

**“HOW TO READ” INSTEAD OF “WHAT TO READ”:  
FEMALE AUTHORS IN TURKISH LITERATURE AS OBJECTS/SOURCES OF  
FEMINIST CRITICISM**

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Feminist criticism is a component of cultural studies that emerge from the questioning of the modernistic, holistic conception predominant in society.

The first-wave feminist movement evolved in mutual interaction with the modernisation project. Obtained through the so-called supra-gender idealism of the “human rights” discourse, legal rights also supported women’s participation in the public sphere. Although women gained the formal freedom to appear in areas where male values prevailed, they had to either masculinise or retain their traditional roles since the masculine rules of the game remained unquestioned. Thus, modernity produced stereotypes for all social values including the gender-related ones, by even integrating potential oppositions into reproduction processes.

**FEMINIST CRITICISM CHALLENGES ALL GIVEN VALUES:**

Deconstructing the official modern discourse and the modern way of living is at the core of the criticism of modernity. Within this new discourse, which defines and, in turn, is defined by actions, feminist criticism signifies far more than a simple methodology. It challenges modernity in ways similar to environmentalist and ethnic movements, and has even a greater destructive force since it encompasses all individuals (being congenital/biological features, sexual characteristics present a more visible form of identity with the absolute and readily available data they provide regarding a person). Therefore, feminist criticism is an absolutely political practice.

In most general terms, feminist criticism can be defined as bringing the feminine perspective into the given order of things. Developed from the idea that providing women “freedom and equality” to live like men by social transformations that take place as part of the modernisation process does not ease the problematic of femininity, feminist criticism is a social project and therefore has sociological aspects.

Intertwining with discourses on omnipresence of power relations and political nature of private sphere, feminist criticism also has psychological aspects as it concentrates on attitudes and behaviours.

Nevertheless, it is a flexible formula that can be applied to all readings/interpretations, given the male-dominant structure underlying various practices such as sciences, art, etc. Thus, from mathematics, which is claimed to be a neutral area, to cinema, astronomy and theology, all sciences that serve us in understanding and manipulating the world become objects for feminist criticism.

**LITERATURE AS AN AREA FOR FEMINIST CRITICISM:**

Being primarily an ideological interpretation, feminist criticism deconstructs various types of discourses including arts and literature, which I will be dealing with in this

paper. The main intention is not to evaluate the artworks, but rather to take them as means to decipher/reveal the underlying sexist structure. From the perspective of traditional literary criticism, feminist criticism's starting point is the idea that "literature reflects the society." Again, in an analysis of origins, feminist criticism can, to a great extent, be related with sociological criticism with respect to the techniques it employs. The discourse and documents of official history either exclude women or confine them to side roles. On the other hand, be it regarded as an artistic imitation and/or reflection of society as mimesis; formed/interpreted to communicate the requirements of the society from a social realist perspective; or subjected to an evaluation based on the stereotypes of critical realism, literature involves sexist patterns.

Feminist literary criticism brings the feminine perspective into literary text analyses. These texts, however, do not have to be written by women. All literary works can render different meanings through a feminine perspective, and provide us personal, period-specific, regional, ethnic, religious, class-related or ideological information on femininity. After all, "until contemporary times, women, (...) wrote like men, without breaking away from norms."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, works by many women are more masculine compared to those written by men: "Many women do not specifically address the 'feminine.' For instance, I am not sure if Simone de Beauvoir's work represents femininity. Mallarmé's work may be considered more feminine."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, "where authorship has remained unknown, inferences from a text to its possible author or that author's sex have proved entirely inconclusive."<sup>3</sup>

In my opinion, it is impossible to conceive "feminine" or "masculine" in pure forms, detached from all cultural conditioning/codes. The so-called feminine characteristics we know are those inscribed by the male-dominant system. We are embedded in culture to such extent that it is impossible for us to determine how essential or natural these characteristics are. If gender roles are formed through social learning, "woman" or "man" cannot be defined without making reference to this process. Social or biological it may be, the hierarchy among sexes should be abolished. The peculiar characteristics of femininity and masculinity have faded away or, in other words, were recreated/constructed in the course of thousands of years by social learning and communication. Deconstructive studies are carried out to see through sexist attitudes. Finding out the feminine aspects in literature or determining the gender of an author would offer but an irrelevant discussion. Before all, by reinterpreting literary works feminist criticism offers us facts that are missing from the pages of official archives, and in that sense, has even a wider significance.

## SOCIOLOGY OF LITERATURE, FEMINIST CRITICISM: THE CASE OF TURKEY

In this context, the feminist criticism of literary works in Turkey will present a significant alternative to the dominant official discourse, which overlooks/censors/distorts femininity. As an institution of the superstructure, literature inescapably includes the codes of the existing power relations; however, thanks to its symbolic nature, it also becomes an important source to communicate unbiased facts.

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<sup>1</sup>C.P.Makward, "La Critique Féministe, Eléments d'une Problématique", *Revue Des Sciences Humaines*, Lille III, 168 (1977-4) : 623

<sup>2</sup>J.Kristeva, J.; "Entretien", 34/44 *Cahiers de Recherches S.T.D.Paris7*, 13 ( 1984) : 59-64.

<sup>3</sup>E. Kern, "Author or Autheress", *Yale French Studies*, *Women Writers*, 27 (1961) : 5

Literature provides the most readily available material regarding the transformation of femininity in Turkey. Moreover, research on literature remained largely unaltered by the process of replacing the Arabic with the Latin alphabet, since unlike magazines, newspapers, papers or bureaucratic documents from the period before 1928, literary works were transcribed into Latin alphabet.

In short, even though it offers a range of works reflecting the power relations and appears in line with the patterns of these relations, literature continues to represent the daily life. Having a structure idealised by the official discourse, history reveals its backstage through literature. Deciphering the ways the male-dominant structure defines literature, feminist criticism also writes an alternative history from the data that literature offers. In this context, literature and feminist literary criticism are significant sources to gather information about women. This methodology and source provide valuable data for all studies focusing on femininity in Turkey.

Due to its qualitative and quantitative richness, literature is a significant source with a lasting effect. In this article on femininity in Turkey I will be dealing with examples from female prose writers; however, the intention behind is not the idea that these sources provide better data on femininity. My choice of female authors as the object of study may also be thought to be related with their sexual identities. However, as I have mentioned before, it remains unclear to what extent author's gender is reflected in the work since both female and male authors are socialized within a sexist order. Especially when the topic of female authors in Turkey is being examined, the issue's relation with modernisation cannot be overlooked. Since modernisation can be read as a process of making women equal to men, the women that can "rise" to a certain status, including some authors, "masculinise." Thus, far from being preferred choices to apply feminist criticism, the works of female authors present further difficulties. Given the vast area and huge number of works that literature encompasses, I have to limit my sources to some examples from female authors when explaining femininity in Turkey.

Needless to say, the main intention behind the creation of these works is not the socio-psychological kind of data that I will be trying to deduce, but rather literary concerns. For me, literature is a socio-psychological and, from the perspective of feminist criticism, an ideological source/means; whereas, it stands as a destination for the authors mentioned in the article, even at times when they do have awareness on the ideological function specified above.

I also would like to point out that presenting a study on femininity in Turkey is not the main intention behind this paper. The primary objective is to highlight the fact that once feminist criticism is applied, literature can serve as a significant source on the question of woman.

#### FEMALE AUTHORS IN TURKEY:

In Turkey, women's writing appeared in mutual interaction with the peculiar dynamics of the modernisation process:

1. Women's writing in Turkey has been in a reciprocal relationship with the transformation in the status of women and with the struggle to this cause. The emergence of women's writing and female authors coincided with the process of making men and women formally equal, and with the heyday of the underlying and resulting first-wave feminism. The first-wave feminism was interrelated with the requirements of the industrial revolution. At this stage of social

transformation, production moved from private to public sphere, letting women to participate first in the work scene (as replacing and cost-effective workforce), then to the field of education since the new system called for qualified workers. In accordance with this infrastructure, the human rights discourse of the bourgeois revolution was brought in, influencing the intellectual background of the first-wave feminism. Unable to effect a transformation in the infrastructure, the Ottoman Empire adopted a suprastructural transformation by embracing the modern way of living where women became showcase elements, and reduced the issue into a Westernisation problem. Transferred to the institutions of the Republic with the same motives, this project supported women (especially the distinguished ones), who have began to appear in education, work and political scenes and struggled for their rights to be turned into laws, to take place in the media and literature scene.

The second-wave feminist movement, a component of the criticism of modernity, and questioning of sexist values is reflected in Turkish literature starting from the latter half of the 1980s.

2. Acting as agents of modernity with their lives and works, most female authors chose the novel genre at least for some period during their careers. V.Woolf claims that women were primarily engaged with novel instead of history, biography, play or poetry because in patriarchal societies they were responsible from the private sphere, which provided a restricted and often interrupted area of experience:

“Women never have a half hour . . . that they can call their own — she was always interrupted. Still it would be easier to write prose and fiction there than to write poetry or a play. Less concentration is required. (...) Her sensibility had been educated for centuries by the influences of the common sitting-room. People’s feelings were impressed on her; (...) Therefore, when the middle-class Woman took to writing, she naturally wrote novels.”<sup>4</sup>

Statistical data from 2001 also reveals the fact that in their first years in the literature scene, novel was women’s preferred choice, and female authors seem to have developed a rising interest in storywriting since the latter half of the 20th century, eventhough there is no striking difference between the number of novels or stories written. Of the total 2132 authors lived and produced since the Tanzimat Period, 278 (13%) are women. For the authors born between the years 1881–1900, 3,45% of the storywriters were women; whereas the figures rose up to 29,63% for authors born between the years 1961–1978. For the authors born between the years 1881–1900, 12,77% of the novelists were women and the figures rose up to 25,64% for the generation of authors born between the years 1961–1978. As for poetry, it obviously is the literary genre with male dominance at least in terms of number of works produced: Of the poets born between the years 1881–1900, 1,75% were women; whereas of the poets born between the years 1961–1978, 11,78% are women.<sup>5</sup>

3. Women’s writing in Turkey is related to urban life and the process of urbanisation especially in terms of its main problematiques.

As familial agricultural production was phased out to be replaced by industrial production rural-urban immigration waves also started. New work areas were formed in the city, which, in turn, transformed the urban life. Transition from the traditional society to a modern one

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<sup>4</sup> V.Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, (South Australia: The University of Adelaide Library 2009) <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/chapter4.html> (accessed January 26, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> E.Aksoy, “Edebiyatçı Kadınların Toplumsal Profili”, Unpublished Article, 2003:31-32

was yet another reflection of the same process. As I have stated before, it is during this modernisation process that women started to appear in the public sphere. They gradually became the educated and working citizens of the nation-state, having equal rights with men. The transformation first occurred in the cities. However, modern opportunities were at the disposal of the privileged women who could become a part of the city and socioeconomical transformation the underlying it. The number of female authors also increased as the theme of villages/rural areas disappeared from Turkish literature. Urban values and sensitivity were among the main components of women's writing in Turkey.

In Turkey, Sami Frasheri's 1872 work *Taaşuk-u Talat ve Fitnat* was the first example in the genre of novel, a literary form which was introduced to the Turkish literature as a result of the modernisation process/choice. In 1877, Zafer Hanim's *Aşk-ı Vatan* was published in Istanbul, only five years after the first male novelist's work was published. In the West, women emerged in the novel scene as men started to lose interest in the genre and engage with the "rising star" of the period, i.e., cinema<sup>6</sup>. Thus, in the West the female novelists could appear only when men chose to evacuate the scene; whereas, in Turkey, women began to write novels simultaneously and, naturally, competed with men since novel, beyond being a work of art, had a function of forming a social model in the framework of Westernisation movement.

#### EXAMPLES FROM THE WORKS OF FEMALE AUTHORS IN TURKEY THAT REFLECT THE LIVES OF WOMEN

Known as the first female novelist until recent times, Fatma Aliye's (1862–1936) first literary work was a translation. Aliye translated *Meram* [*La Volonté*] from French into Turkish, signing it as "A lady" instead of her own name; however, she used her name in *Muhaderat*, her first novel. Both her translation and novel attracted a great deal of attention and were published in second editions. Daughter of Ahmet Cevdet Pasha, a renowned intellectual and politician of the time, Fatma Aliye was brought up in an elite setting and had private education. In the foreword of *Muhaderat* she addresses female readers, which reveals the fact that at the time there was a significant group of female readers. Although she was a member of the upper class, Aliye also lived through the problems of the period such as arranged marriage, infidelity, not being able to return to the family home, or concubinage. Her personal experiences reveal the fact that femininity is a supra-class issue reaching beyond social classes or layers. However, making use of the opportunities of the period, she managed to pursue her happiness by finding solutions and remarrying<sup>7</sup>. Her second novel *Refet* (1896) was about cooperation among women and the social recognition women gained by getting educated and having a profession (teacher), highlighting the fact that marriages made to soothe future concerns were no more women's destiny. Besides, the protagonist of the novel was a poor person<sup>8</sup>. Her novel *Udi* (1897) also revolves around the economic independence of women, and *Levayih-i Hayat* (1897) focuses on five women's problems with the institution of marriage. In *Enin* (1912), the protagonist is a rationalist woman with an interest in natural sciences, who, being cheated on by her fiancé, decides not to marry, and yet boldly embraces

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<sup>6</sup> M.Perrot, "Interview", *Nouvel Observateur*, April 15-21, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> F.Aliye, *Muhaderat* (Istanbul: Beyaz Balina, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> M,Kızıltan. *Fatma Aliye Hanım Yaşamı-Sanatı-Yapıtları ve Nisvan-ı İslam.* (Istanbul:Mutlu, 1993), 23-24.

the decision<sup>9</sup>. In fact, not only her novels, but all works (1) and activities of Fatma Aliye reflect the then-current issues of femininity. Her work documents the fact that, in the latter half of the 19th century, women could somehow find solutions to their problems by getting educated, working, criticising arranged marriage or leaving the unfaithful spouse.

Halide Edip is one of the pioneering figures that, both by her life and her works, offers the possibility of feminist criticism to oppose against the official history, which denies the socio-political laws of social transformation and disregards women's struggle by reducing the transformations in femininity into accomplishments of the Early Republican Period. As the theme of the present paper is feminist literary criticism, I will not expose Halide Edip's life in detail; however, I would like to provide highlights from her life story. She had two children, and despite all the difficulties and the fact that she had nowhere else to go, she was divorced in the beginning of 1900s when her husband decided to take a second wife; she founded Teali-i Nisvan, one of the prominent women associations, to carry out activities to emancipate women; produced literary works and published articles in numerous newspapers and magazines during and after the Second Constitutionalist Era; became the first woman academic scholar in Turkey (1919); gave talks to a broad audience on patriot struggle such as the Sultanahmet rally, protesting the occupation of Izmir, where she spoke to 250.000 people; took a role in the Turkish War of Independence; joined in a political party entitled Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Firkasi in 1924 and left the country when the party was abolished to live and work in France, England and USA until 1939; was an independent member of the parliament representing Izmir from the DP list in the 1950s... Similar to most authors, Halide Edip also "takes her life as the 'axis' of her novels"<sup>10</sup>. According to Halide Edip, "the events are often based on real experiences, some witnessed in person and some recounted by others."<sup>11</sup> Thus, reading her works through the perspective of feminist criticism will provide significant data completing and/or refuting the official discourse regarding the transformation of femininity. In her early works before 1910, Halide Edip especially presented the emotional binds of the "modern" women, which, according to the claims of the official history, had emerged on the scene at some point during the Republic period. The educated and economically privileged women of the period could not overcome their passivity especially in terms of the institution of marriage. Adivar's novel *Seviye Talip* (1910), however, is a unique novel. *Seviye Talip*, the protagonist of the novel, is again a well-educated woman; she criticizes the institution of marriage and enjoys an "extramarital affair" as her husband refuses to divorce. "Overthrowing the basics of life (...) and refusing society's ungrounded opinions," *Seviye Talip* was criticized by some people around her; however, the ones appreciating her were not few in number. Discussing and exposing the basic views on femininity during the Constitutional Era, this novel also points out to the tension between modern and traditional values.

Later novels of Halide Edip present data on the politicization of women. Having influenced by Turkism in the earlier periods, the female protagonist, now, right before the founding of the nation-state, becomes a nationalist, patriot characters especially in works revolving around the Turkish War of Independence. Although this new role did not bring a

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<sup>9</sup> ibidem.,24,25,27.

<sup>10</sup> A.Binyazar, "Eylemiyle de Öncülük Eden Halide Edip'le Romanımız, İnsanımıza Sahip Çıkmaya Başladı", *Milliyet Sanat Dergisi* 306 (15 January 1979): 4.

<sup>11</sup> ibidem

legal status (neither for women in general nor for Halide Edip in person), Halide Edip gathered many votes in the 1919 elections, especially from Giresun, Erzurum, and Beypazari.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the life and works of Halide Edip document the fact that women's right to elect and be elected has developed through a process, and the law of 1934 was in fact a later step, not an "early bestowment" as official history would claim.

Although it was published in 1934, *Sinekli Bakkal* was often thought to belong to the pre-Republican period because of its theme. The novel also reflects the main theme present in author's other works. The woman is among the primary objects and subjects of the society transiting from the traditional way of living into modernity: She transforms the institution of marriage, takes a role in the work scene, engages in political activities, and oscillates between East and West.

In scope of the modernisation project, all rights regarding women were protected by laws in the first years of the Republic and the discourse highlighting "a single identity: the citizen" brought a temporary solution, declining the first-wave feminist movement in Turkey, similar to all other parts of the world. Favored female authors of the period such as Muazzez Tahsin Berkant (1899–1984) or Kerime Nadir (1917–1984) produced fairytale-like works. This fact has to be interpreted as a reflection of the stagnation period that ran between the two waves of feminist movement, or between the modernism's incorporation into society and the emergence of its criticism.

In the 1950s, by the end of the stagnation period, Nezihe Meric's (1925- ) stories presented the way the theoretical equality between men and women intervened in the practices, while leaving the content unaltered within the discourse of modernisation. In her stories, Meric depicted scenes from the lives of women, who, as agents of modernisation, "freely" participated in public life while retaining their traditional roles, and showed how women were torn between household roles and work in their modern, yet traditional lives.

In the 1960s, sub-identities such as ones based on gender, race or ethnicity appeared on world's intellectual stage along with the criticisms addressing the universal concept of modernity. In Turkey, however, the hot issue on the agenda was the discussions regarding the "system," which did not criticise modern values. In this context, issues regarding femininity were being spotted, yet the solutions were not regarded as separate from other social issues.

Although the parameters of urbanisation and education led to a significant rise in the number of female authors, women put away the issues regarding their gender to favor more general social solutions.

Reflecting the sociological transformation of the intellectual petit bourgeois woman as the showcase of the Republic Project, Adalet Agaoglu (1929- ) in fact brings along an existential approach especially in her early works. Thus, the questioning characters and their problems occur on an intellectual level, and there is never an evaluation regarding the gender identity. In later periods, the author presents her ideas on femininity through a perspective of the "melting pot" of social classes.

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<sup>12</sup> A.Yaraman, *Türkiye'de Kadınların Siyasal Temsili*, (Istanbul:Bağlam,1999), 46.

Along with Adalet Agaoglu, authors such as Furuzan (1935- ), Tomris Uyar (1941–2003) and Pınar Kur (1945- ) depicted characters such as working, activist, leftist, intellectual, student, sentenced, bourgeois or rural women and single mothers, not within the framework of femininity problematique, but in a social, political rhetoric. Although the characters were mostly modern women, they did/could not relate their personal issues with modernity and the male-dominance beneath modernity's veil.

With works closely resembling her life story, Sevgi Soysal (1936–1976) also merged the existential feeling of discontent with the so-called supra-gender solutions of the then-rising leftist ideology, without bringing a gender-based interpretation or solution. Excluding explicitly “feminist” interpretations from her works, Sevgi Soysal, however, did make feminist remarks in terms of problematizing femininity and lived in life with her ideas, without openly addressing the issue on a conceptual level<sup>13</sup>. For that reason, before moving on to evaluate the second-wave feminism in Turkey, which emerged by the changing dynamics due to the 12 September 1980 Coup, the resulting transformations and their reflections in literary works, it is to be noted that Sevgi Soysal served as a bridge, that first gave the “genderless” citizen a feminine identity<sup>14</sup> and then took a further step to transform the genderless “sister” discourse into a feminine perspective/feminist criticism.

The 12 September 1980 Coup was a breaking point for many areas including femininity as well. Especially the women intellectually or actively participating in leftist ideologies towards the “social emancipation” that “revolution” would bring about, and, who, could not leave behind their characteristic of being from the “the second sex” even in the “process of struggle,” started to question their experiences and gender identities. Emerging within the context of the criticism of modernity, the second-wave feminist movement made its way into Turkey's agenda in the 1960s.

In her 1983 work *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm*, Latife Tekin (1957- ) introduced a new feminine voice to the novel, one that had just found a literary expression. Through this feminine voice, she also recounted the new urbanites and the origins from the perspective of the experiencing subject instead of an outsider/observer. In a period when urban and modern way of living gained popularity, Latife Tekin was a female author from a different social class and cultural background, unique in terms of the content and style of her writing. Her writing emerged not from the conservatism of modernist thinking, but rather from its antipole that was inescapably created by the social structure resulting from modernity. In that sense, she was consciously or unconsciously “revolutionary” in terms of both the style and the content of her writing. Instead of being recounted by an “overlooking”/“tolerating” approach, periphery was now presented as a social fact. The author not only brought the “other” women's lives into literature, but also criticized the male-dominant leftist movement of the 60s and 70s in her 1986 work *Gece Dersleri*.

Duygu Asena's work questioning the “freedom” and “equality” of modern women and disseminating the basic questions of the period's second-wave feminism to broader audience was published in 1987 under the title *Kadının Adı Yok* [*The Woman Has No Name*], turning the impasse of the first-wave feminist movement into a slogan. The process identifying the freedom and equality of modern woman with being masculinized defined the

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<sup>13</sup> A.Yaraman, “Dönemine Sorumlu, Döneminden Sorunlu Bir Kadın: Sevgi Soysal” in Biyografya1 ed. A.Yaraman, (Istanbul:Bağlam, 2001), 143-157.

<sup>14</sup> A.Yaraman, “Toplumsal Değişme ve Kadında Erkeksilik”, Psikanaliz Yazıları 5 (Fall 2002): 47-54.



language and styles of female authors, influencing especially the authors during the period before and after the 1980s. After Latife Tekin, Duygu Asena also produced works that represented the women as “the other” in terms of language and style, as well as content. Duygu Asena’s work not only reflected the way femininity was problematized those days, but also held a significant place in terms of disseminating and communicating the problematique to broader audience.

Religions, or, to put it more correctly, Islam, which was confined to the private sphere and considered to be reactionary from the perspective of the values prescribed by the secular nation-state also revived to stand against modernity. As a cultural identity excluded in the name of the “progressive” principle of modernisation, being a Muslim was also reflected in literature, along with femininity, which was overlooked by the so-called supra-gender condition of the ideal modern “citizen.” Publishing articles and biographies mostly concentrating on the problematiques of women and Islam in the latter half of the 1980s, Cihan Aktas (1960- ), in the stories and novels she is writing since the 1990s, criticises Muslims’ refusal of modernist contributions to femininity, as well as expressing the oppression of modernity on Muslim women.

Thus the problem of the “secular/modern” women and that of the “Muslim/traditional” women with modernity are reflected in literature, and their struggles both questioned patriarchal values.

Following their colleagues from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the female authors of this period also keenly criticised marriage. It was recognized that having equal legal rights did not transform traditional, patriarchal division of work especially in the private sphere, and the narrow nature of the horizons of the first-wave feminist movement, which was limited with the benefits of modernisation, was also pointed out.

In the atmosphere of 1980s where the socialisation process was brought to social awareness through femininity, lives of women ceased to reflect a mission in the works of authors such as Sebnem Isiguzel (1973), Ece Temelkuran (1973- )<sup>15</sup> (see. Yaraman 1996) and Elif Safak (1971- ). Implicitly or explicitly present in the works, femininity was a spontaneous reflection of socialisation with the abovementioned feminine awareness. In these works femininity reaches beyond the discourse of oppression. Experiences of women are expressed by bodily, sexual, emotional or intellectual experiences and quests. Now, instead of the protests of being oppressed, the freedom of being a woman is reflected in literature. Similar to all other periods, the themes of female authors are not limited to recounting stories of women. However, “feminine” themes formerly untold by women begins to be expressed in works. In her “autobiographical novel” *Siyah Süit*, published in 2008, Elif Safak recounts the feminine experiences from pregnancy to puerperality, which literature lacked until then, as well as expressing the uneasiness and negativite sides of motherhood, an idealized taboo (2) of the patriarchal consensus.

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<sup>15</sup> See A.Yaraman, “Ece Temelkuran’ın Bütün Kadınların Kafası Karışıkır’ı ya da Türkiye’de Kadın Yazınının Evrimi”, Cumhuriyet Kitap 33 (13 June 1996): 6-7.

## FEMINIST CRITICISM OFFERS INCONSUMABLE SOURCES IN TURKISH LITERATURE:

My aim in this article has been to open an area to enrich the sources regarding women, which has only a limited and distorted place in the official documents and archives, through a feminist reading of literary texts. I have tried to present an example of how the data regarding femininity in Turkey can be gathered from the works of female authors in the light of the theoretical basis of applying feminist criticism to literature. I could not mention many female authors and their works. Besides, feminist criticism can be applied to all literary works including the ones written by men. In that respect, I believe that the comments stated above are limited. Eventhough it would not provide direct data on femininity, I believe that subjecting the works of homosexual writers, who, for the past twenty years have openly expressed their sexual preferences, would reveal new data regarding the patriarchal system in Turkey. Thus, feminist literary criticism will continue to be an important source.

### END NOTES:

1) Against the foreign critics, she defends Islam in relation to femininity in her book *Nisvan-ı İslam*, which was also published in English, Arabic and French. She published articles in several newspapers, founded the first women association (Muhadenet-i Nisvan 1896) (Basbugu 1991, p.284), and was the first female member of Hilal-i Ahmer. In 1893, her works appeared in the catalogue of Woman's Library of the World.

2) Even the scientific analyses are limited in establishing a relationship between the idealisation of motherhood and the patriarchal discourse. The idealisation of motherhood leaves the responsibility of the child to the mother, thereby imposing moral norms on women to affirm and support the patriarchal system. The so-called words of appreciation such as "motherhood is divine" or "the child belongs to the mother" are examples of symbolic violence in Bourdieuan sense. Women who become victims of the patriarchal system or even those who protest it appreciate and repeat these words, which confirm the existing system and approve the lack of parental responsibility on man's part.

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(The works of the authors mentioned in the article are, even in cases not specified, are examined to a great extent. Although they also require to be noted down in the bibliography, length of the list rendered such a practice impossible. I would like to point out to the fact that even the works mentioned by their titles do not appear in the bibliography, and only the publication dates are provided for those works in the body of the article. The bibliography includes the works of women only if a quotation from the source is included in the text.)

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