H. Tarık ŞENGÜL  
Head of Department  
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

\_\_\_\_\_

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Başak ALPAN  
Supervisor  
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

\_\_\_\_\_

**Examining Committee Members:**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ayşe İdil AYBARS (Head of the Examining Committee)  
Middle East Technical University  
Department of Sociology

\_\_\_\_\_

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Başak ALPAN (Supervisor)  
Middle East Technical University  
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

\_\_\_\_\_

Prof. Dr. Zühal YEŞİLYURT GÜNDÜZ  
TED University  
Department of Political Science and International Relations

\_\_\_\_\_



**I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.**

**Name, Last Name:** Pınar Tanrıver

**Signature:**

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE STUDY OF TERF DEBATE IN THE CONTEXTS OF US, UK & TURKEY & THE EMBRACEMENT OF INTERSECTIONAL FEMINISM FOR RECONCILIATION PROPOSAL**

TANRIVER, Pınar

M.S., The Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Başak ALPAN

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This study examines the relationality of the trans-exclusionary radical feminism (TERF) debate, which has become the focus of contemporary feminist literature with intersectional feminism. After the introduction of the term, “TERF” in 2008, the debate on trans-exclusion has flared up and pushed feminist actors into a significant polarisation. At the same time, the trans-exclusionary legal and structural changes made by states, institutions and organisations worldwide caused the gap between the parties to widen. The currently accepted feminist discourse has been insufficient to overcome this problem. For this reason, the primary motivation of this study is to question whether this debate can be ended somehow and whether feminism can be progressed by adopting a different perspective. In this context, the TERF debate has been examined based on the US and UK, where polarisation and international effects are the most and based on Turkey due to the undeniable impact of the arguments from these two countries on the conflict in it. In line with these examinations, the development of feminist thought has been examined in the historical conjuncture, and a reconciliatory understanding has been sought that will bring a solution to this highly polarised debate environment. In this direction, this study defends the

argument that due to its inclusiveness principle and perspective of analysing oppression and exclusion through the relationality of identities, intersectional feminism could end the TERF debate and promote the advancement of feminist thought.

**Keywords:** TERF, Intersectional Feminism, Trans-exclusion, identity, LGBTQIAA+

## ÖZ

### TERF TARTIŞMASININ AMERİKA, İNGİLTERE VE TÜRKİYE BAĞLAMINDA İNCELENMESİ VE BİR UZLAŞMA ÖNERİSİ OLARAK KESİŞİMSSEL FEMİNİZMİN BENİMSENMESİ

TANRIVER, Pınar

Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

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Bu çalışma günümüz feminist literatürünün odağına taşınan trans dışlayıcı radikal feminizm (TERF) tartışmasının kesişimsel feminizm ile ilişkiselliğini incelemektedir. 2008 yılında TERF tabirinin ortaya atılmasından sonra trans dışlayıcılık tartışmaları iyice alevlenmiş ve feminist aktörleri büyük bir kutuplaşma içerisine itmiştir. Aynı zamanda, bu dönemde dünya çapında devletler, kurum ve kuruluşlar tarafından gerçekleştirilen trans dışlayıcı yasal ve yapısal değişiklikler tartışmanın tarafları arasındaki uçurumun iyice genişlemesine sebep olmuştur. Bu noktada, günümüzde kabul gören feminist söylem bu problemi aşmak konusunda yetersiz kalmıştır. Bu sebeple, bu çalışmanın temel motivasyonu bu tartışmanın bir şekilde sonlandırılıp sonlandırılmayacağını ve feminizmin, farklı bir bakış açısı benimsenerek, ilerlemesinin sağlanıp sağlanamayacağını sorgulamaktır. Bu bağlamda, TERF tartışması, kutuplaşmanın ve uluslararası etkilerinin en fazla olduğu Amerika ve İngiltere temelinde ve bu iki ülkeden çıkan söylemlerin Türkiye'deki çatışma üzerindeki yadsınamaz etkileri sebebiyle Türkiye temelinde incelenmiştir. Bu incelemeler doğrultusunda, feminist düşüncenin gelişimi tarihsel konjonktürde

irdelenmiş ve bu epeyce kutuplaşmış tartışma ortamına çözüm getirecek, uzlaşmacı bir anlayış aranmıştır. Bu doğrultuda, bu çalışma, kesişimsel feminizmin kapsayıcılık ilkesi ve baskı ve dışlanma durumlarını kimliklerin ilişkiselliği üzerinden analiz eden bakış açısıyla; tartışmayı sonlandırabileceğini ve feminist düşüncenin ilerlemesini sağlayabileceğini iddia etmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** TERF, kesişimsel feminizm, trans dışlayıcı, kimlik, LGBTQIAA+

*To my beloved mother, Sati Tanriver, and father, Mahmut Taner Tanriver, who  
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This research concentrates on the prevailing TERF (“trans-exclusionary radical feminism”) debate in contemporary feminist theory by focusing on the aspects and arguments of the trans-exclusion issue in the US, the UK, and the Turkish contexts and its relation to the feminist literature, in general terms, and its interrelatedness with intersectional feminism in particular. The term ‘TERF’ has recently popped up in line with the rise of trans-exclusionary acts worldwide. With the proliferation of the term’s use within feminist discussions, problems and issues regarding the historicity and causality of “trans-exclusion” have arisen immediately. The founder of the acronym, Viv Smythe, first used it in a blog post in 2008, which she later explained,

It was not meant to be insulting. It was meant to be a deliberately technically neutral description of an activist grouping. We wanted a way to distinguish TERFs from other RadFems with whom we engaged who were trans\*-positive/neutral, because we had several years of history of engaging productively/substantively with non-TERF RadFems (Williams, 2016, p. 255).

“The term has been rhetorically helpful in distinguishing TERF activism from the long-term radical feminist community members who are inclusive of trans women”, as far as Beemyn and Goldberg (2021) indicated in their *Encyclopedia of Trans Studies* (p. 822). Although the word was not found for insulting or fragmenting reasons, it created such a polarised environment within feminist appeal as the cis feminists and the trans activists. Following the coining of the term by Smythe, as I have already mentioned, it diffused to feminist literature quickly and has been used to describe feminists who have trans-exclusionary arguments as an umbrella category by the trans side in the story. Yet, with the start of its usage, debates about its foundations in a historical and theoretical

sense and its relation with feminist theory have also been raised in different contexts worldwide.

With the rise of conditions regarding the rights of the LGB community, such as the legalisation of gay marriage in different contexts like the U.S.A. or France yet the worsening in the requirements of the transgender community like exclusive legal acts regarding their existence, attaining health services, ban of them in the military services, especially in the U.S.A, “the rift between increasingly radicalised transgender-rights activists and the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) communities has finally come out into the open” (Polumbo, 2019, para. 1). With the expansion of the rift between the sides, the polarisation has reached its peak. On one side of the debate are the LGB community, cis feminists and their supporters who either have no problem with the “sex as a natural, biological and material thing” conceptualisation or view transgender individuals as frauds in a more negative way (Polumbo, 2019, para. 20). In contrast, on the other side, trans activists and their supporters strictly defend that sex and gender conceptualisations are constructed, so the use of ‘sex assigned-at-birth’ expression is vital. In addition, trans people must have the same rights as any others. In such a polarised environment where people do not give reconciliation a chance, feminist discussions regarding its present and future are dragged into a vicious cycle of hostility and tagging policy. At that point, intersectional feminism, with its premises and way of analysis, stands out as a reconciliation method for the continuation of feminism in the future. Yet, it is essential to discuss and analyse the background of the arguments and ideas of the sides within the debate contextually (in terms of this thesis, analysis of the U.S.A, the UK and Turkish contexts), interrelatedly and thoroughly, and also the aspects and ideals of intersectional feminism to decide whether the embracement of intersectional feminism as an umbrella theory would be suitable for overcoming the issue, the settlement of it and to present a vision for the future of feminist thought discussions. Thereby, all those brought me to question and research what these recently emerging discussions, the TERF debate and the exclusionary arguments related to it within feminism mean for the future of the

discourse? In addition, can intersectional feminism possibly create a solution or reconciliation for the discourse's continuation and future?

To answer those questions, I mainly focus on some specific contexts. Before deciding on my study's subject, I encountered tweet floods between trans activists and cis feminists, in the Turkish context, on Twitter about the term, 'TERF', which intrigued me. Following my research, I realised that a blogger recently found the term, which started to be used directly within the literature. Through my analysis of the TERF debate and trans-exclusionary feminism issues in Turkey, I observed a severely hostile and antagonistic environment in which the sides of the discussion are tagging each other with harsh indictments. It made me to elaborate on the issue and search whether is it just a tagging policy that seems like it cannot be reconciled in any way and dragged feminist appeal into a vicious loop or if it possibly makes any contribution in terms of progress for feminism. Even deeper research showed that the arguments and views on the issue had been imported from the Western context, especially from the U.S.A. and the UK. Hence, due to the direct influence of the US and the UK on the feminist climate in Turkey, in terms of the TERF debate, I focus on these three contexts as my units of analysis. Since the term 'TERF' has been coined relatively recently, there are few academic articles or written resources, including the term, its use, historicity and aspects. Even if there are sources outside those contexts related to the topic, generally, they have not been translated into the English language yet. Thereby, choosing the US and the UK as the other cases of analysis, along with the Turkish feminist literature, has been the most suitable option for me to conduct this study.

Yet, it is quite hard to make research on such a recent and theoretically ungrounded topic. Due to the recent history of the debate and the term, it is hard to find academic sources and there are almost no reliable source regarding the debate in Turkey. Therefore, in this research, I use netnography as the research methodology, especially for the analysis of the Turkish context. To explore the Turkish context, I first focus on feminist scholars such as Öznur Karakaş, Zeynep Direk, Ebru Pektaş and Alev Özkazanç who are highly active on Twitter

and explored other highly-followed accounts by focusing on some keywords like TERF, “transphobia”, “misogyny”, “trans identity”, “cis women”, “body”, “hormone replacement therapy” and so on to use the content analysis as the search method to get knowledge about the issue and the time frame between 2011 and 2012, which is the period when the term started to be used in the Turkish feminist context. However, there is always the risk that since these records only exist on social media, they can be erased easily. Moreover, many commentators chose to delete their posts due to the debate's highly hostile and hunting structure. Hence, the research had been limited to exploring one side of the debate, i.e. scrutinising the relevance of the term within the scope of digital activism by feminist academics and trans activists on Twitter and other social media sites. Similarly, I focus on the posts on social media and the few academic resources about the topic regarding the cases of the UK and the US.

Before examining the aspects and arguments of the debate in the contexts of the US and the UK and their relation with the Turkish context, it was necessary to make its connection with the theoretical framework. Hence, I started by discussing the whole dimensions of intersectional feminism, from the coining of the term ‘intersectionality’ to its relation with trans activism along with its association with identity politics, its arguments about the matrix of interlocking oppressions, and the form of inclusiveness and finally the connection of all these with the TERF and future of the feminism debates.

Later, more specifically in terms of the debate in the US case, some incidences such as the Daughters of Bilitis and West Side Lesbian Conference occurrences held in 1973, the Olivia Collective controversy in 1977, the writing of Janice Raymond’s well-known book “The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the Shemale” in 1979 and Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival and the Formation of Camp Trans, are examined, one by one as the pioneers in terms of formation of trans-exclusionary arguments in feminist literature before the coining of the word in 2008. While the trans-inclusive arguments in the US indicate that especially views of second-wave feminists or lesbian separatists in the 1970s

consolidated the recent TERF statements and led to the formation of transmisogyny and discrimination toward trans individuals, it becomes evident in the narratives of the activists that the point that they were rejecting was not the state of being *trans* but rather something more structural which was embedded in the system. Thereby, without referring to social, political, economic and cultural circumstances, the recent TERF debate has sprouted on the foundations of discussion in the past. By bringing old narratives back, in a foundational sense, and combining them with arguments discussing the implementation proposals of laws named ‘bathroom bills’, the trans-exclusion narrative and the TERF debate were ignited. Yet, it could not go beyond examining ‘toilets’ as the main point of concern for trans-inclusion.

Contrary to debates in the US regarding the research about the use of the term TERF and arguments in the UK arose from a relatively new incident, the reform proposal of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 becoming more trans-inclusive. The reform proposal and ideas of the actors regarding the issue led to the formation of two camps as TERFs or gender-critical feminists against trans-inclusive activists, which highly polarised the feminist environment in the country. Besides, the collaboration of some women’s organisations in the UK with some irrelevant actors like US Christian right-wing organisations was highly criticised by trans-inclusive activists in terms of degrading the women’s movement. Yet, it also proved that these arguments of trans-exclusionary feminism are shaped by false causality, so the term's use cannot go beyond functioning as a slur without being laid on any logical foundations.

Regarding discussion in Turkey, the feminist scene has imported the term following its use in Western societies, especially from the US and the UK. Although initially, its utilisation has occurred around similar debates regarding the transition process for trans people or discrimination incidences toward them in pride parades but later, especially in the Turkish context, it turned into something functioning as a tagging or targeting tool to eliminate or silence people who are not on their side. Thereby, again exclusively in the Turkish

scene, it became a cog which works for the continuation of the vicious circle of feminist debates.

While doing a literature review to research the aspects of the debate in different contexts, I came up with some methodological limitations. First of all, the literature about the discussion in the UK and the US is highly intertwined mainly because the arguments in the UK have taken their bases from the US context. Thereby, separating the contexts to discuss their views one by one became really hard and almost impossible, resulting in the explanation of the same conceptualisations for both with slight differences. Another limitation, which is only valid for the Turkish context, is the nature of the debate in the country. Since it turned into a tagging and targeting policy rapidly in Turkey, many scholars and activists deleted their arguments on the internet to avoid it, which led us, in some conditions, to read the incident or the statement from the second or third person narratives which led suspicions about the subjectivity of their language.

Following this information, the use of term transgender has started to be utilised as its current definition, an umbrella term for all non-normative gender expressions around the 1990s (Stryker, 2008, p. 254). Yet, I wondered why has the interest or curiosity of people to transgender have piled up throughout the years towards the new millennium? According to Sally Hines, it is essential because “Cultural fascination with the lives and, above all, the bodies of trans people has continued unabated. Alongside a social and cultural turn to trans, trans rights were put on the legal and political agenda” (cited in Hines, 2013, p. 32). Yet, more specifically, why the terms like TERFs (trans-exclusionary radical feminists) emerged in the oppositional standpoint of trans feminism, transgender people, and so on and become more and more visible in recent years? How have the arguments of trans-exclusionary radical feminism shaped throughout the years, grounding on old narratives and taking its contemporary form within the UK and USA feminist literature? Which incidences are the milestones in the history of its formation in these cultures, what are their aspects,

and how are they argued by women and gender studies scholars, researchers, LGBTQIAA+ and human rights activists, organisations, and so on? What are the impacts of these discussions on the feminist/LGBTQIAA+ scene in Turkey; in other words, how is the TERF issue discussed in Turkey? (Again, I am going to study it in terms of the views of scholars, activists, and organisations which are interested in women and gender studies, human rights, and LGBTQIAA+ related issues in Turkey.) While I will elaborate on the arguments within the TERF debate of definite context in respective chapters and its association with intersectional feminism specifically, in the fifth chapter, I will focus on the impacts, influence and relation of all these discussions on the feminist theory.

Further, by discussing the changes in the waves of feminism, I will try to designate a historical point that makes the discussion regarding the trans-exclusion based on identity meaningful. By focusing on the correlation between intersectional feminism and the TERF debate and comparing the views of different feminist approaches on the issue of trans-inclusion, I will try to decide whether intersectional feminism is the most suitable for the settlement of the debate, the inclusion of the trans identity and others and the continuation of feminism for the future. Lastly, in this chapter, I will try to criticise the ongoing debate regarding its relation to (feminist) theory. Before concluding my thesis with the summing up of the arguments that I have already discussed, I am going to try to answer all the questions and explain the points, which I mentioned above, to make some contribution to feminist literature, even if it will be a small one, and planning to offer an insight into possible different ways of thought for the future of more inclusive and intersectional feminism, to the people who are going to read it.

I want to start the discussion by touching upon one of the arguments of Rosi Braidotti (2012) in her book “Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti”, who is a feminist theoretician since I found it highly relevant to the points I am going to discuss and the reigning environment regarding the feminist theory and the debate. As

Unless one likes complexity, one cannot feel at home in the twenty-first century. Transformations, metamorphoses, mutations and processes of change have in fact become familiar in the lives of most contemporary subjects... If the only constant at the dawn of the third millennium is change, then the challenge lies in thinking about processes, rather than concepts. The fact that theoretical reason is concept-bound and fastened upon essential notions makes it difficult to find adequate representations for processes, fluid in-between flows of data, experience and information. They tend to become frozen in spatial, metaphorical modes of representation which itemize them as 'problems (p. 11).

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1. Intersectional Feminism and the TERF Debate

Intersectionality is defined as “one of the feminist theory’s greatest accomplishments” in the article “Feminist Theory Today” by Kathy Ferguson (2017, p. 272). The term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 and further elaborated by Patricia Hill Collins and other feminist scholars in 1990 and the upcoming years, although; it was discussed in the past years without using the word intersectionality. In that regard, in terms of the issue in which this thesis is interested, the reason behind the coining of the term in the late 1980s and the early 1990s coincides with the necessity of its embracement as an umbrella or alternative category for solving the inherent problems of contemporary feminist thought, especially regarding recent TERF wars.

The feminist scene and the emergence of the term intersectionality within that environment in the 1980s and 1990s was “fervently materialist. It was a triumphant story of success not framed in the reductive language of victims ... A woman can be a feminist and still ... pursue her own interests” as far as Joanna Oksala (2011) described in the article *The Neoliberal Subject of Feminism* (p. 113). With the rise of neoliberal governmentality, capitalism had not need further dichotomous gender subordination. In a broader sense, the governmental branch was no longer required to have panoptical features to discipline its members; instead, its only essential task was determining the games’ rules (Oksala, 2011, p. 112). Rather than dividing and categorising individuals, their rights, their abilities and so on under concrete dichotomous categories such as public/private, woman/man, sex/gender, neoliberalism has shifted the social and political to the “the personal or private realm to be dealt with through voluntary charity, the

invisible hand of the market or by improving one's own self-esteem" (Oksala, 2011, p. 112). More or less, it can be said, as Wendy Brown (2005) also explained,

The logic of capitalism does not require gender subordination ... where physical strength is rarely at issue, where continuity of the job matters little, where reproductive work has been almost completely commodified and where reproduction is itself nearly separable from sexed bodies (cited in Oksala, 2011, p. 115).

Hence, neither the subject of feminism nor its counterpart no longer needed to be unified or single. Neoliberal governmental techniques of the 80s and 90s led to diversification and multiplication of the identities in a great sense. Although such diversification and pluralisation of identities can be regarded as a positive thing, at first sight, this result of neoliberal governmentality over the operation of the logic of gender subordination in a different way which rendered individuals into consumers and entrepreneurs themselves by so-called emphasising personal choice, free will and so on led to other problematic issues. This so-called freedom, rationality, personal decisions and choices supporter way of governing was flattering individuals in one way to pursue their own identities, pleasures, and desires; another way putting them under concrete locations to make them manageable. Thus, the emergence of this way of identity politics through the multiplication of them brought along some radical protests with itself in the following years. Queer theory and intersectionality (intersectional feminism in the context of this thesis) can be identified as the most prominent subheadings of these protests which have emerged in those years. Hence, what is wrong with the neoliberal view of the feminist subject can be defined as what led to the coining of the term intersectionality at the very last point. Identities that had not been recognised or known as a disorder, anomaly and so on, based on their existence, like transgender individuals, were now found a ground to be recognised or heard. Yet, in that regard, what was wrong with the newborn identity politics of those years' perspective of the feminist subject was its restrictive and reductive nature. Although those years of identity politics seem like the time of personal choices, "individual agents, human beings are located in psychological, social, and

political contexts” (Brunskell-Evans, 2018, para. 3) that limit their autonomy and inter-relationship with others with concrete, restrained spheres which were framed with the invisible borders of “the belief in unlimited possibilities and freedom of choice” (Oksala, 2011, p. 117) paradoxically made them more vulnerable, confined and minoritised.

As far as I have already mentioned, the rise of identity politics period catered for the recognition of different gendered identities like trans identity, queer identity and so on, which also uncovered the need for representation of those who were not recognised beforehand. In such an environment, intersectionality found itself a ground to bloom like queer theory or any other social movement, activism, or identity in any period. None of these concepts can be thought of outside the socio-political, economic or historical conjectures that they have occurred. Recognition of trans identity or activism cannot be considered outside these conjectures.

Although John Money first used the term transsexual in the 1960s, it was to describe the psychological anomaly condition referring to the person’s disaccord between sex assigned at birth and the performance of gender role. This perception of transsexuality is the issue around which transgender activism arose at the very beginning (Bettcher, 2015, p. 3). Yet, this was not enough for trans activism to bloom in those years since the feminist literature and women’s political agenda were dealing with other structural problems that were embedded socially and politically, like women’s systematic exclusion from public space through the patriarchal codes embedded in all institutions and modern androcentric society. Therefore, although criticised for concerning only white women’s issues, the feminist agenda in those years could not “set the stage for the concept of intersectionality” (Fernandes Botts, 2017, p. 344).

As far as Yasemin Varlık (2019) also mentioned in her article “Feminism and the Costs of Identity Politics”, “LGBT politics have emerged through globalisation and the neoliberal identity politics” of the 1980s (para. 11). During this period,

“identities have started to be classified while the classes have disidentified” (Pektaş, 2019, para. 26). Thereby, in such circumstances, LGBTQIAA+ issues, queer theory, intersectional feminism or trans activism found themselves ground to be emerged and politicised concretely contrary to the period before those years.

In line with the information above, constructing a causal relation between the arguments of early feminist literature and trans-exclusion appeals would be problematic. While the rise of identity-based political agenda is causing all these theories to be political and debatable, it would not be logical to discuss trans-exclusionary arguments before that period or outside of its constructing conjectures. At that point, it would not be wrong to define that such an environment is the one which made contemporary TERF debate possible as part of the political agenda of modern feminist literature.

While some discuss the nature of this current war by repeating the same arguments back and forth in a vicious circle, some see it as the point that the existing feminist literature has stuck with. Yet, how can feminism go beyond the TERF debate? What does it tell in terms of its relation with (intersectional) feminism? Is it possible to overcome this vicious debate to move feminism one step further by reconciling the different demands of the conflicting sides? In that sense, in this thesis, while I was elaborating on the recent TERF issue with the arguments of other sides in the debate in three different contexts, I also tried to show that embracing intersectional feminism as an umbrella theory would be logical to solve any exclusionary and discriminatory arguments, specifically trans-exclusionary appeals, that modern feminism has faced recently.

Intersectionality, since the coining of the term in the late 1980s, is against, most importantly, the construction of concrete categories, groups or identities in neither the oppressed nor the oppressor position. Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2016) defined it as

a way of understanding and analysing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organisation of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves (p. 2).

In that regard, rather than putting individuals into strict moulds and labelling them with concrete tags and positions, intersectional feminism approaches every single factor and identity relationally. With the nature of its analysis, it offers a more complex ontology than other theories, which put people into a single frame at a time, like “identity politics with its politically fragmentary and essentialising” nature and instead observe their relation and impacts on each other (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006, p. 187). Vivian May (2015) defined it as

a crucial tool to avoid either/or thinking, [which is] ‘single-axis’ categories of analysis. At its best, intersectionality replaces additive thinking with fully interrelational thinking; intersectionality facilitates ‘a matrix orientation (wherein lived identities are treated as interlaced and systems of oppression as enmeshed and mutually reinforcing).’ Intersectional sensibilities pluralise our thinking and our understanding of ourselves as thinking subjects. (cited in Ferguson, 2017, p. 272).

In that sense, intersectionality is directly related to the nature of the trans-exclusion debate within feminism and its reconciliation. Firstly, due to its core, the TERF debate and its participants fragment individuals who may be supportive of each other in another scenario. This eventually leads to a significant polarisation within feminist thought which seems like it could not be reconciled in any way, turning it into a vicious, non-progressive circle of theory. In terms of summarising the essence of the debate, without mentioning the contextual differences I elaborated on in the following chapters, the trans activist side defends the argument that they have been excluded, oppressed and discriminated against by radical feminists essentially and ahistorically throughout the years. In contrast, the cis feminists repeat the idea that they see them as the perpetrators of violence and abuse against women. While the first

one labels the counterpart as TERF, the second one tags the other as fraud. While existing feminist literature could not eliminate this unsolvable conflict, intersectional feminism suggests the matrix orientation, which means the intersectionality of all the factors and identities they form through their relationships. In this way, it shows an interrelated system of oppression rather than labelling the sides as the oppressed and the oppressor in a single-axis way. In addition, by presenting interlocking power structures which articulated oppression and exploitation in themselves, it may provide a form of inclusiveness and prove to the opposing sides of the debate that reconciliation cannot be achieved through the compromise of just one of them. It should be reciprocal.

In that regard, the kyriarchy concept within intersectional feminism gains importance as it is defined by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza (2001) in her book 'Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation', which I further explained in the following chapters, as "a system of intersecting multiplicative social structures of superordination and subordination, of ruling and oppression" (cited in <https://everydayfeminism.com/2014/04/kyriarchy-101/>, n.d.). It clearly explains that, for instance, as a cis woman, you may experience male domination, but on the other hand, you may exclude and subordinate a trans woman. Thereby, it points out the interlocking structures, mechanisms and categories of domination formed over each other and could not be solved by seeing only one side of the story. "To oppose these systems of oppression, one has to realise the fact that these systems of oppression, discrimination and exclusion are not independent of each other; that they mutually construct each other, work together, and should be considered together" (Bora, 2021, p. 33). Moreover, Hankivsky also indicates that, "a person can experience both oppression and power" (2014, p. 9). As an example to this, "transsexual sex workers both being exploited and exploiting other transsexual sex workers" which means that even in the same side of the debate people can be fragmented through and experienced the impacts of systems of domination (Bora, 2021, p. 35). Hence, again, to turn this acrimonious debate between trans activists and the

cis feminists or any other conflict which may emerge within feminism into something progressive, embracement of intersectional feminism would be helpful to analyse “the processes by which power and inequity are produced, reproduced and actively resisted” (Hankivsky, 2014, p. 9) to realise the beyond of already existing rather than only identifying the sides of the debate being the part of the one side in it.

In a supporting way to the information above, the “reconceptualisation of identities as coalitions” argument of Anna Carasthathis (2016) that she asserted in her book ‘Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons’ suggests that intersectional analysis points out “the political potential of intersectionality lies in our ability to reimagine our identities and our alignments in coalitional terms, revealing the inherent and potential impurity of categories by practising their interconnectedness” which means that seeing the systems of domination, exclusion and discrimination as a matrix provides a solution-oriented perspective of thinking about the ongoing highly polarised debate rather than acting as a cog in the machine and repeating the same arguments without being progressive (pp. 6-7).

Another point which the realisation of intersectional feminism would be sensible for the future of feminist thought and to be the reconciler of the ongoing TERF debate is that its point of analysis is not the existing identities, their marginalisation or their arguments. It is against any universalising claim of all categories. It analyses their interrelated, interlocked structure of relations to show the bigger picture about the condition. Rather than gathering all women and their billions of experiences under the particular, identical category of womanhood, intersectional feminism is interested in “how intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation [in their experiences] are organised in unique ways” in a way dominating and controlling them (Collins, 2000, p. 276). Hence, the embracement of intersectional feminism regarding the TERF debate and the future of feminism in general terms would be sensible since it is not a theory

which favours either the interests of the one side of the war or constructs any universalising and essentialising claims as identity politics does.

In a nutshell, Ferguson (2017) mentioned the characteristics of intersectionality briefly in her article *Feminist Theory Today* which, I believe, corroborates the necessity of embracing intersectional feminism as a reconciliation method for the TERF debate, as

It is permanently open and thus remarkably fertile for generating new thinking. New identities emerge when political circumstances enable beings to become political subjects—for example, transgender persons. Hence, the identity work of intersectional thinking is permanently unfinished. Intersectionality is characterised as ‘multiscale’ thinking; that is, it ‘draws on multiple sites of knowing, from the micropolitical scale of lived experience and personal reflection to the macropolitical scale of structural, political, philosophical, and representational inequities.’ Intersectional thinking invites us to push on the vectors of power that most elude us and to be surprised at their collaborations (pp. 272-273).

It analyses the categories, identities, and their interrelatedness by considering their “historical, empirical, cultural” contexts and backgrounds, which means that embracing it may present a logical perspective to end the essentialising, ahistorical TERF debate and its hostile, tagging policy manner and emancipate the contemporary feminism from the vicious circle that it has been stuck with (Ferguson, 2017, p. 273). Furthermore, “intersectional thinking requires willingness to listen to unfamiliar insights”, which is defined by Keating (2009) as “raw openness” (cited in Ferguson, 2017, p. 273), which means that contrary to universalising claims, it considers particular experiences and occurrences which again is perfectly necessary for the consideration and recognition of the experiences and arguments of both sides of the debate.

Following this information, in the following three chapters, I am going to tell the background information about the arguments of the sides of the TERF debate within the US, the UK and Turkish contexts and their interrelatedness in a straightforward way. I believe the embracement of intersectional feminism

would be a way to reconcile and move feminism, in general terms, one step further which I explain again with its different dimensions in the last chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### BACKGROUND OF THE TERF DEBATE IN THE USA CONTEXT

Although the use of the term is controversial within the context of the UK, its emergence is generally correlated with the women's movement and feminist views, actions and protests within US culture. Some historical occurrences were later defined as the touchstones of the formation of trans-exclusion in feminist literature.

#### 3.1. Daughters of Bilitis and West Side Lesbian Conference

The pioneer incidents, which are regarded as the most significant ones for the formation of contemporary trans-exclusionary arguments, are the Daughters of Bilitis and West Side Lesbian Conference occurrences held in 1973, the Olivia Collective controversy in 1977 and the writing of Janice Raymond's well-known book *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-male* in 1979 which is seen as "the manual for TERF advocacy" (Beemyn & Goldberg, 2021, p. 823).

After the invitation of Beth Elliot, who was a lesbian and trans woman, to join the lesbian feminist organisation Daughters of Bilitis in San Francisco in 1971, the uprisings had started. Some people raised their voices against her inclusion in the organisation based on the argument that 'she is not a real woman hence cannot be a part of such women's organisation'. In 1973, these exclusionary arguments toward trans presence were brought to the national level with the West Coast Lesbian Conference. Although she was one of the organisers and planned conference speakers, she took a phone call from another lesbian gathering called Gutter Dykes, threatening her not to speak and leave the organisation. She joined the conference as a speaker by not listening to their threats, and protests had started violently. When she took the stage, Gutter Dykes

disrupted the meeting and tried to attack her, which led to the injury of some other trans-inclusionary feminist participants. As far as one of the conference organisers and Lesbian Tide Collective member Barbara McLean (1973) told the incident in her diary (The Lesbian Tide later printed it out), the participation of Elliot both in the organisation and conference by genuinely being part of it was regarded as “the most bizarre and dangerous co-optation of lesbian energy and emotion [we] can imagine” (cited in Williams, 2020, p. 724). At that point, it is essential to mention that in such incidences, actions or discourses of opinion leaders or the ones who have a say become determinant for the future of this way of acting/thinking. One of the significant figures of the American Women’s Liberation Movement, radical feminist Robin Morgan, preferred to light the touch paper. In her speech after the conference, she ignited the rage about the existence of a man (trans woman) in the women-only environment, which led to the understanding which defines it as the foundations of a recent transmisogynistic climate. She (1973) stated,

Are we yet again going to defend the male supremacist yes obscenity of male transvestitism? How many of us will try to explain away – or permit into our organizations, even, men who deliberately reemphasize gender roles, and who parody female oppression and suffering as ‘camp’? No. I will not call a male ‘she’: thirty-two years of suffering in the androcentric society, and of surviving, have earned me the name ‘woman’; one walk down the street by a male transvestite, five minutes of his being hassled (which he may enjoy), and then he dares, he dares to think he understands our pain? No. In our mothers’ names and in our own, we must not call him sister. We know what’s at work when whites wear blackface; the same thing is at work when men wear drag (cited in Williams, 2020, p. 725).

Although there was no such naming TERF at that time, she got the name in the recent trans-exclusion debates with her ‘trans women are men since they do not suffer from the same oppression as woman-born-woman’ argument. She was perceived, in a sense, as making a “negative caricaturization of the trans existence as a stealer of women’s natural energy or emotion” (Williams, 2020, p. 725). Yet, it is not much sense that recent trans-exclusionary arguments took their foundations from these narratives since trans identity was neither on the political status subject nor recognised in those years. It will be a wrong causality

if a direct relation is formed between the past and the present arguments since opposed points and demands are different. The feminist discussion in those years dealt with other structural problems embedded in all public and private spheres. Hence, any kind of identity-related issues such as ethnicity, race, gender and so on remained in an insignificant position on the agenda of the feminist movement. Hence, even if those feminist activists still have trans-exclusionary arguments in recent years, relating those feminist arguments in the past with recent trans-exclusionary actions and discussions would be false causal.

Nevertheless, other radical feminists, such as Mary Daly or Germaine Greer, have also been remembered for resembling being transgender with some negative concepts, hence the pioneers of the trans-exclusionary arguments recently. For example, Mary Daly (1978) described trans people as Frankenstein constructs with the words,

Today the Frankenstein phenomenon is omnipresent not only in religious myth, but in its offspring, phallocratic technology. The insane desire for power, the madness of boundary violation, is the mark of necrophiliacs who sense the lack of soul/spirit/life-loving principle with themselves and therefore try to invade and kill off all spirit, substituting conglomerates of corpses. This necrophilic invasion/elimination takes a variety of forms. Transsexualism is an example of male surgical siring which invades the female world with substitutes. Male mothered genetic engineering is an attempt to “create” without women. The projected manufacture by men of artificial wombs, of cyborgs which will be part flesh, part robot, of clones – all are manifestations of phallocratic boundary violation (cited in Williams, n.d., para. 8).

In the upcoming years, Germaine Greer (1999) resembled trans people with horror movie serial killers who killed their mothers (Williams, 2020, p. 725). Such connotations about trans people and trans-inclusion were alleged to lie the foundations of transmisogyny and trans-exclusionary acts today, within feminist literature, without taking the identity formation process of trans identity into consideration carefully.

### 3.2. Olivia Collective Controversy

Another incident in those years that was described as effective in nowadays trans-exclusionary acts was the Olivia Collective Controversy in 1977. The Olivia Collective was not just a trans-inclusive formation but also “trans-affirming, and even provided trans medical care” (Williams, 2020, p. 726). One of its members was Sandy Stone, an out trans woman and active participant in education of women in different parts of the music-making process. After Janice Raymond, who was a significant radical feminist scholar in those years (whose book “The Transsexual Empire” is regarded as a guideline for trans-exclusion, I will come to her impact on the formation of the trans-exclusionary ideology in the following part in a straightforward way) saw the trans-inclusion policy of the Olivia Collective as a betrayal for women’s (liberation) movement and breach of women’s rights and started to send letters to other feminist organisations to inform them about the situation which later turned the events into a matter of life and death. Hence, again, it is evident that exclusion or discrimination was not about having a trans identity, it is about the betrayal of women to their own kind. The opposition and exclusion of feminist spheres toward trans-identified individuals exist, yet these antagonisms are not based on being *trans*. This may be where the TERF debate tied itself up regarding the feminist discourse.

On the other hand, it may signal that the current feminist thought is not enough to cope with all these long-lasting trans-exclusionary arguments; hence, it has to transform its aspects and views in a way being more inclusive to be part of the progress.

To continue, Sandy Stone described the scene formed as “We were getting hate mail about me. . . The death threats were directed at me, but there were violent consequences proposed for the Collective if they didn’t get rid of me” (Williams, 2016, p. 256). Although the threats, Stone continued to be a part of the Collective while organising a music festival for women in major cities to meet them with women’s music; then Olivia received a letter which informed them

about a paramilitary and armed gathering named The Gorgons that threatened to murder Stone if she would show up in Seattle. Being accurate in their threats, Gorgons came to the organisation with their weapons but were disarmed by the security of the Olivia. Stone explained it as

In fact, Gorgons did come and they did have guns taken away from them. I was terrified. During a break between a musical number someone shouted out ‘GORGONS!’ and I made it from my seat at the console to under the table the console was on at something like superluminal speed. I stayed under there until it was clear that I wasn’t about to be shot (cited in Williams, 2016, p. 256).

With all these incidences, the exclusion argument became something tangible. Nevertheless, when the ideas of feminist theory are considered carefully, it may be seen that the exclusion is not about being *trans* but rather about being a man, as lesbian separatists were strictly opposed. Anyway, those acts are perceived as the foundations of the recent trans-exclusion debate, even if it was born from false causality between the words regarding two different periods. Hence, it is essential to note that the consideration of activism without referencing the conditions it was raised in will be deficient.

Nevertheless, the ideas of opinion leaders on feminism, women’s rights, and so on, like Janice Raymond, were regarded as influential in shaping today’s exclusionary arguments. However, without accounting for the impact of the opinions or ideas on such sensitive issues with fanatic masses background, Raymond ignited the arguments by accusing Stone of creating division/separation among radical feminist women, which led to the idea of the separation of the radical feminist movement due to male inclusion. She further explained her opposing arguments against the inclusion of Sandy Stone (specific to this occurrence), which induced the formation of polarisation among different thinking women, in her book “The Transsexual Empire” as

Stone is not only crucial to the Olivia enterprise but plays a very dominant role there . . . This only serves to enhance his [sic] previously dominant role and to divide women, as men [sic] frequently do, when they make their presence necessary and vital to women. Having produced such divisiveness, one would

think that if Stone's commitment to and identification with women were genuinely woman-centered, he [sic] would have removed himself from Olivia and assumed some responsibility for the divisiveness (Raymond, 1979, pp. 101-102).

After the threats and adverse incidences, Stone preferred to leave the Collective for the safety of herself and the fellows, yet she continued studying the inclusivity of trans people within feminist theory by taking and describing the happenings as the cornerstone for the formation of literature. Hence, she wrote the book "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto" in 1992, regarded as the foundational source for trans feminism and transgender studies.

### **3.3. "The Transsexual Empire" by Janice Raymond**

It is time to mention the aspects of Raymond's book, "The Transsexual Empire", which are seen as highly influential in shaping trans-exclusionary acts in the upcoming years. Sociology professor Sally Hines (2017) defines the impact of the book as "The stance of what has recently become to be known as a TERF perspective is evident" in it (cited in Mackay, 2021, p. 57). Stephen Whittle, a legal scholar at Manchester Metropolitan University and transgender activist, refers to three main points in the book of Raymond, which led to condemnation of trans people by feminists. Firstly, Raymond denigrated trans people by accusing them of being "mythic deceptions" that the male power base created to affect and infuse feminist ideology. Secondly, "transsexuals are one result of a socio-political programme, controlled and implemented by the medico-legal hierarchies of, and on behalf of, a patriarchal hegemony which has used them" (Whittle, 2006, p. 196). It means the penetration of the patriarchal empire into women in an absolute sense. Women's sexuality, spirits and identities are all invaded by male dominance. For Whittle (2006), Raymond stated about trans women that "physical loss of a penis does not mean the loss of an ability to penetrate" (p. 196). Last and maybe the most striking argument of Raymond about trans people is the relationship she constructed with them and the rape incident. She explained it as "All transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing

the real female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves. . . Transsexuals merely cut off the most obvious means of invading women, so that they seem non-invasive” (Raymond, 1979, p. 104). All these views regarding trans people, or trans women in a narrower sense, as invaders of women’s realities or rapists of them, actually lend to colour the fact that the central point of their arguments. The recognition of trans women was still about their consideration as males, which made them a potential threat to women’s existence and hence turned them into realities that must be excluded. Even so, it would not escape from being a foundational argument for the trans-exclusionary point of view in contemporary TERF debates rather than being the focus of male exclusion debates.

### **3.4. Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival and Camp Trans**

Other incidences, in that regard, which are effective on trans-exclusionary arguments within the feminist stance after the writing of *The Transsexual Empire* by Janice Raymond were the MichFest occurrence, the establishment of Camp Trans afterwards womyn-born-womyn views in the 1990s. The Michfest incident is named “the ground zero of TERFdom” by feminist activism and gender studies scholar Finn Mackay (2021, p. 71). Williams (2020) explained the very first beginning of the events “As Raymond’s policy work began to affect trans people’s ability to access affirmative healthcare in the US, the woman-born woman dialectic gained increasing cultural currency” (p. 727). Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival is a festival in which women from all around the US gather to celebrate their womanhood with music, workshops and many more activities without judging onlookers. Based on Mackay’s (2021) description, it is “a sacred pilgrimage in certain feminist communities, travelling to Michigan and staying on ‘The Land’ is an experience to treasure and one to recount with pride” since 1976 (p. 71).

At the festival held in 1991, Nancy Burkholder, a trans woman, was thrown out of the land because she was trans, and the area was just reserved for natal

womyn-born-womyn. She insisted on verifying the rule by the security, which forbids the participation of trans people in the festival, since she did not notice it before. Although there was not a definite monolithic rule about trans-exclusion, the founder of the festive Lisa Vogel (2018) (who also disagreed with the womyn-born-womyn policy herself) mentioned her talk with the security chief of that year in an interview as she indicated “some womyn at the gate were bugging out about this womon’s presence, this trans womon’s presence. And one thing led to another” (Mackay, 2021, p. 72). After Burkholder’s removal from the land, her friend Janis Walworth took action and tried to inform everybody about the incident as much as it is possible. She also came in the following years and distributed educational leaflets named ‘Gender Myths’. In 1993, she and her supporters were warned by security to leave the festival since they were under the physical threat of some lesbian feminist gatherings. She later told the story as

. . . the festival security stopped by and told us that the trans women in our group would have to leave, ‘for their own safety.’ Tensions were definitely rising, we were told. We had scheduled to do some workshops and some folks were definitely hostile. We were told that, for our own safety, the trans women would need to leave the festival as soon as possible (Williams, 2020, p. 727)

By placing particular focus on the argument of trans-inclusion opposers, it can be said that it was based on the womyn-born-womyn idea and being against ‘penis’ as the symbol of male domination, which is further explained by women’s studies scholar Bonnie Morris (1999) as the creation of

a space in contrast to mainstream society, one where women could dance in the dark, sleep under the stars, sunbathe naked and flirt and have sex with other women, all with total freedom and validation, without the fear of reprisal, and without the fear of male violence (cited in Mackay, 2021, p. 73).

As far as it is also understood from its name, the womyn-born-womyn idea is constructed by the spelling of women without the word ‘men’ as the argument of separatist feminists to rescue women from the male dominance or influence any sense. Furthermore, according to the womyn-born-womyn definition in the book ‘A to Z of the Lesbian Liberation Movement,’ it means,

. . . women who were born women [as] opposed to male to female transgendered persons who may have, and retain, male privilege. Identifying or declaring oneself woman-born woman helps to keep 'woman only' or lesbian-separatist space pure (cited in Williams, 2020, p. 722).

In line with all these explanations and definitions, many trans-inclusive activists perceive the use of the word 'womyn' in the name of the festival as the signifier of "essentialist policing" and "(transphobic) reference to anatomy rather than politics" (Mackay, 2021, p. 73).

In terms of the events, to not cause any violent activity, Walworth and her team left the area. Still, in the following year, 1994, they formed Camp Trans just outside the gates of the MichFest area, in which the main aim was the concretion of people's stance against the trans-exclusionary acts and policies of the organisation. It was formed primarily due to the evident polarisation between the separatist in the Land and trans-inclusionary activists in the Camp. It results from the formation of tactical territories for the sides of this particular political debate in which people were informed and educated about the issue by joining workshops or simply communicating with others. Until the end of it, in 2012, Camp Trans has run with the motto 'humyn-born-humyn' against the exclusionary 'womyn-born-womyn' policy of Michigan Fest and became to be seen as the symbol of trans rights and liberation movement in US history.

Another, asserted, trans-exclusionary incident related to Camp Trans happened in 1999. The incident was realised by the presence-making protests of Camp Trans members entering the Michfest land to raise the issues that they discussed in the workshops. Although they stated that some of their members were trans explicitly, following their entrance to the area, a group of women gathered around them and started to shout the slogan 'MAN ON THE LAND!' The fight ignited with the threats and assaults of Michfest protestors on 16 years old trans girl from Camp Trans. With the intervention of Michfest security and some trans-supporting women in the field, nothing physical happened to the girl. Still, it is crucial to mention the incident to see the (alleged) foundations of ongoing

trans-exclusion ideology on the invader (of authentic womanhood) arguments that approached trans women as gender fraud. Besides, it took its place in the trans-exclusion historicity of the US as the '(penis) invasion' incident.

With its alleged impact on shaping trans-exclusionary acts and arguments in the US, the Michfest ended in 2015. In that regard, its finishing is regarded as the fall of the last castle of 'TERFism', which Sophie Lewis (2019), who is a feminist scholar and writer in The New York Times, points out with the words, "In America, however, TERFism today is a scattered community in its death throes, mourning the loss of its last spaces, like the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, which ended in 2015" (cited in Mackay, 2021, p. 76).

Although intersectional feminism discussions started concretely in those years, it would not be enough to be effective over those trans-exclusion arguments. Yet, with the proliferation of the views of both sides, ongoing feminist discourse showed that it was not enough to reconcile such vicious debate, so for the continuation of feminism, it becomes vital to transform itself into a more intersectional way.

### **3.5. Raising of Trans-inclusion in the Focal Point of Contemporary TERF Debate**

At that point, it is fair to describe what constructs the contemporary trans-exclusionary politics as a tangible reality since the recent feminist arguments attributed its foundations to the discussions in the past, in terms of the US and also worldwide. Still, some additional factors are influential in expanding trans visibility and trans human rights issues until they are positioned as the focal point of contemporary politics. Anne Bolin (1994, 1997), who is a cultural anthropologist, suggests three significant changes for the expansion of trans visibility and trans-inclusion arguments as

the greater access to a broad range of more client-centered and LGBTQIAA+Q-sensitive transition-related healthcare options with the closing of the restrictive university-affiliated gender identity clinics, the rise of the transgender rights movement, and the increasing acceptance of a nonsurgical transsexual identity as a permanent state of being (cited in Beemyn, 2014, p. 41).

Beemyn (2014) also added, as an extra point, the impact of the internet on contemporary transgender activism with the words, “The Internet has also played a critical role by enabling people to try out different gender possibilities anonymously and to connect with individuals who identify and express their gender in myriad ways” (p. 41).

Yet, the emergence of the internet and its prevalent use by all people is a kind of abstract factor when it is thought, in terms of trans-exclusion arguments and the TERF debate in the US, since its widespread utilisation is affected and transformed almost everything in the world. Hence, it is vital to mention significant tangible occurrences and changes that ignited the TERF debate in the context of contemporary transgender activism and feminist discourse in the US.

### **3.6. Concrete Changes about Trans-inclusion in the US**

As far as Beemyn (2014) covered the trans-inclusionary acts and policy changes in the US in their research

Federal legislation banning discrimination based on gender identity and expression has been stalled in Congress ... passing of a non-discrimination law that included gender identity/expression in seventeen states and the District of Columbia, by 2013 ... the growth in the number of cities and counties with transgender rights ordinances from three in the 1980s to more than 150 in 2012, so that covering of more than forty-five per cent of the US population by a transgender-inclusive non-discrimination law (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force 2012, 2013) ... Addition of more than 720 college and university campuses the “gender identity/expression” to their non-discrimination policies in the last seventeen years ... the beginning of implementation by many other transgender-supportive policies, such as providing gender-inclusive housing, bathrooms, and locker rooms; covering transgender-related counseling, hormone therapy, and gender-affirming surgeries under student health insurance; and enabling transitioning students to change their name and gender on campus records and documents without having legally done so (p. 38).

In addition to these changes, discussions regarding the embracement of intersectional feminism, boosting inclusivity in terms of gender identity and implementation of transgender rights laws, rejecting the idea of genitalia as a signifier of gender, multiplicity of transgender identities, and the use of ‘genderqueer’ as an umbrella term which facilitates the description of gender identities for gender-nonconforming individuals, rejection of traditional gendered language and, as a response, the emergence of gender-inclusive pronouns (the use of ze/sie instead of he/she and the use of they/them as singular pronouns), designation of day as Transgender Day of Remembrance as a response to anti-transgender acts, discrimination and violence are the alterations which can be regarded as keystones for the implementation of more trans-inclusive policies both in the US and international terms (Beemyn, 2014, pp. 38-43). Although all these adjustments are fostering trans-inclusivity in society and pushing trans-exclusionary arguments of people to a more segregated and isolated place, the debate has not ended yet.

### **3.7. ‘Bathroom Bills’ and The Rise of Trans-exclusionary Arguments**

The main reason behind the ignition of the TERF debate in the US context is the implementation of laws (and also proposals given for the practice of them in some other states) called ‘bathroom bills’ which is “prohibiting trans people’s use of public toilets that do not match the sex listed on their birth certificates. Questions of access, safety and inclusion in gender-separated toilets became an international talking point in 2016 when North Carolina in the United States passed the law known as the bathroom bill” (Jones & Slater, 2020, p. 838). Supporters of these laws have three main concerns regarding trans-inclusionary policies: security, privacy, and religious freedom (Pogofsky, 2018, pp. 734-735). The revoke of the Trump administration to the law in North Carolina also “rescinds the Obama administration’s position that established that non-discrimination laws require schools to allow transgender students to use bathrooms that match their gender identity” in a way matching with the ideals of intersectional feminism (Bagagli, Chaves, & Fontana, 2021, p. 7). The reason

why trans-exclusionary (feminist) arguments centred on bathroom bills is derived from the long-lasting history of the anti-trans idea. “The framing of women-only toilets as a fundamental concern for feminism has meant that the potential ramifications of changing toilet design are subsumed within broader principles of women’s safety” (Jones & Slater, 2020, p. 839). Hence, rather than concentrating on discrimination against trans people, feminist arguments and other trans-exclusionary actors prefer to focus on the invasion of bathrooms by trans intruders, which can be regarded as the use of the old discussions in a way leading the contemporary feminist discourse to a dead end.

While some scholars argue that the separation of toilets/bathrooms is not biologically necessary but somewhat socially mandated, many anti-trans feminist activists emphasise that such distinction is required; otherwise, it would violate women’s safety or rights in a broader sense (Westbrook & Schilt, 2015, p. 28). This emphasis of feminists on the necessity of such distinction further led them to be labelled as TERFs by trans-inclusion activists. The exclusion that they (trans-exclusionary radical feminists) supported for the protection of women’s rights is actually “based on the basic premise that the fight for rights of transgender people is antagonistic with the rights of cisgender women” (Bagagli, Chaves, & Fontana, 2021, p. 4). In addition to the naming of this feminist current, the use of the TERF acronym can be regarded as an umbrella term subsuming “an extensive set of transphobic practices that defend exclusion or effectively exclude transgender people from different spaces, which includes the exclusion of trans women from the women's bathroom” (Bagagli, Chaves, & Fontana, 2021, p. 4). Charlotte Jones and Jen Slater (2020) further explained the act of hostility towards transgender from some fractions of feminism (TERFs are one of them) in the last years, as “monopolized public discourse around the movement and the access to the toilet has thus become a symbol overloaded with significance” (cited in Bagagli, Chaves, & Fontana, 2021, p. 4). It would not be wrong to describe TERF arguments as the revision and reuse of the old feminist narratives in a false causal way. For instance, the perspective which sees trans women as sexual predators, invaders or intruders to women’s safe spaces is

based mainly on the trans-exclusionary discourse of Raymond and some other second-wave feminists. Representation of trans individuals as the wolves in sheep's clothing or the enemies trying to leak into authenticated women's spaces is very common in TERF narratives to describe trans-inclusion, which took its foundation from the 'gender fraud' conceptualisation by them (Westbrook & Schilt, 2015; Williams, 2020). Following these foundational bases, within the recent TERF rhetoric, trans people are positioned as "the opposite of cisgender: unnatural, monstrous, and dangerous to themselves and others" (Williams, 2020, p. 723). As I mentioned earlier, these arguments about trans people are not shocking since they are influenced by the ideas of the second-wave feminist discourses such as Mary Daly's or Germaine Greer's analogies which they drew between trans people and Frankenstein and horror movie serial killers. Thereby, the message recent trans-exclusionary actors are trying to convey is that; trans people are dangerous and inclusive policies regarding them should not be implemented. For example, Sheila Jeffreys (2014), who follows Raymond's narrative of feminism, stated that the peeing of a trans woman in a public restroom is a "violation of an authenticated woman's human rights" (cited in Williams, 2020, p. 723). Such an antipathy against trans people and a moral statement contribute to "a social climate wherein trans women are publicly beaten (Amusing, 2011) or sexually assaulted by cisgender women" while trying to use toilets/bathrooms instead of reconciling the debate for both sides (Williams, 2020, p. 723).

On the other hand, the unchanging relation between her past and present ideas proves that she still perceives trans women as men who try to invade authentic women areas, as she supported in the 1970s.

At that point, it is crucial to mention that in the US, according to empirical research data about trans people, "transgender people are much more likely to face violence in the restroom rather than to perpetrate such violence", which means that what is happening, in reality, is different than what trans-exclusion supporters emphasise (Westbrook & Schilt, 2015, p. 30). Moreover, to another

research, by Amira Hasenbush, Andrew R. Flores and Jody L. Herman (2018), in the US, “reported incidents of crime in public toilets are ‘exceedingly rare’ irrespective of trans-inclusion policies” (cited in Jones & Slater, 2020, p. 839). Although all these arguments proved the irrelevancy of the recent trans-exclusionary narratives, the perception of trans women as “dangerous predators” (Pearce, Gupta, & Moon, 2020), who are essentially male, or “Trojan horses” (Phipps, 2017) they would not come to an end (cited in Jones & Slater, 2020, p. 839).

Following this information, it won’t be wrong to describe the aim of some trans-exclusionary acts, in the scope of this research, as forming a “rival campaign (that) has led to a strategic binary positioning, placing feminism in conflict with trans justice” (Jones & Slater, 2020, p. 839). In other words, it would be defined as the “obfuscation of the trans-inclusive nature of the feminism” by trans-exclusionary actors to reach their ends (Williams, 2016, p. 256) which might be realised with the embracement of intersectional feminism. For instance, Sheila Jeffreys, in Andrea Dworkin Commemorative Conference in 2006, emphasised the unnecessary of trans medical care as a kind of follow-up to Raymond’s arguments which shaped the transition period for trans people negatively in the 1980s. While doing this, she credited Dworkin and her prominent book, *Woman Hating*, as her inspiration without any reference to her words about women as a political class instead of the perception of women as a sexed class (Williams, 2020, p. 719). In that sense, John Stoltenberg (2015), a radical feminist author and the long-term writing partner of radical feminist Andrea Dworkin, stated that

The notion that truly revolutionary radical feminism is trans-inclusive is a no brainer. I honestly do not understand how or why a strain of radical feminism has emerged that favors a biology-based/sex-essentialist theory of ‘sex caste’ over the theory of ‘sex class’ as set forth in the work of [Monique] Wittig, Andrea [Dworkin], and [Catharine] MacKinnon. Can radical feminism be ‘reclaimed’ so that its trans-inclusivity — which is inherent — is made apparent? I hope so (cited in Williams, 2016, p. 254).

In addition to Stoltenberg, another significant radical feminist activist Catharine Mackinnon (2015), remarked on women as sexed class arguments of trans-exclusionary actors as

Male dominant society has defined women as a discrete biological group forever. If this was going to produce liberation, we'd be free . . . To me, women is a political group. I never had much occasion to say that, or work with it, until the last few years when there has been a lot of discussion about whether transwomen are women . . . I always thought I don't care how someone becomes a woman or a man; it does not matter to me. It is just part of their specificity, their uniqueness, like everyone else's. Anybody who identifies as a woman, wants to be a woman, is going around being a woman, as far as I'm concerned, is a woman (cited in Williams, 2016, p. 257).

Thereby, the discussion started with the laws forbidding the trans-inclusion in public restrooms and limiting the passing of them in line with discrimination based on gender identity came to the point which bathrooms became the primary concern of trans-exclusionary arguments and sex essentialist discourse about women revisited as the separatist lesbian feminist narrative did in the past. In that sense, what trans-inclusive radical feminists, intersectional feminism supporters and all other activists suggest is abandoning “the narrow definition of womanhood and female oneness” (Serano, 2007) to consolidate normatively gendered ways of living and “transing of a space” which brings “the politics of trans diversity, inclusion and visibility . . . into wider public spaces as part of a commitment to trans [people's] safety” (Lohman & Pearce, 2020) instead of denigrating them with descriptions such as “teeny weeny . . . percentage of the population” (Greed, 2018), and accusing them of being “abusers of women's rights” (Kirkup, 2018) and “detrimental on women's fragile gains” (Ditum, 2018) (cited in Jones & Slater, 2020, pp. 839-846). At that point, the aim must be conceptualised as the end of the conflict between the sides by being more inclusive, considering the complex matrix of oppressions rather than continuously targeting each other. Also, some transformative and progressive reformations must be made to progress within feminism.

This is not the entire but extensive narration of how the TERF debate is formed throughout the long-term feminist arguments in history and took its contemporary form in the US context. All these discussions are also constructed as part of the basis of the debate in the UK and became crucially influential in its shaping, which I will discuss in the following section.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE USE OF THE TERF ACRONYM IN THE UK CONTEXT

When the origin of the term in terms of prevalent usage has been thought of, in the UK context, the announcement of Conservative Party's Prime Minister Theresa May about the reform plans considering Gender Recognition Act 2004 (GRA) in 2017 can be contemplated at first. Even though people can change their sex marker on their birth certificates with GRA, the whole process is "medicalised, bureaucratic, invasive and expensive" (Hines, 2013). People in the UK can change their sex marker in almost every related record by self-determination method except their birth certificates. However, since it has still legal recognition, it is crucial and has symbolic significance for most people and institutions. With the help of reform in GRA, people can also change their sex marker on their birth certificates by simply stating their intentions, or in other words, by self-determination way. This supposed progress pleased trans people, LGBTQIAA+ organisations and inclusiveness supporters.

#### **4.1. Gender Recognition Act (2004) Reform Proposal**

In 2018, UK Government consulted on reforming GRA, and it showed that if it occurs, it will have repercussions on the society. Most people and organisations challenge the central point is the self-determination process, which will be held through sex marker change in birth certificates (Pearce, Erikainen, & Vincent, 2020, p. 679). The reform review was finalised in 2020 and decided not to make any changes but rather drag down the cost of the Gender Recognition Certificate (cited in Mackay, 2021, p. 8). Yet, through time passing until its finalisation, gender wars kind of discussions have already started, and opposite poles formed about the issue which either you can choose the with-us or against-us side of the story but not the mid position as a targeting policy. The primary reason for

revising the consultation is to cope with the unnecessary bureaucracy of medical transition procedures and reform the gender self-identification process embedded in GRA 2004. In a more detailed way, there were three major points which the reform aimed to change, which are the embracement of self-declaration understanding of gender identity without needing medical examination, also reducing the transition age to 16/17 years old, again, the adoption of the gender identity principle for the use of single-sex spaces such as toilets, changing rooms, shelters, and finally the change of the protected characteristic of Equality Act 2010<sup>1</sup> as gender identity instead of gender reassignment (Brunskell-Evans, 2020, pp 88-89). Although LGBTQIAA++ groups and their allies welcomed the revision decision, anti-reform sympathiser groups, actors, and organisations have also started to be organised. Some points must be considered carefully to understand the basis of the repercussions and the stances and the arguments of the actors within the trans-inclusion and TERF debate in terms of the UK.

#### **4.2. Protests of Women Organisations to the Reformation of GRA 2004**

Firstly, during this period, throughout the country, prominent lobby groups or organisations, including A Woman's Place UK (WPUK), Fair Play For Women (FPFW), Mayday4Women, We Need To Talk, and the Lesbian Rights Alliance held conferences and conventions which are highly responsible for the spread of trans-exclusionary feminist movement all through the world and internet realm (Pearce et al., 2020, p. 679). Although most of them indicate that they are not against trans people and are at pains to show their support for them, their support

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<sup>1</sup> From Equality and Human Rights Commission Report (2021), "The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. It conditions that a person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is: 'proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex'. In 2016, a Women and Equalities Committee report made over 30 recommendations calling for government action to ensure full equality for trans people. One of the report's recommendations was that the use of the terms 'gender reassignment and 'transsexual' in the Equality Act 2010 are outdated and misleading. The preferred umbrella term is trans or gender identity." adapted from <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/gender-reassignment-discrimination#what>.

is just ended when there occurs a clash between the interests of trans people and women and children. For instance, FPFW (2020) shows its support for trans people by indicating it in one of its public statements but making a point of opposition to

all forms of bigotry and discrimination. Trans rights do not exist in isolation and they must not come at the expense of another extremely vulnerable and disadvantaged group: women and girls. Trans rights are human rights, but they are not female rights. (cited in McLean, 2021, p. 475)

As another example of the opposition from organisations, Woman's Place UK made a statement (2020) on GRA,

We believe that a change to self-identification is likely to threaten the rights of women and girls, as well as those with other protected characteristics and that the government must consider carefully the impact of these changes before attempting to bring them into law. (cited in Hines, 2013, p. 32)

WPUK is not the only organisation which expresses its opposition to the reform of the act, but it might be the one which achieves great public reach (Brunskell-Evans, 2020, p. 98). The point that can be understood from their statements is that the rights of trans people or any other evaporate when women's and children's rights are on the table since the planned reform of GRA was in line with the principle of trans-inclusion; it would be the violator of the women's and children's rights and detrimental for them. Again, the whole issue turns into a targeting fight between the poles which both of them try so hard to get the edge over (McLean, 2021, p. 475). Such organisations can be associated with the term trans-exclusion due to their view of the superiority of the women's and children's rights juxtaposed with trans rights rather than equal human rights understanding, which leads to their naming as TERFs. (Yet, at that point, it should not be forgotten that the use of the term TERF as a slur is different from its use as a description to differentiate its supporters from the trans-inclusive others.)

On that point, I want to mention another organisation which can be regarded as one of the actors in the TERF debates in the UK, even though its physical existence or actions is not located in the UK. Since many hot topics are ignited on social media in today's world and expand their audience internationally, the TERF debate in the UK does not remain limited to the actors inside its borders. Many trans-exclusionary feminist organisations in the UK have high media usage and interaction with the outside world; consequently, one US Christian right-wing organisation (Hands Across the Aisle) has become influential in their anti-trans politics. It is essential to indicate at that point that such kind of influence is not very common among trans-exclusionary actors in the UK, yet, due to its participation in the debate by making statements and its examination by many scholars (Mclean, 2021; Mackay, 2021; Hines, 2020), I do not want to go by without mentioning it. Its declaration (2020) about the topic was in a way supporting the anti-trans inclusion movement amidst provoking its followers against them as

For the first time, women from across the political spectrum have come together to challenge the notion that gender is the same as sex. We are radical feminists, lesbians, Christians and conservatives that are tabling our ideological differences to stand in solidarity against gender identity legislation, which we have come to recognise as the erasure of our own hard-won civil rights. As the Hands Across the Aisle Coalition, we are committed to working together, rising above our differences, and leveraging our collective resources to oppose gender identity ideology (cited in Hines, 2020, p. 33).

“The irony of feminist groups aligning themselves with the US Christian right who have activated so rigorously against women's reproductive rights is clearly astounding”, Hines (2020) added to her arguments (p. 33). Although their anti-feminist nature must prevent them from being named TERFs, the usage in this context indicates slur conceptualisation. Yet, it is highly essential to suggest at that point that such a polarisation within feminism not only becomes an obstacle in front to the continuation of feminist discourse but also leads to the feminist actors from both sides of the debate being harmed chiefly, which means there won't be a winner of this debate, the only winner would probably be the anti-gender, authoritarian tendencies. The current situation about the relationship

between international and national actors in the ongoing TERF debate in the UK looks like they go halfway against a common 'so-called' enemy (trans) and vice versa for the enemy position of transmisogyny and its actors in their relation to trans-inclusive activists. Again, this determination and targeting of common enemy understanding affirm the cancelling and denigrating nature of the debate and feminist discourse. Hostility or hate that they embrace for each other has become an issue (beyond criticising counterparts online as being TERF or detrimental to women's rights, which I will further explain below); in such an environment, the progress will be tainted in terms of the visibility and recognition of trans identity and embracement of more inclusive feminist theories.

After focusing on a US organisation generally touched upon in the academic literature discussing the ongoing TERF debates and its emergence, I go back to the ones on the national level. Another point organisations like WPUK and FPFW and their supporters are challenging is that they not only oppose gender self-determination but also defend the idea that sex and gender must be two conceptualisations that are kept distinct from each other. For them, even if; gender can be changed by stating self-intent, sex is inflexible and belongs to material reality. Yet, by doing this, they ignore the deep-rooted feminist literature, which maintains the idea that sex and gender are co-constructed. "This kind of argument is a contemporary manifestation of older sex/gender essentialist discourses: trans women have long been positioned as a threat to cis women's safety, especially in Western societies, because trans women's bodies have been discursively associated with dangerous male sexuality and potential sexual predation" (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014 as cited in Pearce et al., 2020, p. 680). This leads us to the second point that must be scrutinised to understand the use of the TERF naming for such organisations and anti-trans inclusion movement allies in the UK context. The reason those feminist organisations and their supporters are against self-determination is that they see it as dangerous for cis women and as the violator of women-only spaces by 'men.' They think that men are the perpetrators of mental and physical violence, abuse, and so on and

women-only areas must only belong to cis women to forestall such kind of disasters. It can be clearly understood that none of those organisations and their supporters sees trans women as ‘women’, which is again the sameness of argument with the US context, which viciously circulates without going further. “Trans people and allies often describe proponents of this approach as ‘TERFs’ because they tend to support trans women’s/girls’ exclusion from spaces such as women’s toilets, changing rooms, rape crisis centres, shelters, and feminist groups” (Pearce et al., 2020, p. 680). For them, women-only spaces are safe zones for cis women against sexual violence, abuse, or other gender-based crimes. This view sees trans women as a ‘threat’ to ‘cis women’s safety’ due to their association with male sexuality and sexual depredation.

Yet, this kind of understanding, in a way touching upon a different point, indicates another type of fallacy about ideal cis women who are seen as vulnerable and need to be protected and preserved; hence, some spaces like bathrooms, changing rooms, prisons, toilets, and so on must be just for them. From a broader protectionist point of view, safety evokes the notion of white female vulnerability, which was one of the reasons that the term intersectionality was coined; hence, trans women are seen as its enemies. This argument is also explained in a detailed way by Laurel Westbrook and Kristen Schilt (2014) in their “Doing Gender, Determining Gender: Transgender People, Gender Panics, and the Maintenance of the Sex/Gender/Sexuality System” named article as,

... ‘safety’ works to naturalize gender difference and to maintain unequal gender relations. ... This construction produces “woman” as a “vulnerable subjecthood”. Conversely, men, or more specifically, penises, are imagined as sources of constant threat to women... Women-only spaces, then, can be framed as andro- phobic and, as a result, heterophobic, due to the assumed inability of women to protect themselves from men ... (p. 680)

By thinking and acting following this idea, those people are not only excluding trans people from others, but they are also playing into misogynistic others’ hands, such as anti-feminist, authoritarian, anti-gender actors, to label women as ‘weaker sex’ and fragile who need to be protected from men. Many UK feminist

organisations have started distinguishing between sex and gender in recent years. As I mentioned above, for them, sex is strictly related to reproductive organs, genitals, hormones, and chromosomes, while gender is about identity. Hence, gender can be connoted with fluidity while sex is rigid and defined. “Though gender may be subject to change, sex is fixed: a trans woman may ‘identify as’ a woman, but she will never be a woman since sex-as-natural-biology is the defining component of womanhood” (Hines, 2013, p. 34). Behind this argument, the idea of the superficiality of gender underlies due to its constructed nature, which originates in Janice Raymond’s (1979) book “The Transsexual Empire.” (I elaborated on her arguments about trans people and their impacts on contemporary trans-exclusion and TERF debates in more detail in the U.S.A. section). For her, trans women are men and vice versa since the state of transgenderism is unchanging on masculine or feminine well-being (p. 170). She regards trans women as a vessel for domination of cis women by being one of them and surpassing their biological characteristics and creative capacities (p. 173).

Based on her arguments, the central view of the recent anti-trans movement in the UK forms as trans women are not really women. Jen Slater and Charlotte Jones (2020) and also Cole Parke (2016) explain their views about authentic womanhood and opposition arguments laying under the anti-trans inclusive acts as “real womanhood is exclusively determined on a natal, biological level. They oppose identity or gender-based rights, instead of arguing that women are oppressed as a biological class and deserve rights based on binary and essentialist understandings of male/female sex categories” (cited in McLean, 2021, p. 475). From this perspective, even if a trans woman were to undergo medical procedures, she cannot be a real woman since she does not have XX chromosomes in any way (McLean, 2021, p. 475).

### **4.3. The Role of Genitalia in the TERF Debate**

In that sense, it is essential to mention the roles of genitals, hormones and chromosomes for the trans-exclusionary stance to shape its points and principles. As Laurel Westbrook (2014) states in the article “Doing Gender, Determining Gender: Transgender People, Gender Panics, and the Maintenance of the Sex/Gender/Sexuality System”, for some trans-exclusionary actors espouse biology-based gender ideology,

gender is determined at birth by doctors on the visible recognition of genitalia. However, such gender categorization is assumed by many to be the result of other, less visible, biological forces, namely, chromosomes and hormones. While genitalia and hormones can be modified, chromosomes are static meaning, on some level, XY and XX could be the best criteria for maintaining a binary gender system (p. 44).

Although it is not the standard hinge among TERFs to construct their point of view on unchanging characteristics of chromosomes and hormones, some of them support the idea that even if trans people make changes in their sexual organs or more inclusive terms, they undergo some medical transition procedures like gender affirmation surgery, they cannot change who they are since it is written on their genetic code or DNA. However, it is not a common argument among trans-exclusion supporters since Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKenna (1978) state, “in everyday interactions; chromosomes are poor criteria for gender attribution because they are not visible” (cited in Westbrook, 2014, p. 44). On the other hand, genitalia is the primary determiner of gender and stands at the central point of their concerns. To further explain the issue and understand the stance of the current trans-exclusive acts on this point, I am going to give examples from recent occurrences within the UK context. As far as I indicated earlier, it is impossible to mention all occasions within the context one by one; I will explain some prominent examples that gained more visibility on social media and scholars like Sally Hines, who is currently a Professor of Sociology and Gender Identities at the University of Leeds in the UK.

Before scanning and examining her article “The feminist frontier: on trans and feminism” (2019) about the recent TERF debates reigning within gender-related

topics within the UK, there is another point I want to explain. Since TERF debates and the use of the term are newer when compared to the whole trans-exclusion literature (since the word “TERF” was first used in a 2008 blog post, as I explained earlier), written academic sources, arguments and research are limited in number. Almost all disputes occur on social media tools like Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Reddit, or Myspace or through the websites of opposing sides, apart from the actions or protests realised in parties’ gatherings. In that regard, it is important to skim the debates which are going on these platforms in the form of content analysis or, in my case, examine both the first one and the written literature which has already scanned them to understand the aspects and nature of TERF debates and the arguments of its actors. This case is further explained by Hines (2019)

since [TERF] debate frequently arose as a result of commentary from high profile feminist writers or journalists in both on and off-line media, meaning that debate in on and off-line spaces, or social and traditional media, was not so clearly delineated (p. 149).

Following this explanation, I will exemplify the views of trans-exclusionary actors and trans allies about the genitalia and women-only spaces arguments with more recent and nowadays incidences, in addition to the ones I discussed above. To show how trans-exclusionary campaigns in the UK construct their protests around having male genitalia means trans women are not women and cannot use women-only spaces, I want to refer to an occurrence realised on Twitter in 2014. Some anti-trans inclusion argument supporters have started using the hashtag #NoUnexpectedPenises for the first time in ongoing debates about the place of trans women in these spaces.

UK journalist and high-profile feminist activist Sarah Ditung posted of the: ‘necessity of excluding penised individuals from some women-only spaces’ (3 June 2014). In reply, another UK feminist with a strong media profile tweeted: ‘@Sarah Ditung I love you and agree with you. It is my right NOT to have penises around me if I choose #NoUnexpectedPenises (cited in Hines, 2019, p. 151).

The hashtag was used more and more over the following days by people to reinforce her statement. As an impact, more and more women have started to share their experiences or memories of sexual violence, harassment or assault in public places like swimming pools, parks, and toilets which makes people think as there is a relation between the presence of trans people in public places and having sexually abused. By going further, Alison Phipps (2016), a gender studies scholar and feminist theorist at Newcastle University in the UK, connoted the presence of trans women in women segregated spaces with rape.

The penis is the key object here, 'stuck' to trans women through an invasive and violent obsession with their surgical status, but also imagined as a separate entity which is itself responsible for sexual violence rather than being merely someone's genital organ (cited in Hines, 2019, p. 151).

All of them lead to great rage and hostility towards trans people in the UK society, especially among women. Hence, the trans-exclusionary point of view has started to increase its followers. Yet, it should not be forgotten that cyber-attacks and targeting are the ways which are used by both sides to eliminate each other. Hence, it turned the nature of the debate into a toxic and problematic issue which made nothing positive for the future or improvement of feminist theory. It can be said that, in a way, the trans-exclusionary side constructs one of their main opposing points around having male genitalia rather than less visible but more determinant factors such as chromosomes and DNA. Furthermore, by giving such extreme statements about the inclusion of trans people in same-sex segregated spaces, especially on social media platforms which reach an infinite number of people in today's world, those anti-trans inclusion arguments lead to the formation of a more hostile attitude towards trans people in the society and more polarised feminist theory.

#### **4.4. 'Gender Fraud' Argument of Trans-exclusionary Side of the Debate**

Another point, and example, that Hines stated in both of her articles (2019, 2020) to reflect the trans-exclusionary side's point of view toward trans people is the

‘gender fraud’ or ‘gender deception’ argument, which is also evident in the US discussions, and Dyke March London 2014 event as its related example. The idea is not that separate from the ones I have already mentioned. Yet, it is crucial to note it apart since it is a kind of conceptualisation used for these specific debates. In Dyke March London 2014 event, which is held yearly worldwide to increase lesbian visibility, as Hines (2019) indicated, some anti-trans activists protested the planned speaker concerning the argument that a person with a penis can neither be a woman nor a lesbian. They handed out some leaflets which they called out to whom they described as the ‘real’ women or lesbians. They stated in the text,

By inviting a misogynist, anti-feminist, lesbian-hating man to speak for us, Dyke March London is contributing to lesbian invisibility, the taking over by men of lesbian spaces, creating a March hostile to lesbians, enforcing the idea that penis is female and that lesbians should accept it, demonising women who stand up to it (cited in Hines, 2019, p. 150).

The nature of these arguments is really similar to the ones between feminists and other women in the US in the 1970s. The influence of the protests and the speech piled on day by day on social media. People started to criticise Dyke March London organisation for its speaker choice as a male with a penis. This argument is amidst the trans-exclusion based on the genitalia, as far as I have indicated. Yet, there is another opposition that anti-trans actors espouse in those incidences. Their main idea here, rather than having male genitalia, they accuse trans individuals of concealing their gender from others hence labelling them as frauds. This deception argument is prevalent in feminist criticism of transgender people, and it has a long-run history. Besides, in the UK, some people were convicted due to gender fraud crimes, and in the cases, they were accused of concealing their gender from their partners (Hines, 2019, p. 150). Hines (2020) also argued that those arguments increase the rage against lesbian trans individuals since feminist (lesbian) organisations gathered with a vast number of followers publicly, as they did in London Pride 2018, to show their opposition to the trans-inclusion movement by shouting slogans about their claims for the removal of T (trans) and the following part from LGBTQIAA+ acronym in the

front row of the cortege. It turns into an ordinary scene rather than a marginalised opposition to the trans-inclusion movement, both in the UK and international terms (p. 33). Moreover, since the impact of those debates reached a massive number of people, bringing them together with extreme fanaticism and partisanship, it has started to be dangerous as it was once for both sides. The hostile attitude towards trans people is mentioned in the book of Juliette Jacques (2016), who is a writer and well-known for her book 'TRANS: A MEMOIR' in which she tells her transition story as a woman, which she describes as "I saw that for many people around the world expressing themselves as they wished meant risking death" (cited in Hines, 2019, p. 151). In addition, the current situation between the anti-trans inclusion idea supporters and the trans allies in the UK is described as "real battles with real casualties" by Finn Mackay (2021, p. viii).

#### **4.5. 'Gender-critical' Emphasis of Trans-exclusionary Feminists instead of The Use of TERF Term**

Another point must be mentioned while explaining the TERF debates scene in the UK within feminist discourse. While TERF is a naming first used by Smythe on a blog post, it has started to be used to define anti-trans feminists. However, it is not espouser labelling by the anti-trans side of the arguments. Instead, they prefer to call themselves gender-critical to explain further and expand their standpoint. "It is a term and a self-descriptor that activists will use for themselves; it is not a term put onto them, unlike the widely popular label, TERF", Mackay (2021) explained (p. 89). Although it is not an expression exclusive to anti-trans activists in the UK, I decided to discuss its aspects in the UK part due to its everyday use right after the protests against the government's reform proposal about GRA 2004 and its publicly held consultation in 2018. What does it mean to be gender critical? Are anti-trans actors the only ones who are being critical of gender? In a more detailed definition, Mackay (2021) clarifies gender-critical as a term used by "those who are critical of what they call gender ideology or trans ideology and who are, in the main, opposed to

liberalising laws around sex and gender recognition and opposed to the inclusion of trans women in many women's spaces" (p. 45). For instance, one of the leading actors in the recent TERF debates is J. K. Rowling due to her trans-exclusionary arguments insists on her gender-critical stance while defending her ideas. She is so popular on national and international terms owing to her novels. Hence, due to this popularity, her statements about the debate became highly visible in mainstream media, increasing people's curiosity about the topic, specifically the content of the gender-critical stance.

Yet, what are the aspects of being gender critical or why do anti-trans feminists prefer to be named as gender critical rather than being TERF? The negative perception of this labelling shapes the main argument of gender-critical feminists in that regard. Rather than being descriptive, gender-critical activists see the TERF denomination as a slur. The acronym TERF is generally regarded as misogynistic to tag anti-trans feminists. Pearce, Erikainen, and Vincent (2020) explained the details of this perception as

Certainly, TERF (like 'cis') is often used in angry commentaries online by both cis and trans feminists, either as an accusation (e.g. 'you're a TERF') or an insult (e.g. 'fuck off TERF'). Yet, it is important to understand and account for the power dynamic at play here. In examples such as, members of a marginalised group and their allies seek to identify, and express anger or frustration at, a harmful ideology that is promoted primarily by and in the interests of those who are systemically privileged as cis (men as well as women) (p. 683).

Thereby, although the trans-inclusive arguments claim that the use of the acronym does not function as a slur, it works as a tool for targeting policy which is inherent to the nature of this vicious debate. Yet, initially, it is thought for the need of a group and its allies (trans-inclusive individuals) to describe their opponents (anti-trans actors) with a chosen ideology (In the end, it turns into a category with universalising claims which I will discuss later.). It is not utilised with the desire for their subordination; however, its recent use contains a sense of denigration for the opponents. In recent years, the acronym has started to be used for misogynistic purposes; even in some cases, it is a tag to represent

violence or negative actions as legitimate. As Pearce, Erikainen, and Vincent (2020) further argued, the use of the term has started to be estranged from its original meaning and to be related to transphobia or transphobic individuals from a general perspective.

Consequently, at that point, it is essential to mention that this kind of use is not accepted and has criticisms from trans-supporting actors, as well. For instance, writer Beth Desmond, a trans woman and LGBTQIAA++ activist, criticised a viral video that includes images from a game in which a man is stabbing a woman successively labelled as a TERF. She stated that “trans women have nothing to gain from a man delighting in inflicting violence against women” (cited in Pearce, Erikainen, & Vincent, 2020, p. 684). Again, at that point, the harmful impact of this static debate appears once and for all. The ones who are not even closely related to feminist ideology or its premises are using this polarised environment for their hostile interests and actions. This example, again, shows that contemporary feminism should solve its inferior conflicts as soon as possible, converting itself into a more inclusive and conciliatory way for the best of its future.

After all these explanations, the idea of what it means to be gender-critical is still vague. Gender-critical means, as far as Kathleen Stock (2019) described (She is a philosophy professor at the University of Sussex and defines herself as a gender-critical)

arguing that there are problems, either conceptually or practically or both, with the legal and social prioritisation of the notion of gender identity over categories such as sex ... [tend] to be critical of gender, understood as distinct sets of social stereotypes – ‘femininity’; ‘masculinity’ – attached to the sexes, arguing that these are contingent, harmful, and should not be perpetuated (cited in Mackay, 2021, p. 94)

or for Maya Forstater<sup>2</sup>, the gender-critical stance accepts the immutability of sex and the existence of two biological sexes in humankind. In line with these

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<sup>2</sup> She is one of the central and prominent figures of the recent TERF debates in the UK. Due to her tweets which were in line with trans-exclusionary arguments and criticisms of the planned

explanations, although there are intersecting points between second-wave feminist ideology and gender-critical position, they are differentiated at the end of their perception of gender identity. Gender identity is, for gender-critical, dangerous. From the gender-critical perspective, masculinities and femininities are not just social constructs but also ways of oppression which prevent them from being identities. Nobody can change their biological sex by any means; hence gender-critical activists are against the ‘sex assigned at birth’ argument. For them, womanhood is “defined by birth sex and by the membership of the female sex class from birth.” Consequently, “sex class at birth is sex class forever” (Mackay, 2021, p. 96). For instance, Sheila Jeffreys (2014), described this perception of gender-critical as

it is on the basis of biological sex that women are subordinated. Female foetuses, for instance, are aborted in some countries and communities, not because they have a gender but because of their sex, whereas gender is a social construction which can only be created after birth (cited in Mackay, 2021, 98).

Thus, it can be said that their main argument is the superficiality of gender and the necessity of the protection of women’s sex-based rights by taking their roots from separatists in the US like Jeffreys.

Again, it is crucial to open a parenthesis regarding the abovementioned issue. Many gender-critical campaigners are not against the pursuit of transgender identities in the UK. It might be simplified or misinterpreted within the debate due to either misogynistic purposes or lack of awareness. Thereby, in that point, it is vital to express that there is no intrinsic disagreement between the trans and anti-trans sides of the debate. The only need might be a different perspective for

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reform of GRA 2004, her company did not renew her contract in March 2019. She tweeted about the incident on Twitter and was supported by the author J. K. Rowling, who was also criticised for being an anti-trans feminist. She applied to the employment tribunal to object to the action of her company but lost the case. Yet, in 2021, she brought the decision to the High Court, and she won. She describes herself and her beliefs as being gender-critical. She has tweets like “sex is immutable and not to be conflated with gender identity” or explanations like “Being a woman is a material reality. It is not a costume or a feeling. Institutions that pretend sex doesn't matter become hostile places for women, in particular.” adapted from <https://news.sky.com/story/maya-forstater-woman-who-lost-job-over-transgender-views-wins-appeal-against-employment-tribunal-12329249>.

settlement. The point they take a contrary position is “individuals identifying as a sex other than that which they were labelled at birth” (Mackay, 2021, p. 98).

Since the issue is having another sex rather than the one assigned at birth, gender-critical activists are criticised for, most importantly, running “against (and ignore) decades of feminist theorising on the ontological and epistemic status of womanhood and femaleness” (Pearce, Erikainen, & Vincent, 2020, p. 687). In line with this argument, Hines (2020) argued that

the positioning of sex as the source of oppression presumes a universal characteristic of womanhood in which all cis women are disadvantaged in the same way. Work by feminists of colour, disabled, lesbian and bisexual, working-class and trans feminists has provided rich analysis of the intersecting facets of women’s oppression, pointing to the ways in which minority women are discounted for within dominant feminist frameworks that offer a narrow definition of what a woman – and thus a feminist subject – is (white, able-bodied, heterosexual, middle class and cisgender) (p. 34).

Which is more or less responsive to Jeffreys’ gender-critical perception. In addition, critiquing gender is not a way of thought exclusive to the gender-critical position because, for many years, all components of feminism, like trans actors, have also tried to disassemble the whole idea of gender. For example, one of the well-known figures of trans-inclusive policy within feminism, Sandy Stone (2006), indicated that the “binary character of gender differentiation should be examined with deepest suspicion” by all (cited in Mackay, 2021, p. 113). Therefore, criticising gender is not a characteristic peculiar to the gender-critical stance due to these reasons.

This is not an occurrence that can only be described as the reality of the UK or the USA contexts but is also valid for the whole world. Yet, since I will examine the conditions of this trans-exclusionary feminist movement in UK and US cases among Western societies due to their more rooted and influential nature and other physical reasons, which I have already stated, I will go on with the impacts of all these arguments in Turkey. I will also answer how the TERF issue is discussed within Turkish society, following the discussions in the West.

Accordingly, I will return to the intersectionality discussions thoroughly for these three different but highly related contexts after examining the scene in Turkey. Although it is impossible to note all contexts one by one, it won't be wrong to describe this situation as an expanded "trans-exclusionary political climate with international dimensions" (Pearce et al., 2020, p. 680).

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THE HISTORICITY AND CONTEXT OF THE TERF DEBATE IN TURKEY IN LINE WITH THE DEBATES IN THE US AND THE UK**

In line with the debates in the US and UK, Turkey has also been affected by the TERF debate. Although there are similarities between the contexts, the main points argued and the incidences focused on are slightly different. Yet, before discussing the contemporary context in terms of the TERF debate in Turkey, with its aspects and the arguments of both sides, I will give brief information about the dominant feminist discourse within the Turkish context, which created a conducive environment for the proliferation of the TERF debate in Turkey.

#### **5.1. The historicity of Feminist Discourse and Trans Activism in Turkey**

“The women movement in Turkey did not start in the 1980s. Although we discovered this in the 1980s, the history of the women movement in Turkey is quite old; it goes back more than a century; it started in the last period of the Ottoman Empire” (Tekeli, 2004, para. 4). Yet, with the drastic rise in women’s liberation movements and human and LGBTQIAA+ rights protests around the world scene in those years, their interrelated bound especially brought significant changes regarding them in the very eyes of the people.

Nevertheless, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, in such an environment in which the Progressivists and the Islamists had contrasting opinions about the place and role of women in society, women started to raise their voices to be heard in the newspapers and journals of the time (Sirman, 1989, p. 5). Women had begun to question and criticise polygamy, which “was an Arab custom that had been adopted in the course of the centuries and that there was nothing in Islam that prevented a reform of the family” (Sirman, 1989, p. 5). More insistent voices

started to be raised following the time of the institution of the Second Constitutional Period between 1908 and 1919 with the impact of the Young Turk Revolution. After the overthrow of Abdulhamit and his absolutist rule, women gathered around new organisations, and new journals began to be written in a relatively free environment. “In spite of the fact that many of the articles in these journals addressed women primarily as wives and mothers and urged them to adapt themselves to the needs of home and country, some women writers appear to be very critical of men's role in the subordination of women” (Sirman, 1989, p. 7). For instance, Naciye who was writing in *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women’s World) in 1913, questioned the realness of men’s freedom wish for women in one of her articles by saying “in reality, men are nothing but little dictators” (Sirman, 1989, p. 7). Yet, those views were not shared among all women. They were generally the views of educated, middle-class women affiliated with the feminist ideals and appeals in the U.S.A. and Britain.

The second decade of the twentieth century was described as a period when the search for a national bourgeoisie intensified and when women were being incorporated into public life according to their social class. Thus, various vocational schools and secondary schools, as well as a Women's University, were established to train well-to-do urban women as school teachers and nurses (Sirman, 1989, p. 8).

The women in this period were recruited for work in textile, health and teaching areas. Hence, the view saw them as the primary supervisors of home and health spheres had not significantly changed. Although some of them raised their voices to object to the supremacy of male rule in the Ottoman family structure, that was not enough to change the characteristics of women as wives and mothers.

In the early Republican Period of Turkey, “women occupied the public space” (Sirman, 1989, p. 9). Contrary to the educational demands of women who were in wives’ and mothers’ roles in the Ottoman period, women in this term added their agenda to the part of educating the nation with patriotic instincts.

Organised women, who actively participated in the War of Independence, wanted to establish the first political party under the name “Women's People's Party” after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. However, they were permitted to form an association. The newly established Republic, which soon turned into a single-party regime, gave women their civil rights, which they had been defending for years, in 1926; and also recognised their political rights in 1930 and 1934, yet it suppressed the women's movement, among other non-governmental organisations. In 1935, the Turkish Women's Union dissolved itself after gaining the right to vote and the entry of the first female member of parliament into the Turkish Grand National Assembly (Tekeli, 2004, para. 6).

Deniz Kandiyoti (1987) described the dominant female image in those years as “the comrade-woman, and as the asexual sisters-in-arms” whose honour and dignity remained without any change due to her active role in the improvement and liberation of the Turkish nation (cited in Sirman, 1989, p. 12). Populism was one of the main ideological conceptualisations of those years. “This populism also included feminism, or in a literal translation of the Turkish word, “womanism” (kadıncılık). The official ideology proclaimed the equality of Turkish men and women” (Sirman, 1989, pp. 13-14). This state-proclaimed gender equality produced many educated women in Turkey who thought that the aims of the women’s movement had already been attained due to Kemalism.

Following these years, between 1935 and 1975, it is almost impossible to show a concrete example of a significant women’s movement action.

Women are encouraged to work in charitable organisations, and the official rhetoric that ‘Owing to Atatürk, Turkish women have outstripped Western women’ eventually turns women into the silent majority ... which only the tiny minority of women could get college and occupational education, which formed the display of Turkish Republic (Tekeli, 2004, para. 7).

The Progressive Women’s Association, established in 1975, had problematised and dealt with Turkish women's inferior and oppressed position within the society. Yet, the motive that drove them was the leftist aims regarding class struggle rather than the aims of the feminist and women’s liberation movement.

After the 1980s military coup d'état, in terms of the women's rights and liberation movement (the new women's movement, or the second wave of the feminist movement), lately following their Western counterparts, "A handful of young, urban, middle-class, well-educated, and mostly professional feminist women began to question women's status in Turkey... In their analysis, they used concepts such as patriarchal domination, sexism, gender inequality, and sexual discrimination" (Tekeli, 1992, p. 140).

The 'conscious-raising' groups were formed by young women who criticise the leftist movements from a women's point of view, the ones who had completed their education abroad and returned to the west, and also the academic women who resigned from university due to the YÖK law, have developed a brand-new analysis that is critical of the male-dominated society and the state. As it was very clearly expressed in the 'Feminist Manifesto' they published in 1989, they launched an all-out struggle against the domination of men - the patriarchal order – 'over women's bodies, identity and labour' (Tekeli, 2004, para. 8).

Hence, this late leap in the women's liberation movement and perception of the woman question as a part of the political agenda in Turkey is generally described due to the incredible domination of left-wing ideologies in anti-state circles (Sirman, 1989, p. 16). Even if it was a late bloomer compared to the Western world, the women's movement in Turkey did not stray from the principles of its precursor because the Turkish intellectuals who escaped to the US or other European countries from the oppression of the Turkish military, joined the anti-militarist, environmentalist or feminist spheres in the West who later, will share and transfer these experiences through knowledge which led to the blooming of new social movements, and queer movement as one of them, in the Turkish scene (Çetin, 2015, para. 5). With the sprout of these different movements on the national stage, two significant incidences occurred in Turkey regarding women and trans movements. The first one was the March of Women against The Battering in 1987. The latter was the hunger strikes of trans sex workers in Gezi Park in 1987 against police brutality and violence under custody, especially in the Beyoğlu region. Both incidences are so important, especially the action of trans individuals in 1987, which was described by many as the first one that led to the start of the LGBTQIAA++ movement in Turkey (Şakir, 2021; Çetin,

2015). After the incident, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the increase in terms of LGBTQIAA++ visibility and recognition and the gain of momentum in terms of the movement were realised. “When it emerged in the 1990s, the LGBTQIAA+ movement in Turkey bore leftist and anarchist characteristics and drew support from feminists, anarchists and ecologists” (Birdal, 2014, p. 15), which lent to colour the influence and support of Turkish intellectuals as abovementioned. Thereby, LGBTQIAA++ and trans activists have started to engage in social and political life by actively participating in newly emerged LGBTQIAA++ organisations such as EHP LGBTT, Lambdaistanbul, VolTrans and TransMen Initiative (Ozlen, 2020, p. 372). Also, they were active by joining the frameworks of magazines like Amargi, where they could transfer their arguments to people in written and published work collectively with feminists to share their different perceptions and strategies.

At that point, although the LGBTQIAA+ movement and trans activism distinctively started to diverge from the feminist movement in terms of their ideas, demands, organisations and arguments, they met at the common point when the issues were “femicides, trans murders and/or suicides, domestic violence, harassment cases, and ongoing litigations on transitioning cases” (Ozlen, 2020, p. 372). Furthermore, the ‘coming together’ argument about feminism and trans activism explained by Aslı Zengin (2016) as “the framework of ‘gender killings’ allows us to think more capaciously about our shared experience as killable cis women and trans people” (cited in Ozlen, 2020, p. 372).

Yet, in the late 2000s, with the rise of the conservative society and the negative influence of JDP on its supporters regarding women’s and LGBTQIAA+ issues, both movements started to be marginalised and pushed into outsider positions. In addition, by taking their exclusive language a step further, some organisations “opposing gender equality, request that LGBT+ NGOs be classified as ‘terrorist organisations due to their dissemination of ‘indecent’ and ‘homosexuality’” (Ozlen, 2020, p. 373).

These kinds of incidences were the representations of hostility and exclusion towards the both LGBTQIAA+ activism and the feminist movement in Turkey; however, circumstances such as “Gezi protests of May/June of 2013 reveal the possibility of an LGBT+ politics, which goes beyond the Gay International’s rights-based activism and liberal identity politics” (Birdal, 2014, p. 6).

After describing the reigning scene in terms of feminist and LGBTQIAA+ (also trans) activism in Turkey, now, I can elaborate on how the TERF term is conceptualised in the national context.

## **5.2. The Use of Term TERF within the Context of Turkey and Its Connotations**

Some significant occurrences and arguments must be considered based on the use of the term TERF in the Turkish feminist context. Although the term’s use did not start directly after its coining in the western world, it also was not a late bloomer in the Turkish feminist scene. Primarily, in 2011, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of march parade commemorating International Women’s Day, a trans individual was “asked to ‘leave the parade’ ‘because men are not allowed in this space’” (cited in Ozlen, 2020, p. 373) which ignited the debate in Turkey while there was an ongoing conflict between two sides as trans activists and cis feminists. The argumentation of the trans activists was formed around the issue of ignorance of their trans identity by feminists. Besides, they also emphasised the cruciality of recognition based on their identity with their banners and slogans saying, ‘trans people exist’ in events or gatherings like the Feminist Night Walk on the 8<sup>th</sup> of march. Following the incident in the parade, discussions have started concerning the trans-inclusion and recognition of the trans identity among feminist circles. Another argument of the trans women about their exclusion was the account of the fact that they are “not women or feminist enough” since they have male physical characteristics (like beards) and “experienced male privileges before” (cited in Ozlen, 2020, p. 374). In that sense, I find the embracement of intersectional feminism and the consideration of Emi Koyama’s emphasis on the

necessity of ‘alliance work’ issue to end the conflict between sides, which I will further explain later in the discussion.

On the cis feminist side of the debate (Feminist Collective) criticised trans activists for “not partaking in year-round activities related to fighting violence against women, campaigning against rape litigations” and “only showing up on 8<sup>th</sup> of march parades” (cited in Ozlen, 2020, p. 374). One of the collective members further installed that they feel tense about “trans alliance issues because they may be stamped ‘transphobic’ during their course of learning about trans subjecthood” (cited in Ozlen, 2020, p. 374). Hence, ‘political correctness’ is one of the criticisms of the cis feminist side of trans activists by saying that they are limiting the scope of the broader debate by gazing upon the rigid and definite conceptualisations. At that point, it would be noted that this is the fairest criticism presented for the nature of the whole TERF debate, in a way being valid for both sides. In the following discussion part, I will explain how all these discussions turned into a lynch culture or silencing/cancelling policy because sides bid their time negatively tagging each other without offering any beneficial suggestions for improving the feminist movement. Hence, ideas or statements like Nükhet Sirman’s (2011) should not be ignored for the sake of the conflict as “afraid that feminism might become immobilised/stable if they keep shutting themselves down to difference” (cited in Ozlen, 2020, p. 375).

Although two roundtables were organised by Amargi magazine, as a result of the parade incident, to debate the strategies and perspectives about the feminist understanding of different sides, it would not be enough to reach complete peace of state or ensure total solidarity. Once, the discussions and smear campaigns on social media starting in 2018 led to significant polarisation between the sides in the sense that they are continually denigrating each other by tagging with negative connotations and showed that both sides are ready to explode in the case counter-attack.

The TERF debate in the Turkish context and the usage of the term have started with some feminist theoreticians stating their opinions about changing the age for Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), likewise in the UK, and the responses from the trans activist side ignited the debate. So, it stretched the tensions between the two sides, which stand already on a fragile surface. For instance, Öznur Karakaş (2018) proposed the restriction for HRT with the age of 18 by saying that such an invasive medical process can be harmful to the child; moreover, they may regret their decision to transition later. Many trans components criticised her arguments. She also claimed that she was censored and tried to be silenced not to argue her opinions. A year later, in 2019, after the Women's Commemorative Parade on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, a banner saying, 'we will eradicate cis women' was criticised by Zeynep Direk, who stated her oppositional position; against the existence of such people spreading 'hate speech.' By connoting the act of this one trans person with 'the male privilege of trans women' argument, she again could not get out of being described as TERF and exclusionary feminist. Although she tried to form solidarity without expanding the debate by saying that "masculinity is in every one of us, and it may emerge in various kinds of relationships" (Ozlen, 2020, p. 379) to emphasise the idea that it is not peculiar to being *trans* women, she could not run from the tagging policy inherent to the discussion itself. Yet, in the end, she deleted all her messages and writings about the issue since it turned into something vicious and produced nothing progressive.

Your body is your foundation, your reality, in a way your fate, just like where you were born, like you. Amor fati. You should love it. A penis or a beard will not make you a man; you are not lacking, after all. If you were to decide otherwise, of course, we'd see when you are 16-17, but don't do this just to become a 'man.' 'What' you are is not your anatomy (cited in Ozlen, 2020, p. 380).

Again, these words of Öznur Karakaş were criticised for giving biological reference to the body, which caused the consolidation of the gender binary system. Again, it ended up with the reconsolidation of the trans activists' perception of Öznur as being TERF. Nevertheless, she continued her arguments

that resembled the whole debate and its basis to the “hunt of the outsider, targeting and identifying enemy” (cited in Ozlen, 2020, p. 380). Furthermore, she insisted on the idea that the TERF debate is endemic to Europe and America; hence it cannot be imported to the conditions of Turkey directly (cited in Ozlen, 2020, p. 382).

While on the other end of the debate, trans activists assert other criticisms, which eventually cannot be perceived as new since the arguments of both sides go on to be reproduced in a vicious circle. As

In our struggle with transphobic people, TERFs, I am very sorry to say to the cis white crew and some feminists: you insistently cut off some parts written by queer activists with caps lock on, claiming that ‘queer activists lynch people.’ This is white fragility (cited in Ozlen, 2020, p. 381).

Hence, the debate, especially in Turkey, cannot go beyond the ‘you did this-you did that’ kind of argumentation or being “another social media catastrophe” (Özkazanç, 2019, para. 1).

Even the implementation of intersectional feminist arguments of the activists within Turkey could not overcome the repeating, targeting and accusing policies as a way of cancelling.

As feminists who take a position against TERFs + SWERFs, our only common argument is: that sex workers should have equal rights and security with other proletarians, and trans women should have equal rights and protection with cis women. In this way, we can protect the lives of these people who are pushed into criminality. History has shown us the results of ignorance on differences and different needs thousands and thousands of times: upper class, white, cis, straight, and privileged women will gain more space and visibility in each. This is liberal (cited in Ozlen, 2020, p. 383).

After focusing on the historicity, aspects, arguments and oppositions of both sides of the TERF debate in the US, the UK and the Turkish context, it is essential to discuss what all these mean for a more moderate, inclusive and conciliatory feminist methodology, i.e. intersectional feminism. Is it a way out of

the existing conflicts within the theory? Or what does it suggest in terms of trans-inclusion and recognition of trans identity different from the ongoing arguments? In the following discussion, I will try to show that “The state of being *trans* or trans identity is essential and immutable in history. Hence, its exclusion or discrimination is also essential” view of trans activism is incorrect by associating it and its trans identity-based politics with the rise of intersectional feminism. Yet, I believe that regarding identities or activism, the state of existence cannot be thought of outside the historical, socio-political or economic processes. Thereby, without recognising or embracing a specific identity, its activism cannot be realised. Moreover, its exclusion cannot be thought of in terms of inexistent identity. In the following part, I will discuss all the above mentioned aspects and try to prove my argument about embracing intersectional feminism to settle within feminist theory.

## CHAPTER 6

### INTERSECTIONALITY: THE BEST FOR SETTLEMENT BETWEEN THE SIDES OF THE TERF DEBATE?

In literature and all TERF debate, the state of being *trans* is represented as an essential, unhistorical, immutable phenomenon as if the trans identity has always existed and has always been oppressed. Yet, I believe that oppression towards trans people and the realisation of the TERF debate cannot be understood independently without referring to being ‘trans’ as an identity formation process in its historical and socio-economical contexts. Thereby, it is essential to discuss the trans-exclusion concept after the rise of identity politics in the 1980s. In that sense, the emergence of intersectionality, or intersectional feminism in a narrower sense, would effectively consider trans identity politics and the addition of trans-inclusion issues to political and academic agendas. Unlike the other waves of feminism and queer theory, intersectional feminism is more compatible and related to the recognition and visibility of trans identity in the contemporary world. In other words, intersectional feminism becomes the most coherent feminist theory, regarding trans issues, by accepting trans existence, compared to exclusionary and de-identifier others, by lighting the way by providing recognition and consideration of different kind of identities and their relationship with each other.

When the term ‘transsexual’ was first used, it described an anomaly in a person's medical sense.

Transsexual was originally used in a medical context to refer to individuals with gender identities incongruent with the sex assigned at birth who sought medical technologies to alter their bodies. The term has recently been used to flag opposition to the politics of transgender (Bettcher, 2015, p. 2).

John Money, as a former student of Parsons who distinguished between sex status -what a person is- and sex roles -the behavioural supplement of the position defined by status- introduced the concept of 'gender role' to signify how a person expresses, by word and deed, his/her status as man/woman. Money problematised the gender role to point out a disaccord between sex assigned at birth and the performance of the gender role to discuss the physiological and psychological genesis of such 'anomalies'. This understanding of transsexuality as an anomaly and its problematic medicalisation is the issue which transgender politics arose at the very beginning of everything (Bettcher, 2015, p. 3). Yet, before the 1960s, trans identity and gender issues were not part of the politics or feminist agenda.

The first wave of feminism emerged in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, in which women claimed the same fundamental rights and freedoms as men by being human. Being based upon natural rights doctrine, the feminists' demands, in general, included universal suffrage and equal opportunities in education and property rights. Although Black women have disputed the "prototypicality of white women's experience" (Carastathis, 2016, p. 17), they did not "set the stage for the concept of intersectionality" (Fernandes Botts, 2017, p. 344) by challenging racism and sexism "not only as separate categories impacting identity and oppression but also as systems of oppression that work together [and] mutually reinforce each other" (Gines, 2014, p. 24). This is basically because, within this episteme, it was impossible to gather race, gender, and class together as socio-political categories and mobilise dissident action upon them.

In the period, after the use of the term 'transsexual' in a medical sense, in the late 1960s, recognition by the state was only possible based on being active in a profession which led to the systematic exclusion of women since they were only socialised by being wives of active workers. This situation posed problems associated with "an anthropological revolution concerning the equality of the sexes", which hardly later, women's emancipation was realised as a reaction to

this kind of understanding (Balibar, 2014, p. 14). Hence, again, at the time, the trans identity or trans-inclusion issue was neither something politically recognised nor debated on the agenda.

With the rise of the second wave of feminism in the late 1960s, feminists realised that formal equality was not enough to liberate women from the privacy of the households within which they were condemned as wives and mothers. Women's systematic exclusion from the public space was not simply sustained by legal arrangements but by the patriarchal codes embedded in all institutions of the androcentric modern societies. Claiming that 'the personal is political,' the feminists waged war on the structures of patriarchy reproduced by the binary social distinctions between private-public, inside-outside, sex-gender and nature-culture.

During that period, another rising concept must be visited concerning its impact on contemporary trans arguments and the TERF debate. 'Political lesbianism' or 'lesbian separatism' rose, especially in the late 1960s and 1970s, embarked on patriarchy opposition as a social and historical structure that organises social relations to systematically reproduce the sexual difference, i.e., the hierarchical ordering of men over women. Unlike the first wavers who sought equality for women, they politicised and embraced sexual difference as the site of feminist struggle par excellence. With the motto, written in Chicago Women's Liberation Union's 1971 pamphlet with the significant influence of Grace Atkinson's arguments, "if feminism is the theory, lesbianism is the practice", they challenged monogamous marriage and heterosexism as impediments to the sexual liberation of women. Another incident which made emphasis on giving up heterosexual sex and adopting Political Lesbianism as a practice was evident in the publication of a pamphlet in 1979 called "Love Your Enemy: the debate between heterosexual feminism and political lesbianism," which was written by the Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group, and the primary author being Sheila Jeffreys (Thompson, 2020, para. 3). As I have already mentioned, she is one of the prominent figures regarded as one of the perpetrators of trans-exclusive acts

and arguments in contemporary debates. Although many recent trans-exclusive discussions supported the idea that they took their bases from the views of second-wave feminists like Jeffreys or other political lesbians when it was carefully considered, the point that they were rejecting was not the concept of being *trans* but rather a betrayal of women to their kind, in trans men's case, or fraud of men to intrude or rape women's spaces in a sense led to the reproduction of patriarchy in those spaces which was cleaned before (allegedly, by the efforts of these lesbian separatists).

At that point, I found it crucial to place particular focus on Rubin's (1975) explanation regarding what lesbian separatists were against actually in the 1970s rather than their perceived anti-trans position. Gayle Rubin (1975) uses the concept of "the sex/gender system" to "describe the social organization of sexuality and the reproduction of the conventions of sex and gender" (p. 168), instead of the alternative term, such as the "patriarchy." Even though both terms "indicate that sexual systems have a certain autonomy and cannot always be explained in terms of economic forces" their inattentive adoption might lead to different sorts of confusion. "A sex/gender system is not simply the reproductive moment of a 'mode of production.' The formation of gender identity is an example of production in the realm of the sexual system" (Rubin, 1975, p. 167). The formation of gender identity is an example of production in the realm of the sexual system" (Rubin, 1975, p. 167). "The term patriarchy was introduced to distinguish the forces maintaining sexism from other social forces. But the use of patriarchy obscures other distinctions" (Rubin, 1975, p. 167). By subsuming all gender stratified systems into the same term, patriarchy erases the possibility of an alternative to male dominance. Using patriarchy as a transhistorical concept referring to the empirical evidence that indicates that all societies have been oppressive of women throughout history exhausts the possibility of a sexually egalitarian society. "Sex/gender system, on the other hand, is a neutral term that refers to the domain and indicates that oppression is not inevitable in that domain, but is the product of the specific social relations which organise it" (Rubin, 1975, p. 167). Hence, the point that the lesbian separatists problematised

and fought against was different than the exclusion of people based on their being *trans*.

It does not mean that they were pro-trans for sure, but rather, the trans identity was not something recognised as a political subject or something that one could be against its existence directly. They were not problematised how individuals defined their subject positions or trans identity performed. They did not deal with individuals or their personal choices. They problematised heterosexual orientation of women, which “perpetuates their social, economic, emotional, and sexual dependence on and accessibility by men” (Calhoun, 1994, p. 560). Thereby, being lesbian, which is something different than a personal choice and is about being inherently in the oppositional position to the embedded structures, which is equated with being a “true feminist”, was described by Monique Wittig (1981) as

the only concept ... which is beyond the categories of sex (woman and man), because the designated subject (lesbian) is not a woman, either economically, or politically, or ideologically. For what makes a woman is a specific social relation to a man, a relation that we have previously called servitude, a relation which implies personal and physical obligation as well as economic obligation (-forced residence-, domestic corvee, conjugal duties, unlimited production of children, etc.), a relation which lesbians escape by refusing to become or to stay heterosexual (cited in Calhoun, 1994, 563).

Hence, the view of trans women as either something pathological or male individuals tried to invade women’s spaces, both physically and mentally is sensible within that context. In the separatists’ views, they were the tools of the ongoing system that were used to re-reproduce patriarchy and heterosexual structure, but they were neither recognised identities nor subjects. This perception about the opposition to trans people which did not problematise their identities but rather their conceptualizations which were seen as the perpetrators of male-dominated, heterosexual structures, was evident in the statements of some prominent feminists who were regarded as the pioneers of the contemporary trans-exclusionary politics like Jeffreys, Morgan (in her speech in 1973, she resembled trans women to males wearing drag), Raymond (in her book

“The Transsexual Empire” in 1979, she accused Sandy Stone, out trans woman, for creating divisiveness among women as men always do), and Daly (the resemblance she constructed between trans individual and Frankenstein in 1978).

The recognition of subjects based on their identities, as politically debated or considered issues on political agenda, was realised, more or less, with the rise of new wave feminism (or third-wave feminism) in the late 1980s and 1990s by the elimination of the dichotomous understanding of public and private and the abolition of other dichotomies with the rise of neoliberalism. The third wave of feminism emerged in the late 1980s based on an objection to the second wavers’ construction of a universal category of ‘woman.’ The third wavers, despite the discrepancy of their arguments, came to an agreement on the idea that it was not possible to encompass the heterogeneity of sex, gender and forms of oppression that shape the experiences of women under a single identity of womanhood. Rebecca Walker argues that “for a generation that has grown up transgender, bisexual, interracial” it is no longer possible to order the world with binary schemes that juxtapose ‘us/ the women’ vis a vis the ‘Other’:

It seems that to be a feminist in the way that we have seen or understood feminism is to conform to an identity and way of living that doesn’t allow for individuality, complexity, or less than perfect personal histories. We fear that the identity will dictate and regulate our lives, instantaneously pitting us against someone, forcing us to choose inflexible and unchanging sides, female against male, black against white, oppressed against oppressor, good against bad (Walker, 1995, p. 22).

Third-wavers, therefore, advocate “a form of inclusiveness” that “respects not only differences between women based on race, ethnicity, religion, and economic standing but also makes allowance for different identities within a single person” (Heywood, 2006, p. xx). To attain such inclusiveness the “third-wavers embrace multivocality over synthesis and action over theoretical justification” (Snyder, 2008, p. 175). Hence, what turned being *trans* into a political identity was the embracement of identity politics which the state has started to deal with different identities and their relations as being in the position

of the oppressed and the oppressor. Nina Lykke (2010) described this occurrence as

... particularly since the beginning of the 1990s, many feminist researchers (e.g., Haraway 1991c; Butler 1993; Braidotti 1994) have pointed out that it is problematic to maintain a dichotomy between sex and gender ... their arguments can be seen as contributing to a collapse of ‘the great divide’—and as a move toward making visible the ways in which gender/sex is a mixed and ambiguous phenomenon (p. 25).

As Joanna Oksala (2011) described in the article “The Neoliberal Subject of Feminism”, “the shift in techniques of government would have necessitated a shift in the corresponding construction of the subject” (p. 108) which means that the neoliberal government techniques need to create new subjects and identities with the shift of “social and political to the personal or private realm” (p. 112). In other words, eliminating dichotomies as public-private, sex-gender and so on made the emergence and visibility of many identities possible, including trans identity. In that regard, the consideration of trans-inclusion or trans-exclusion arguments after the late 1980s would be meaningful since it was the time they started to be recognised based on their identities and politically debated. Moreover, with the blaze of figures like Thatcher, Madonna and so on, in the late 1980s, who can be regarded as the “exceptions of ‘natural womanhood’”, “how the social order presumed by liberalism is itself pervasively gendered became visible” (Oksala, 2011, p. 114). Thereby, the ending of the “neat cut between the two genders in terms of the irreconcilable dualisms that constitute political liberalism, individual/family, autonomy/dependency, self-interest/selflessness” made the recognition of trans identity and politics based on its credit possible by the rise of feminist theories like Queer Feminism or Intersectional Feminism (Oksala, 2011, pp. 115-116).

Although the emergence of queer theory and intersectionality (based on the first use of the term by Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined it as ‘intersectionality’) coincided within the historical timeline, both have trans-inclusive perceptions by recognising their identity due to the differences within their walk-through, I

believe intersectionality (or intersectional feminism) is more suitable for the trans-inclusion arguments and visibility of trans identity. In that regard, I will discuss both theories simultaneously by explaining the points that they are differentiated and why intersectionality is more compatible with arguments regarding the continuation of the existence of trans identity. In that regard, I want to benefit from Leslie McCall's (2005) three approaches which are "defined principally in terms of their stance toward categories, that is, how they understand and use analytical categories to explore the complexity of intersectionality in social life" to describe the differences of queer theory and intersectional feminism in their relation to trans identity (p. 1773). McCall (2005) frames three approaches encompassing the wide range of methodological approaches in intersectional studies that satisfy the need to account for the systems of oppression in their complexity in a non-reductive fashion. She defines her methodology with what she calls the "intercategorical complexity" approach, and the other two approaches, "anticategorical complexity" and "intracategorical complexity", are the ones on which I will elaborate in terms of trans identity perception of two theories (p. 1773).

Queer politics takes its roots in the ground-breaking work of Judith Butler, where she deconstructs the heterosexual model for thinking about sexuality that "regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term" and denaturalises sex by showing that the so-called natural and pre-discursive reality of the body is constructed within power relations (Butler, 1990, p. 31). "Rather than treating their sexed bodies as the underpinning of their politics, she argued, feminists should embrace the fluidity of gender. Liberation from the patriarchy would be won alongside gay, lesbian, transgender and queer rebels against heterosexism" (Rustin, 2020, para. 9). In her "Sex Trouble: Anti-body, anti-norm, anti-power..." article Ebru Pektaş (2019) described the conceptualizations that queer theory used as

the concepts of power and normative, which queer theory inherited from Foucault, come into play. Accordingly, power is a fluid, all-encompassing,

omnipresent relationship, and there is no vector of power from the oppressor to the oppressed. The oppressed also establish a power relationship. Lesbian gay, gay trans, transgender, all these exclude and dominate other 'sexual minorities.' Power relations progress through 'normative' discourses. Everything that is accepted as a norm in society has an implication of homogeneity and therefore suppresses difference implicitly or explicitly, turning into a tool of power (para. 13).

Hence, in order to avoid being a tool of power if it is everywhere, "we should carefully avoid being 'us' and defend resistance and a kind of 'anti-power'" (Pektaş, 2019, para. 14). Thereby, queer theory is not about either expanding the borders of what is already constituted in a sense interiorising the outsider or dragging it to the centre of the debate. It is about ripping the centre apart completely.

It is about being against the binary mentalities (sex/gender; homosexuality/heterosexuality; femininity/masculinity) that have left their mark on our perceptions about gender and the compatibility that these structures bring and advocating that none of the sex/gender/sexual orientation identities are 'natural' but historically, culturally and socially constituted and therefore cannot be considered independently of power relations (Yardımcı, 2012, para. 5).

This makes the queer theory a kind of deidentification politics. Rather than supporting every outcast identity, it defends the argument for abolishing all identities to avoid being the tool of power. In her approach, McCall (2005) describes anticategorical complexity as something that "deconstructs analytical categories" (p. 1773). In this way of complexity, "social life is considered too irreducibly complex to make fixed categories anything but simplifying social fictions that produce inequalities in the process of producing differences" (McCall, 2005, p. 1773) which makes it suitable for the perception of queer theory. Yet, by this kind of complexity and queer theory, it won't be wrong to say that they would be inadequate for the recognition of trans identity and its specific demands for visibility and inclusion since trans people demand the recognition of their identity to solve the problems related to their ignorance or exclusion.

At that point, I find it essential to place particular focus on that initially, “the emphasis for both groups [anticategorical and intracategorical complexities] was on the socially constructed nature of gender and other categories and the fact that a wide range of different experiences, identities and social locations fail to fit neatly into any single ‘master’ category” (McCall, 2005, p. 1777) yet through the process of argumentation they differed from each other like the strategic separation of queer theory and intersectional feminism handling (trans) identity issue.

The term ‘intersectionality’ has become an umbrella concept travelling across diverse disciplines ranging from sociology, political science, literature, philosophy, and anthropology to feminist studies, ethnic studies and legal studies since it was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in an article within critical legal studies. Deployed on various dimensions, for diverse motivations and within different methodologies, intersectionality has been celebrated in academic circles as “the most important theoretical contribution of women’s and gender studies to date” (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). Many feminists underlined the potential of intersectionality to recognise the differences between women without falling back on racist, patriarchal, and heteronormative definitions of difference. They argued that intersectional analysis would herald a “more complex ontology than approaches that attempt to reduce people to one category at a time,” “multiplex epistemologies” that “treat social positions as relational” and a critique of “identity politics for its additive, politically fragmentary and essentializing tendencies” (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006, p. 187). Intersectional studies, they claimed, would transform gender-first approaches to feminism by showing how different forms of oppression and exploitation are historically articulated in interlocking power structures from which subject positions arise. Intersectionality, therefore, would challenge race & class-blind feminist methodologies by revealing how systems of oppression and exploitation tend to be simultaneous and mutually constitutive on both micro and macro levels and indicating that unless feminism takes into consideration “multiple axes of oppression...it presumes the whiteness of women, the maleness of people of

colour, and the heterosexuality of everyone” (Risman, 2004, p. 442). Feminism, with the advent of intersectional studies, was forced to reconstruct its “imagined community” and become inclusive of inequalities and differences among women “in order to be able to keep up its own foundational premises” (Knapp, 2005, p. 253). Furthermore, intersectionality has been celebrated by many feminists, as a social movement strategy, for offering new avenues of cooperation to fight against “racialized, capitalist gender oppression” (Lugones, 2010, p. 743). Intersectional political practice, accordingly, mediates “the tension between recognizing difference and fostering common identities and goals” (Irvine et al., 2019, p. 1) and overcomes “the dichotomy of recognition and redistribution politics” (Yuval-Davis, 2018, p. 159) by avoiding both the “isolating and fragmentary effects” (Montoya, 2019, p. 135) of the former and the homogenising effects of the latter.

In addition to the abovementioned arguments about intersectional feminism, Eda Canimana (2019) states, in the article “Cis-feminism’s Power Struggle,” in a way lending colour to them, that it provides

the elimination of racism and cis-heterosexism in feminism has not occurred with an additive methodology that tries to cover the various demands of feminists located in different positions in intersectional power relations instead with an epistemology that transforms the feminism itself. In other words, a new feminist epistemology and methodology have emerged by relationally considering the notion of power and interpreting the political subject as a notion constructed and positioned by the intersection of these power relations (para. 3).

All these aspects regarding the realisation of intersectional feminism conclude about recognition of trans identity and its political demands that the more coherent theory for trans existence is the embracement of this particular feminist theory since the recognition of diverse identities and experiences, their relation to structures of power, and methods of mediating difference and increasing inclusivity are the main concerns of it.

In addition, the conceptualisation of the concept “Kyriarchy” with intersectional feminism lends to colour the abovementioned argument. Kyriarchy is defined by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza (2001) in her book “Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation” as

a neologism...derived from the Greek words for ‘lord’ or ‘master’ (kyrios) and ‘to rule or dominate’ (archein), which seeks to redefine the analytic category of patriarchy in terms of multiplicative intersecting structures of domination... Kyriarchy is best theorised as a complex pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social structures of superordination and subordination, of ruling and oppression (cited in <https://everydayfeminism.com/2014/04/kyriarchy-101/>, n.d.)

Its existence means that an individual can simultaneously be in a privileged and oppressed position. Moreover, it asserts that someone who fights against a form of oppression might be the perpetuator of other kinds (s). The conceptualisation of the term is responsive to explaining the trans-exclusionary arguments within contemporary feminist thought, and further suggests the solution as the embracement of intersectional feminism due to its inclusive and recognitory nature.

Another argument which finds the embracement of intersectional feminism for the cognisance of trans identity, socially and politically, is the view of “reconceptualisation of identities as coalitions” by Anna Carasthathis (2016) which is described in her book “Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons.” She (2016) suggests that intersectional analysis leads us to

reconceptualizing identities, as coalitions, enables us not only to form alliances across lines of experiential and political difference but also to constitute ‘coalitions of one’ where one is aligned with all aspects of one’s identity as a struggle concept prefiguring the tasks ahead as opposed to a truth taken as axiomatic (p. 11).

Hence, the intersectional analysis of feminism will not just recognise the identity of trans but also others; furthermore, it will provide a base for thinking about their experiential and political differences in a coalitional sense to form a

struggle concept against exclusion. In addition, she (2016) explains the critiquing conceptualisation of intersectionality to identity politics and describes its realisation being beyond it, with the words, “the political potential of intersectionality lies in our ability to reimagine our identities and our alignments in coalitional terms, revealing the inherent and potential impurity of categories by practising their interconnectedness” (pp. 6-7).

In the conclusion of these arguments, it would not be wrong to say that intersectionality perfectly fits the intracategorical complexity approach of McCall. It puts forward ‘first-person narratives’ in order to reveal the multiplicity of identities and the plurality of lived contradictions. Also, it reconceptualizes “identities as coalitions” as I elaborated earlier. Besides it, simultaneously, “utilizes narratives to uncover the differences and complexities of experience embodied in [any particular social]...location [as well as] the range of diversity and difference within the group” (McCall, 2005, p. 1782) and “acknowledges the stable and even durable relationships that social categories represent at any given point in time” (McCall, 2005, p. 1774) though it also maintains a critical stance toward categories, it won’t be wrong to think intersectionality under the intracategorical approach.

For the arguments indicating that recent TERF debates took their foundations from the political lesbianism discussions in the past, as I have already explained, it can be said that it will be a wrong base to construct your point since separatism did not deal with trans identities or any other identities. The recognition based on identity has not emerged, so the lack of multiplication of different identities invalidates the claims as such ‘trans were excluded based on their transness.’ Their exclusionary attitude toward trans women was based on their perception of them as gender frauds who try to leak women’s spaces to divide them or break their structural opposition to the system. The new government techniques of neo-liberalism and no need for the continuation of the system to continue gender dichotomies led to the multiplication and recognition of new identities. Since identities cannot be thought of outside the historical, economic and socio-

political conditions in which they sprout, grounding recent debates based on past discussions would not be anything different than forming false causality, which puts the feminist theory into a vicious circle of repetitive arguments.

In terms of the ongoing TERF debate, originating from the reasons I mentioned above, it turns into a cancel policy and exposure culture in which supporters of both sides continuously target each other with hostile speeches, descriptions and denigrating comments to silence each other. Rather than being a debate, it turned into an actual fight. Moreover, as I have already indicated, the debate gets into a vicious circle that repeats the same old regressive arguments. In that regard, intersectional feminism can be described, as already done by many, as the resolution for ending the debate since it both recognises different identities and forms coalitions from their interconnectedness to create a common struggle concept.

Tunca Özlen (2019), in his “The pains of transition from the second wave to the third wave in the feminist movement” article, explains the conditions of the ongoing debate, simplistically and understandably, by criticising both sides and by suggesting intersectional feminism as ‘the solution’ which I do not need to add anything more. As

The ongoing debate is between trans-exclusionary feminism interpretation that is stuck in the second wave and needs a transhistorical ‘woman’ identity to exist, and a feminism interpretation that represents the third wave transcends identity politics and feeds on queer theory ...While the queer movement is making its way towards destabilisation and blurring identities to expand the boundaries of identities as much as possible and ultimately, to reach a society with no existing identities. The feminist movement, on the other hand, needs a more defined female identity while taking a position against the attacks of the male-dominated system. For example, the motto ‘Trans women are women’ aims to expand the boundaries of women's identity, not destabilise it. LGBTQIAA+ movement's emphasis on an identity-free society/genderless should not take the form that ignores women's issues or leads to misogyny. On the other hand, the women's identity defined by feminist politics should not be completely homogeneous and rigid. The two movements should feed off each other; feminism should be intersectional (Özlen, 2019, para. 12-19).

## CONCLUSION

This study examines the aspects and arguments of the ongoing TERF debate within feminist theory, mainly focusing on the contexts of the US, UK and Turkey. The trans-inclusion defending actors in the debate argue that trans-exclusion is an essential, unhistorical and immutable phenomenon based on the argumentation that the always-existing characterisation of trans identity makes the oppression, based on it, also always-existing. Thereby, by taking its foundations from the feminist arguments in the past (since the discrimination toward trans identity has also had always-existing nature, which made the realisation of it possible in almost every context historically), trans-exclusionary arguments of contemporary feminists have been formed and shaped. Yet, this way of understanding the nature of the recent trans-exclusionary statements brings some contradictions that must be elaborated on carefully. Perception of the recognition of trans identity as an essential and unhistorical concept within feminism constructs the main problem regarding views of the trans-inclusive side. In other words, formations of identities, activism or any different types of social movements cannot be considered without referring to the socio-cultural, economic, and political conditions they have sprouted. So, taking trans discrimination into account as an already-existing phenomenon in feminist theory would be meaningless since the recognition of identity itself cannot be realised beforehand. With the multiplication of identities in the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s, the system had not needed a gender binary system anymore since the control of individuals was not formed over the dichotomies but rather in terms of a complex economic system in which the power was established over the choices and interests (Oksala, 2011, p. 110). In that regard, which renders trans identity visible is the emergence of queering theories like intersectional feminism or queer feminism from the counter position of identity politics of neoliberalism. Thereby, there is no intrinsic trans-exclusion within feminism since the trans identity emerged as a political subject due to some historical circumstances.

In addition, while discussing the aspects of the recent TERF debate straightforwardly, the problematic foundation of it is also laid on due to the reasons I mentioned above. Also, by presenting the arguments of both sides, which are used to eliminate and dominate the other, another problematic aspect of the debate has shown up. Beyond taking its roots in a way constructing false causalities and correlations, the nature of the debate is also complicated since it cannot go beyond the adoption of targeting, cancelling policies and denigrating arguments used to silence the counter side. The ongoing debate turns into an arena where sides fight to bring down the others; hence, it does not produce anything progressive, reforming or inclusive of taking the conflict or the feminist theory further. It is nothing but a mundane debate that continuously uses repetitive arguments like a parrot and cannot escape from being a cog in a wheel or a vicious circle. In that regard, Lykke's (2010) adaptation of Haraway's description of the 'god trick' concept perfectly explains how targeting and tagging claims of both sides about each other turn into something universalising in a way to oppress the counterparts. As

For the theorizing move from critique and problematization to affirmation can easily, as an unintended side effect, end up in an act of essentialization and universalization. Instead of opening up to a dynamic process that can create space for the unfolding of diversity and multiplicity, a kind of god-trick (Haraway 1991c, pp. 191–196) may be reinstated: 'Here is a vision about gender/sex which is good and right for everyone!' (p. 37).

Thus, the nature and the foundations of the trans-exclusion arguments and the TERF debate itself are the problematic ones that necessitate research for an inclusive and responsive theory to the demands of different identities.

Especially regarding the debate in Turkey, although the whole TERF debate is anything rather than progressive, the Turkish feminist context is the one which suffers from the severe impacts of such a polarised debate mostly. Since the authoritarian, anti-gender and fragmenting oppressions regarding the LGBTQIAA+ and women's movement in Turkey are the ones which are most

severely effective over the organisation itself, such hostile appeals, hate speeches, targeting policies or hunts of the outsiders, between the ones who should support and defend each other usually, only subserve to the authority or the ones who are working with the aims of dividing, minoritising and ruling. Hence, such a highly fragmentary separation would be lethal for the future of the feminist movement in Turkey. Rather than spewing hate at each other, the sides of the debate should find a way for reconciliation within feminism, such as embracing intersectionality to add inclusiveness and interrelational perspectives to their point of view.

The main aim of this study becomes answering the question of that can intersectional feminism be both responsive in a way fulfilling the demands of two conflicting sides, especially in terms of trans-inclusion and recognition of trans identity, and also act as an umbrella theory concerning the complexities of different intersecting identities without sticking into rigid categories and always envisaging beyond.

In that sense, by using Leslie McCall's (2005) three approaches to complexities and comparing queer feminism and intersection feminism, this research aims to find the most coherent theorisation for recognising trans identity. Intersectional feminism and some aspects of transfeminism, as the subheading of it, which Emi Koyama (2001) elaborates in the article "Transfeminist Manifesto" in a way which she calls out women to "build up alliances" and emphasises the importance of "intersectional analysis" for the future of feminist theory (pp. 9-10), are reconciliatory and recognizant ones which perfectly match with this aim. Although both intersectional and queer feminism has emerged to oppose reigning identity politics, due to the strategic differences in their walkthroughs, the intersectional approach is more suitable since it offers the recognition of trans identity and other identities; on the contrary to queering aim of identities and ripping the centre half suggestions by queer theory. Furthermore, Susan Stryker (2004) explains the relationship between the queer theory and trans demands as inadequate by saying,

I wanted to help define “queer” as a family to which transsexuals belonged. The queer vision (of) utopian reconfiguration of community ... in which the foundational containers of desire could be ruptured to release a raw erotic power that could be harnessed to a radical social agenda ... (Yet,) too often transgender phenomena are misapprehended through queer theory (pp. 213-214).

Besides, in line with the arguments of intersectionality, I also perceive that it is offered, by many scholars and activists, as a resolution proposal to end the conflict within the recent TERF debate. Thereby, the relationship between intersectional feminism and the TERF debate can be described as progressive since it pledges reconciliation between two poles of the argument while being transformative in a sense reconceptualising the identities and their interconnectedness in a coalitional way.

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## APPENDICES

### A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKE ÖZET

Bu çalışmada, günümüz feminist literatür içerisinde görünürlüğünü git gide arttıran TERF tartışmasına odaklanılarak, bu tartışmanın ABD, İngiltere ve Türkiye bağlamındaki argümanları, tarihselliği ve feminist teori ile ilişkiseliliği incelenmiştir. TERF tabiri, 2008 yılında bir blog yazarı olan Viv Smythe tarafından türetilmiş ve günümüz dünyasında git gide görünürlüğü artan, trans dışlayıcı argümanları ve eylemleri savunan bireyleri, aktivistleri ve feminist teorisyenleri tanımlamak için kullanılmaya başlanmıştır. 2008'den bu yana özellikle sosyal medyada görünürlüğünü artırarak sürdüren TERF çatışması, feminist düşüncenin, argümanlarının, söylemlerinin ve feminizmin geleceği hakkındaki tartışmaların odak noktasında yer almaya başlamıştır. Bu nedenle de tabir bir anlamda negatif bir biçimde hızlıca kullanıma girmiştir. Söylemin açılımı, her ne kadar trans dışlayıcı radikal feminizm olarak bilinse de literatür içindeki tartışmalar; trans bireylerin ayrımcılığa maruz kalması durumunun feminist aktörler tarafından yapılamayacağı çünkü feminizmin yapısı gereği trans dışlayıcı olmasının mümkün olmadığı yönündedir.

Bu noktada sorulması gereken sorulardan belki de en önemlileri bu çatışmanın nereden doğduğu ve nasıl sonlandırılabiliridir ancak bu noktalara değinirken sorulması gereken diğer sorular; bu tartışmanın çıkış noktası, TERF söyleminin içinde barındırdığı anlamların, kendine temel olarak aldığı dayanak noktalarının ve tartışmanın somut ve bağlamsal olarak feminist literatür içerisinde yarattığı etkinin ve geldiği noktanın ne olduğudur. Bu doğrultuda, yazmış olduğum tezim boyunca ben bu tartışmayı, çıkış noktası, TERF söyleminin doğuşu, tartışmanın Amerikan ve İngiliz literatüründeki taraflarının kendilerine dayanak aldıkları noktalar, bu argümanların Türkiye'deki feminist literatür üzerindeki etkileri, bu tartışmanın kesişimsel feminist düşünce ile ilişkisi ve feminizmin bağlamsal

olarak içine düştüğü bu çıkmazdan, özellikle geleceği hususunda, nasıl bir yöntem izleyerek çıkabileceği konularını ele alarak sürdürmeye çalıştım.

Bu bağlamda, bu çatışmanın nasıl bu denli hızlı bir biçimde feminist tartışmaların odak noktasın geldiğini ve bu derece büyük bir kutuplaşma yarattığını anlamak için öncelikle bu dışlayıcılık söylemlerinin nereden ve nasıl çıktığını irdelemek elzemdir. Dünya çapında, lezbiyen, gey ve biseksüel bireylerin yaşam şartları ve hakları konularının iyice görünür olup, politik ajandanın bir parçası haline gelmesiyle bu konularda eylemde bulunmaya ve iyi yönde gelişmeler sağlanmasına gidilmiştir. Ancak bu durumun aksine, trans bireylerin sahip oldukları haklar konusu ya negatif değişimlere uğratılmış ya da gerçek anlamda trans bireylere yönelik suç ve dışlayıcı eylemlerde büyük bir artış yaşanmıştır. Örneğin; ABD’de trans bireylerin askerlik yapması yasaklanmış, sağlık hizmetlerine erişimleri kısıtlanmış ve cinsiyet beyanına dayalı tuvalet kullanımlarının önüne geçilmiştir. Normal şartlar altında birlik içinde hareket eden LGBT toplumu ve feminist aktörler arasında bu gelişmeler ekseninde bir kopuş yaşanmaya başlamıştır. Tartışmanın bir tarafında, cinsiyetin doğal, biyolojik, maddi bir olgu olarak kabul edilmesi gerektiğini savunan LGB topluluğu ve feministler; diğer tarafta ise cinsiyetin doğumda atanmış bir kimlik olduğu görüşünü savunan trans bireyler, aktivistler ve destekçileri bulunmaktadır. Bu tartışmaların fitilinin ateşlenmesi ve sonrasında iyice kızışması ile devletler, kurumlar ve yasal yapılar tarafından alınan negatif ve dışlayıcı yöndeki kararların iyice artması sebebiyle tartışma ciddi bir şekilde alevlenip, taraflar arasında büyük bir kutuplaşmaya sebep olmaya başlamıştır. Bu noktada, var olan feminist düşüncenin bu problemi çözmek için yetersiz olduğu, bu tartışmanın feminizmi kısır ve ilerlemeden uzak bir döngüye soktuğu ve daha kapsayıcı, yatıştırıcı, problem çözücü bir feminist düşüncenin benimsenmesi gerektiği savunuları ortaya sunulmuştur. Bu anlamda, kesişimsel feminizm, ortaya koyduğu analizlerin ve öncüllerin ilişkiselliği, bağlantılı yapısı ve kapsayıcılığı ile göz önüne çıkmıştır.

Bu nedenle, tüm bu yaşananlar ve tartışmalar beni TERF çatışmasının, feminist söylem için ne ifade ettiğini, bunların arka planını ve bu tartışmanın feminizmin geleceği konusunda neye işaret ettiğini sorgulamaya ve araştırmaya itmiştir. Buna ek olarak, feminizmin içine girdiği bu kısır döngüyü ve kutuplaşmayı, onu daha kapsayıcı ve ilerlemeci bir yapıya evirerek, tartışmaya nasıl uzlaşmacı bir çözüm bulunabileceği sorusunu da araştırmaya yöneltmiştir. Bu nedenle de feminizmin devamlılığı için nasıl bir düşünce benimsenebilir sorusuna cevaben; kesişimsel feminizmin benimsenmesinin ve bu düşünce yönünde eylemlerde bulunulmasının bu çatışmayı sonlandırabileceği, feminist teorinin devamlılığının daha gelişmiş bir biçimde sağlanabileceği tezinin gerçekliğini incelemeye başladım.

Bu denli uluslararası ve yerel bağlamda ilerlemeyen bir tartışmanın belli çerçevelerle sınırlandırılması gerekliliği sebebiyle, bu konuyu araştırmak üzere ABD, İngiltere ve Türkiye'yi kendime analiz birimi olarak belirledim. Bu üç ülkeden birinin Türkiye olarak seçilmesinin başlıca sebebi, tartışmayı öncelikli olarak Türkiye'deki feminist aktörlerin söylemleri ve paylaşımları doğrultusunda öğrenmem oldu. Türkiye'deki çatışmayı sosyal medya platformları üzerinden, özellikle Twitter'dan, takip etmem üzerine yerel temeldeki söylemlerin hangi bağlamlardan ve temellerden etkilendiğini araştırmaya başlayıp, İngiltere ve ABD'deki feminist çevrelerin bu konu üzerinde çok fazla çalışmaları, söylemleri ve tartışmaları olduğunu öğrendim. Özellikle söylemleri bakımından Türkiye'deki tartışmanın aktörlerini çokça etkilemişlerdi. Bu nedenle, Türkiye'deki feminist çevrelerin fikirlerinin en çok etkilendiği iki bağlam olarak ABD'yi ve İngiltere'yi de çalışmanın diğer odak noktaları haline getirdim. Diğer taraftan, bu tartışma, her ne kadar trans dışlayıcı söylemlerin temellerini çok daha eski argümanlardan aldığı söylene de özellikle TERF tabirinin 2008 yılında ortaya atılmasından sonra ateşlendiği için hakkında yazılan akademik ve güvenilir kaynak sayısı epeyce az. Bu nedenle, yerel durumlarda yazılan kaynakların birçoğunun İngilizceye çevrilmemiş olmasından ötürü, İngiltere ve ABD'yi diğer araştırma birimleri olarak belirlemek, bir anlamda zorunlu hale geldi. Bu bağlamlara karar verilmesinin sonucu olarak, bu çalışmayı hangi

metodolojiyi kullanarak sürdürmem gerektiği noktasında, akademik kaynaklar haricindeki kaynakların birçoğunun sosyal medya platformları ya da blog paylaşımları üzerinden olması nedeniyle netnografik yaklaşımı benimsemeye karar verdim. Bu yaklaşımı kullanarak, internet üzerindeki sosyal medya sitelerinde, tartışmanın tarafları tarafından yapılan paylaşımların içerik analizini yaptım. Tarafların aktörlerinden hangilerini seçip, paylaşımlarını inceleyeceğim noktasına geldiğimde, akademik yazılarını takip ettiğim ya da böyle bir yazımı yoksa bu sosyal medya platformlarını en aktif biçimde kullanan ve fazla sayıda takipçisi bulunan hesapları baz almaya çalıştım. Bu noktada, incelemek adına bir zaman aralığı belirlemem gerektiği için bunu Türkiye’de TERF tabirinin yaklaşık olarak kullanılmaya başlandığı ve tartışmanın fitilinin ateşlendiği 2011-2012 ile günümüz yılları arasını seçerek sınırlandırdım ancak bu durum özellikle yerel bağlamdaki araştırmam özelinde bir kısıtla karşılaşmama neden oldu. Özellikle Türkiye’deki tartışma, tarafların birbirini yaftaladığı, nefret söylemlerinde bulunduğu ve birbirine hakaretler ettiği, gelişimden uzak bir iptal ve susturma politikası haline geldiği için konuyla alakalı geçmiş yıllarda yapılan paylaşımların birçoğu silinmiş ya da aktörler tarafından erişimi engellenmişti. Bu sebep, zaman zaman tartışmanın boyutlarının ve tarafların görüşlerinin tek bir açıdan ele alınmasını mümkün kıldı.

Tüm bunlar doğrultusunda, bu tez çalışması, TERF tartışmasının kesişimsel feminist düşünce ile ilişkisinin kurulması ve feminist teorinin devamlılığı adına bir çözüm önerisi, farklı bir bakış açısı olarak sunulması ile başlamıştır. Kesişimselliğin, ya da bu tez bağlamında kesişimsel feminizmin temelleri 1980’lerin sonunda Kimberlé Crenshaw tarafından atılıp, takip eden dönemde Patricia Hill Collins ve başka feminist düşünürler tarafından feminist düşüncenin gelişip, sürekliliğinin sağlanması adına benimsenmesinin gerekliliği, farklı boyutlarıyla işlenmiştir. Kesişimsel feminizmin, özellikle tabirsel olarak bu dönemde ortaya çıkmasının dönemin koşulları ile ilgisi çok büyüktür. Özellikle, 1970’li ve 1980’li yıllarda benimsenen neoliberal yönetim araçları ve biçimleri ile kapitalizmin bir yönetme şekli olarak ikiliklere ihtiyacı kalmamıştır. Artık yönetim biçimleri özel olan ya da kamusal olan, kadın ya da erkek biçiminde

ikili ayrılıklara gerek duymadan çalışmasını sürdürebilmektedir. Neoliberalizm, ortaya çıkan bağımsız piyasa ekonomisi ile artık bireyleri panoptik yönetim biçimlerine ihtiyaç duymadan, yalnızca oyunun kuralını belirleyerek idare edebilmektedir. Fiziksel güce ihtiyaç duyulmayan ve üreme gücünün neredeyse tamamen metalaştırıldığı bu süreçte, kadın kategorisinin artık tek ve birleşik bir biçimde sunulmasına ihtiyaç tamamen ortadan kalktı. Tek kategori altında toplama anlayışının tamamen ortadan kalkmasıyla birlikte ortaya çıkan kimlikler ve kimlik politikası, daha önceden politik söylemlerin parçası olmayan kimliklerin bir tanınma ve temsiliyet kazanmasına yol açmıştır. Bu bağlamda trans kimliği kendine sosyal ve politik anlamda bir yer bulmuştur. Ancak kimlik politikasının olumsuz yönlerinden biri olarak kategorileştirme, gruplama ve kimliklerin söylem ve eylemlerini belli alanlarla sıkıştırmasının ortaya çıkardığı kısıtlanmış azınlıklar, Queer ve kesişimsel feminizm teorilerinin doğuşuna yol açmıştır.

Bu noktada, TERF tartışması ile alakalı belirtilmesi gereken en önemli nokta bu tartışmanın söylemlerini geçmiş, feminist argümanların oluşturulduğu iddiasıdır ancak cinsiyet kimliğinin politikleşmesi, bir anlamda kimlik politikasıyla birlikte olduğu için trans kimliğine yönelik bir dışlanma tarihsel konjonktürden ve kimliğin tanınması sürecinden bağımsız düşünülemez. Bu nedenle günümüz trans dışlayıcılık tartışmasının geçmişten günümüze var olduğu iddiası yanlış bir nedenselliğin sonucudur. Her ne kadar translık durumu, söylemsel anlamda, 1960'lı yıllarda ortaya atılmış olsa da bu dönemde tasvir edilen translık olgusu bir hastalık ya da anomali durumu olarak tasvir edilmiştir ve bir kimlik olarak tanınma durumu söz konusu değildir. Bu nedenle trans kimliğinin tanınması ve dışlanmasına yönelik tartışmaların 1980'lerden sonra ele alınması daha tutarlı olacaktır. Bu nedenle, oluşan bu gelişmelerin TERF çatışmasının ortaya çıkmasına ve gerçekleşmesine olanak sağladığı bir gerçektir. Ancak ortaya çıkan bu çatışma, feminist düşüncenin bir kısır döngüye sürüklediğini ve ortaya atılan yeni argümanlar ve söylemler karşısında yetersiz kaldığını göstermiştir. Bu nedenle feminizmi daha kapsayıcı, güç ilişkilerine ve baskılarına daha ilişkisel

bakan bir yöntem haline getirmek ve feminist düşüncenin devamlılığını sağlamak adına kesişimsel feminizmin benimsenmesini elzem kılmıştır.

Kesişimsel feminizm, yapısı gereği kimlik politikalarının özcü ve parçalayıcı yapısına karşı çıkmaktadır. Herhangi bir olguyu ya da kimliği, çevresiyle kurduğu güç ilişkilerinden bağımsız, tek bir düzlemde incelemenin mümkün olmadığını çünkü bu baskı, dışlanma, ayrımcılık gibi durumların birden çok bağlantının ürünü olarak ortaya çıktığını savunmaktadır. Kesişimselliğin potansiyeli, sürekli olarak, çevredeki diğer faktörlerle yeni bağlantılar, kesişimler, ilişkiler ve koalisyonlar kurmasının altında yatar. Bunu yaparken de her türlü özcü, genelleyci ve indirgemeci söyleme karşı çıkar. Tarihsel, kültürel, politik, ampirik her türlü boyutun güç ilişkilerini incelerken ele alınması gerektiğini bu sebeple her türlü deneyim ve yaşanmışlığın önemli olduğunun arkasında durur.

Tüm bunlar dikkate alındığında, kesişimsel feminizmin, feminist teorinin devamının sağlanması hususunda benimsenmesinin, özellikle TERF tartışmasının taraflarının uzlaşmasının ve bir anlamda farklı bir bakış açısı kazanmalarının sağlanmasının yolu olarak görülmesi mümkündür çünkü eğer bu tarz farklı bir düşünce şekli ortaya konmaz ise feminist düşüncenin içine girdiği kısır döngüden çıkarak, yeni şeyler üretmesi ve farklı çözümler üretmesi ve ilerlemesi mümkün olmayacaktır.

Bütün bunlar göze alındığında, TERF tartışmasının taraflarının, ülkesel konjonktürde, ne söylemlerde buldukları önem kazanmaktadır. Öncelikle Amerikan feminist hareketi bağlamında, trans dışlayıcı söylem ve eylemlerin tarihinin özellikle 1970’li yıllardaki feminist hareketle birlikte ortaya çıktığı savunulmaktadır. Batı Yakası Lezbiyen Konferansı, Olivia Kolektifi Anlaşmazlığı, Janice Raymond’ın “Transseksüel İmparatorluk” adlı kitabı ve Michigan Müzik Festivali, günümüz trans dışlayıcı eylem, söylem ve hareketlerin temeli olarak görülen belli başlı hadiselerdir. Trans bireylere yönelik yapılan aşağılamalar, haklarında yapılan olumsuz benzetmeler, dışlamalar,

tehditler vb. eylemlerin, bu bireylerin trans olması durumundan ötürü olduğu savunusu yapılmaktadır. Ancak, dönemin feminist hareketleri incelendiğinde ortaya çıkan bu dönemde karşı çıkılan ya da savaşılan şeyin trans kimliği olgusu olmadığıdır. Translık henüz bir kimlik olarak tanınmamış bu sebeple de politik söylemin bir parçası haline gelmemiştir. Bu nedenle dönemin kadın hareketinin ya da feministlerinin karşı çıktığı şey daha yapısal bir gerçekliktir. Toplumun her alanına yerleşmiş olan patriarka, erkek üstünlüğü ve kadının üzerinde kurulan baskı kültürü savaşılan asıl olgulardır. Bu nedenle, dönemin radikal feministleri ya da lezbiyen ayrılıkçıları her türlü erkeklik olgusuna karşıdır. Bu bağlamda, kuzu kılığına girmiş kurtlar olarak betimledikleri trans kadınları, dolandırıcı olarak tanımlamakta ve feminist hareketi bölmeye çalışan erkekler olarak tanımlamaktadırlar. Bu dönemle günümüz konjonktüründeki TERF tartışmalarını, geçmiş argümanlarla beslemek ve temellendirmek doğru bir nedensellik kurmak olmayacaktır. Ancak bu durumun aksi olarak, dönemin feminist hareketinin öncü isimlerinden bazılarının söylemleri, örneğin; Janice Raymond'ın trans kapsayıcılık hakkındaki olumsuz düşünceleri, o günlerden bugünlere, translığın bir kimlik olarak tanınmasına rağmen pek bir değişime uğramamış ve dışlayıcılığını korumuştur. Bu düşüncenin devamı bağlamında ortaya çıkan trans dışlayıcı bazı yasal değişiklikler, örneğin; trans bireylerin toplumsal cinsiyet kimlikleriyle örtüşen tuvaletleri, soyunma odalarını vb. kullanmalarının yasaklanması feminist hareket bağlamında da bir gerilemeye ve tartışmanın taraflarının ciddi bir biçimde kutuplaşmasına neden olmuştur. Bu gerilimler ve zıtlaşmalar doğrultusunda, trans bireylere yönelik şiddet ve nefret suçlarında büyük bir artış yaşanmıştır. Aslında bu noktada ortaya çıkan tablo, feminist hareketin bu şekilde bir bölünmeye uğratılmış olduğu ve kadın hareketinin baltalandığıdır. Bu tarz ayrıştırıcı eylemler, otorite tarafından gerçekleştirilen, kadın hareketinin parçası olan, kavganın taraflarının yalnızlaştırılarak, yönetilmesi kolay küçük azınlıklar haline getirilmesine örnektir. Bu nedenle feminizmin devamlılığı ve kadın hareketinin sürekliliği bağlamında, bu tartışmanın taraflarından herhangi birinin galip gelmeyeceğinin anlaşılması, içinde bulunulan kısır döngünün fark edilmesi ve ilerleme adına daha kapsayıcı, baskılanma ilişkilerine daha kesişimsel bakan, her türlü özcü,

genelleyici ve indirgemeci söylem ve eylemden uzak bir feminist bakış açısının benimsenmesinin gerekliliği ortadadır.

İngiltere’de gerçekleşen TERF tartışması ve feminist hareketle ilişkisi incelendiğinde durum pek de farklı değildir. İngiltere bağlamında, TERF tartışmasının fitilini ateşleyen en büyük gelişme 2017 yılında gerçekleştirilmesi planlanan Cinsiyet Kimliği Tanıma Kanunu’na yönelik reform planıdır. Bu reform planı kapsamında, cinsiyet kimliği değişikliğine gitmek isteyen bireylerin yapması gerekenler daha az bürokratik, daha uygun ve kolay hale getirilecektir. Bu reformun kapsadığı en önemli değişiklikler; dönüşüm süreci yaşının 16-17 yaşlarına çekilmesi, tuvalet, soyunma odası ve sığınma evleri gibi alanların cinsiyet kimliği beyanına bağlı olarak kullanılabilmesidir. Planlanan bu değişikliklerin açıklanması doğrultusunda, İngiltere’de TERF tartışmasının fitili ateşlenmiştir. Feminist örgütler ya da diğer kadın sivil toplum kuruluşları bu karara çok sert bir şekilde karşı çıkmışlardır çünkü bu durumun doğumda atanan cinsiyetiyle cinsiyet kimliği örtüşen kadınlar (cis kadınlar) için ciddi şekilde zararları olacağı iddiasında bulunmaktadır. Dışlayıcı söylemlerin temelinde, trans kadınların, translık olgusunu bir kılıf olarak kullanacağı ve asıl amaçlarının tek cinsiyetli alanlarda bulunan kadın ve çocukları taciz ve istismar etmek olduğu düşünceleri yatmaktadır. Diğer taraftan, İngiltere özelinde, bazı Amerikan Hristiyan sağ tandanslı sivil toplum kuruluşları da tartışmanın aktörleri haline gelmiş ve trans dışlayıcı ideolojinin savunuculuğunu yapmıştır. Bu noktada, yukarıda da belirttiğim gibi, şunu fark etmek çok önemlidir; bu tartışmanın muhtemel olarak bir kazananı olmayacaktır. Tek kazanan bu tarz kadın hareketleri gibi özgürleşmeci, ilerici eylemleri bastırmaya ve kontrol etmeye çalışan karşıt görüşlü, cinsiyetçi, otoriter mekanizmalar olacaktır. Bu nedenle feminizmin bu içsel olmayan ve kesişimsellik gibi uzlaşmacı ve kapsayıcı bir yöntem benimseyerek üstesinden gelebileceği bu problemi mantıklı bir biçimde çözüp, gelişmiş bir şekilde yoluna devam etmesi elzemdir. Bunlara ek olarak, kadınları, zayıf, savunmasız ve güçsüz gösteren bu yüzden de korunmak için yalnızca tek cinsiyete ait olan alanlara şiddetle ihtiyaçları olduklarını savunan bu dışlayıcı bakış açısı, yıllardır süregelen feminist

söylemlerle ve kadın hareketinin eylemleriyle örtüşmemektedir. Ayrıca tartışmanın bir cinsel organa sahip olup olmamakla ilgili olması ve bu doğrultuda karşı tarafa zarar verebilip veremeyeceğine karar verilmesi de feminist düşüncenin temellerinin ciddi bir şekilde basite indirgenmesinin sonucudur. Bu nedenle, özellikle İngiltere bağlamında yaygın olan ve trans kadınları, sahtekâr ya da dolandırıcı erkekler olarak nitelendiren bakış açısı sorundur. Ayrıca feminist hareket içerisinde yaratılmaya çalışılan ayrılmaya ya da bölünmeye örnek olarak LGBT toplumundan T'nin (trans) ayrılmasını savunan görüş ve eylemler gösterilebilir. Bu sebeple, feminist hareketin devamlılığı adına bu tarz ayrıştırıcı ve azınlıklaştırmaya çalışan eylem ve söylemlerden kaçınılmalıdır.

Bu iki ülkenin Türkiye'deki tartışmalar üzerindeki etkisi düşünüldüğü zaman gayet etkili oldukları söylenebilir, ancak özellikle son dönemde Türkiye'deki tartışmanın akademik ya da gelişmeci olmaktan tamamen çıkıp bir ifşa, fişleme ya da yaftalama politikası haline dönüştüğü ve kendinden olmayanın susturulduğu ya da baskılandığı bir hal aldığı da ortadadır. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye'deki feminist hareketin ve LGBTQIAA+ hareketinin tarihselliğini ve gelişimini irdelemekte fayda vardır. Bu anlamda, Türkiye'de, özellikle Osmanlı'nın son döneminden beri bir kadın hareketinin mevcut olduğunu belirtmek asla yanlış olmayacaktır. Bu yüzden, Türk kadınının, erkek hegemonyasının baskın olduğu farklı birçok alanda sesini yükselttiği ve bu duruma karşı çıkmaya çalıştığı bir gerçektir. Örneğin, 1800lü yılların sonunda kadınlar, Arap kültüründen alınmış bir gelenek olan erkeğin çok eşli olabilmesi durumuna karşı bir duruş sergilemiş ve mevcut aile yapısında revizyona gidilmesi gerektiği konusu üzerine söylemlerde bulunmuşlardır. Sonrasında, 1900'lü yılların başında, Abdülhamit'in tahttan indirilmesi ve mutlakiyetçi yönetim şekline son verilmesiyle, daha özgür bir ortama geçiş yapıldı ve bu durum kadın hareketinin ilerlemesi ve kadınların erkek egemenliğine başkaldırısı konularında olumlu gelişmelere yol açtı. 1920'li yılların gelmesiyle birlikte ise kadınlar, anne ve eş rollerinin yanı sıra sahip oldukları iş rolleriyle anılmaya başladılar. Kadınlar artık, her alanda olmasa bile, iş sahibi olabiliyorlardı ve çalışabildikleri alanlardan başlıcaları; sağlık, eğitim ve dikiş-nakış alanlarıydı.

Cumhuriyet'in ilanıyla birlikte ise kadınlar kamusal alanın bir parçası haline geldiler. Bu dönemde, geçmişteki eğitim taleplerinin yanı sıra kadınlar hedefleri arasına ulusun eğitimi gibi vatansever eğilimleri de eklediler. Bu dönemin en önemli ideolojik ilkelerinden biri olan halkçılık, feminizmin bir türü sayılabilecek kadıncılık alt ilkesini de içinde barındırıyordu ancak dönemin kadınları ve kadın hareketi, Atatürk'ün ve Kemalizm'in "eşit Türk kadını ve erkeği" söylemiyle hedeflerinin hepsine çoktan ulaşıldığını savunuyordu. 1935 ve 1975 yılları arasında, özellikle kadın hareketleri ve feminizm anlamında hiçbir gelişmenin gerçekleşmediğini söylemek yanlış olmayacaktır çünkü bu dönemde kadınlar "Türk kadını, Batılı kadınların önüne geçti" söylemlerinin de etkisiyle hayır kurumlarında çalışmaya itilmişlerdir. Sonrasında, 1980'lere gelene kadar, Türk kadınının toplumdaki bastırılmış ve ezilmiş pozisyonu politik bir mesele haline getirilip, irdelenmeye çalışılmıştır ancak bu irdelenme kadın hareketleri kapsamında değil daha çok sol eğilimlerin sınıf mücadelesi söylemi dahilinde olmuştur. 1980 darbesi sonrasında ise Batılı toplumların ikinci dalga feminizm örneğini biraz geç de olsa benimseyen Türk kadını, kadın hakları ve özgürleşmesi adına harekete geçmiştir. Bu dönemde, devlet dışı çevrelerde sol tandanslı örgütlerin etkisini yitirmesiyle birlikte ivmelenen kadın hareketi, LGBTQIAA+ hareketinin de öncüsü olmuştur. Özellikle, 1987 yılında Gezi Parkı'nda gerçekleşen ve polis gözetimi altında şiddete maruz kalan trans seks işçileri adına yapılan eylem, Türkiye'deki ilk LGBTQIAA+ eylemi olarak kabul edilmektedir. Hareket daha sonrasında, 1990'lı ve 2000'li yıllarda, iyice ivme kazandı. Ancak 2002 yılında iktidara gelen AKP hükümeti sebebiyle, kadın hareketleri ve LGBTQIAA+ hareketleri sekteye uğramış ve azınlık gruplar haline getirilmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu durum, gene yukarıda bahsedilen, cinsiyetçi, baskıcı ve otoriter mekanizmaların bir yönetim biçimi olarak bu grupları kontrol altına almaya çalışmasının bir sonucudur. Ancak 2013 yılında gerçekleşen Gezi Parkı Eylemleri dönemi, Türkiye'de LGBTQIAA+ temelli politikaların, gey hakları aktivizminin ve liberal kimlik politikasının ötesinde olabileceğinin ispatı olmuştur. Ancak bu dönemden sonra, trans dışlayıcılık söylemleri bağlamı kapsamında ortaya çıkan tartışma ortamı, feminist hareketin içinde tekrardan bir ayrışmaya sebep olmuştur. Bu süreçte yaşananlardan, tartışmadaki gerilimi en

üst noktaya taşıyanlar, Onur Haftası yürüyüşleri kapsamında gerçekleşen cis kadın aktivistlerin trans aktivistleri yürüyüşten dışarıya çıkartmak istemesi, trans kadınların yeterince kadın olmadığı söyleminin ortaya atılması, trans kadınların Onur Yürüyüşleri harici ortaya çıkmadığı, kadına şiddet, tecavüz ve kadın cinayetleri eylemlerinde yer almadıkları vurgusu, cis feminist aktivistlerin transfobik olarak yaftalanma korkusuyla trans kimliğini anlamak adına soru sormaktan kaçınması ve bazı cis feminist akademisyenlerin hormon terapisi ve yürüyüşlerde açılan pankartlar doğrultusunda ortaya koydukları eleştiri temelli düşünceleri olmuştur. Bu nedenle, özellikle Türkiye'deki tartışma, gerilimin en üst noktalara çıktığı, tarafların birbirlerine tutumlarının gelişim ve ilerlemeden uzak, düşmancıl bir şekilde ilerlediği, feminizmin gelişimi adına hiçbir katkı sağlamayan bir duruma gelmiştir. Belki de bu sebepten ötürü artık daha farklı, kapsayıcı ve yenilikçi bir feminist söylemin benimsenmesi elzemdir.

Tüm bu bilgiler doğrultusunda, bir sonraki bölümde feminizmin tarihsel gelişiminin, dönemsel konjonktür ve şartlar doğrultusunda adım adım ilerlemesini ve bu sebepten ötürü de 1990'larda ortaya çıkan kesişimsel feminizmin bu dönemin koşullarıyla ve değişimleriyle en çok uyuşan feminist söylem olması nedeniyle, benimsenmesinin bu düşüncenin gelişmesi ve ilerlemesi adına en önemli ve gerekli adım olacağını detaylandırarak ve örneklendirerek anlatmaya çalıştım.

Bütün bu bilgileri, detaylandırarak ve örneklendirerek kapsamlı bir biçimde anlattığım, çalışmamın ilk dört bölümünden sonra, son kısımda ve kapanışta, kesişimselliğin bir hayli düşmanca ilerleyen TERF tartışmasının yatıştırılması ve feminist düşüncenin devamlılığının sağlanması adına benimsenmesinin gerekliliğinin vurgusunu yaptım. Özellikle Türkiye bağlamında, LGBTQIAA+ hareketi ve feminist hareket çok kırılabilir ve bozulmaya müsait bir yapıya sahip olduğundan ötürü, birlik olması gereken hareketler içerisinde oluşan bu tarz ayrışmalar, çatışan tarafların yararına olmazken aksine otoriter, cinsiyetçi ve baskıcı yönetim mekanizmalarının yararına olmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, kesişimsel feminizmin benimsenmesi, savunduğu kapsayıcılık, baskı ve dışlanmanın

anlaşılması için kompleks güç ilişkilerinin incelenmesi gerekliliđi, kimliklere ve olgulara tek eksenli bakmak yerine ilişkisellik boyutundan incelenmesi gerektiđi, kimlikleri tek tek tanıyan kimlik politikaları yerine onların bir ađ içerisinde bütün olarak düşünülmesi ilkeleri ile TERF tartışmasının sonlandırılması ve feminist düşüncenin ilerlemesi açısından elzemdir.

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### YAZARIN / AUTHOR

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THE STUDY OF TERF DEBATE IN THE CONTEXTS OF US, UK & TURKEY & THE EMBRACEMENT OF INTERSECTIONAL FEMINISM FOR RECONCILIATION PROPOSAL

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