

WOMEN BEHIND THE PENS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TURKISH FEMALE AUTHORS FROM REFORM PERIOD TO MODERNISM

Senem ÜSTÜN KAYA

English Language Teaching Department, Başkent University, Turkey
efesenem@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

In history, men dominated the political and professional realms while women were limited in domestic spheres and were accepted as the subordinate, “the second sex” or “other” (De Beauvoir, 1968, p. xvi) biologically and naturally. With the French Revolution (1789), women’s suffrage movements emerged all over Europe and due to the wars and the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century onwards, gender shifts occurred because women were involved in the public spheres to substitute men. Under the influences of the western feminism, in the Ottoman Empire, feminist movements began with the Tanzimat Reforms (Zihniöđlu, 2013) in the second half of the 19th century and novelties of the century provided the age of “modernisation” in the lives of the Ottoman women. With the Second Constitutional Monarchy (1908-1922), Turkish female authors appeared in the literary canon with their own names and reflected the social, cultural and political changes in the Ottoman society with feministic views. Through modern periods, there are noteworthy female authors, whose works are the documents of the Turkish Republican Era. Therefore, this study aims at examining the developments of female writings from the Tanzimat Reform Era to modern periods. The study involves three main parts. The first part focuses on the historical analysis of changes in Turkish literature. In the second part, certain Turkish female authors and their works are analysed to exemplify the contextual and discourse levels. Finally, the study concludes that the historical and social developments, which began during the 19th century, constitute the modern period feministic works in Turkish literature. Within this scope, the novels and short stories of Emine Semiye, Fatma Aliye, Nezihe Muhiddin, Halide Edip Adivar and Leyla Erbil were studied. Based on the findings, it was concluded that feministic views and female writings have evolved from the Tanzimat Period to modern ages due to political, social and historical changes in Turkish culture.

Introduction

In history, men dominated the political and professional realms while women were limited in domestic spheres because women were accepted as the subordinate, “the second sex” or “other” (De Beauvoir, 1968, p. xvi) biologically and naturally. The French Revolution (1789) was the turning-point of feminist movements in France where French women sought for independence, liberty and gender equality. This movement influenced all the European women throughout the women’s suffrage movements. After the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, women were involved in the public spheres to substitute men at war and gender shifts emerged almost in all patriarchal societies. Feminists’ movements, which began in the 19th century in western cultures, aimed at changing the condition of women in patriarchal societies. Imprisoned at home, isolated from the society and accepted as the subordinate, women had to struggle for equal rights. Therefore, in the Ottoman Empire, feminist movements began under the influences of the western culture (Zihniöđlu, 2013).

For centuries, female authors have faced prejudices in literary canon because the act of creation have been associated with men, and thus, female writers were accepted as unethical, abnormal and a rebel to nature (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 6). Also, for male authors, the writings of women were accepted as too emotional, and therefore, women had to write with pseudonyms or under male names.

The Ottoman feminism dates back to the second half of the 19th century in the last periods of the Ottoman Empire. Until the Tanzimat Period (1839 and 1876), women’s rights were limited but with the reforms, women gained equalities with men. Novelties of the 19th century provided the age of “modernisation” in the lives of the Ottoman women. During the First (1876-1878) and the Second Constitutional (1908-1918) periods, many intellectual women tended to awake women’s attention to the gender issues.

However, Turkish feminists and intellectuals advocated that women were still domesticated and alienated from the political and social spheres by the norms of the patriarchy. Therefore, they organized conferences, established institutions and charity organizations for women’s employment and founded political parties and unions for women. *Teali-Nisvan (Organization for Women’s Rise)* was one of the most significant union for women to struggle for liberation, political and social rights and equality on education (Erol, 1992; Arat, 1995; Adak, 2007; Gökçimen, 2008; Zihniöđlu, 2013).

Moreover, the Ottoman feminists published articles and wrote literary works both to criticize the expectations of the patriarchal society and create an awareness about gender inequalities. During the Tanzimat Period, female

writers published magazines as *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete (Newspaper for Ladies)* and journals *Kadınlar Dünyası (Women's World)*. This new movement attempted to challenge the perception of women by the society and stereotypical roles imposed on women by the patriarchy. In other words, for Berktaş (2004), women not only demanded equal rights but also questioned the patriarchal system to define themselves in new ways. They demanded respect as individuals, education rights, and change in the imposed roles as mother, wives and daughters.

Female identity and role in society were the major concerns of intellectuals who believed that women's prosperity lead to a prosperous nation. Ottoman cultural integrity and development of the empire were associated with the status of women. In journals and magazines, Turkish feminists tried to awake the attention of women about the inequalities in the society, barriers of patriarchy, the struggles of western women, feminist movements within Europe, the arranged marriages and the subordinate position of women in marriage:

It has to be acknowledged that neither is man created to serve his wife, nor is the woman created to be the slave of man. If a man is able to support both himself and his family with his skills and expertise, why should a woman not demand the same knowledge and skills? What is the difference between men and women if we have the same hands and feet, eyes and brain? Aren't we human beings as well? Is the reason why we have remained in the same place since our creation the difference of our sex? No one who has common sense can accept this! If we as Turkish women are supposed to remain uneducated and ignorant, then shouldn't the European women also be like us? If the reason for our illiteracy is the necessity of being veiled, then what about the peasant women who are working with their men in the fields and helping them by all means? (Rabia, 1869, p. 30).

We, the Ottoman women have been living in indolence, living on our spouse's salary, and become wretched from extreme poverty when left alone by our men. We were illiterate, lazy, unskillful, and unable to support a family with our low income. From now on we need to come to our senses, help each other to reinvigorate the working and educational life [for women] and let us be saved from the wretchedness and destitution that continually threaten us (Fatih, 1912, pp. 2-3).

Kadıoğlu (1998) stated that the reforms during the Republic encouraged women to "educate the nation" and become teachers, but first they were expected to become good mothers and wives (p. 94). Therefore, the Tanzimat Period female authors believed that education was the only salvation for women to gain a self-identity and independence:

Our men find us [women] guilty all the time. Whatever happens, they claim that 'women are ignorant.' Our women are illiterate! Yes, this cannot be denied. But, who are the ones that leave them uneducated? Is it our precious fathers who raise an objection against their daughters' pursuit of higher education after they are twelve? Let's say that our mothers are not conversant. I wonder how benevolent our men are towards us. What kind of a self-sacrifice and endeavor did they show us? None! Is not it? What do they expect from us? What right do they have to make demands on us? (Haydar, 1911, p. 2-3).

Although many male intellectuals advocated the feministic movements, there was no change in the status of women because Turkish women had to struggle in society similar to those in many European countries because the Ottoman society was based on a strict patriarchal system:

Let us confess, today a woman lacks the rights to live and be free... her life is dominated by a father, a maternal or paternal uncle, a husband or a brother who takes advantage of traditions and customs. It is impossible for her to set a goal or an ideal for herself (Demirdirek, 1999, p. 74).

Ottoman women's demands were parallel to the struggle for women's rights in the West. They followed women's movements around the world but underlined the fact that living in an Islamic society set different conditions for them. When they discussed their demands within the framework of Islam, they provided supportive examples from "asri saadet", the "undistorted" days of Islam, but they refused to compromise (Demirdirek, 1999, p. 79).

Ottoman men and women have tried to legitimate and rationalize these kinds of Islamic principles by using a sociological formula based on the necessity of a social order that is in accordance with the nature of a 'woman' and 'man' (Durakbaşa, 2002, p. 105).

[Osmanlı kadınları ve erkekleri, bu tür İslami ilkeleri, 'kadın' ve 'erkek doğası ile uyumlu toplumsal düzen ihtiyacına dayanan bir sosyolojik formülü kullanarak rasyonel gösterip meşrulaştırmaya çalışmışlardır]

The women's suffrage movements, which initiated with the Tanzimat period, reached its peak after the establishment of Republic in Turkish culture. Turkish women gained rights in education, marriage and divorce, inheritance and politics. Due to the women's inclusion in work places after the First World War and Balkan War,

Reform Acts in economic, social and political spheres were initiated (Kurnaz, 1991, p. 128). 1918-1923 time span was the period when the society was reshaped and experienced politic, economic and social changes. After the foundation of the Turkish Republic (1923), women found opportunities to criticize the gender equalities in the society. Although the republican era was the synthesis of old and new and traditional and modern, the change in the regime could not provide women their desires and expectations about equality: “the absolute domination of father,” was handed over “to the republic of brothers” (Berktaş, 2003, p. 105) and male domination ignored women as “concrete/factual female [subjects]” (Berktaş, 2001: 357). The ideal woman of the Republic was shaped by the traditions of the Ottoman norms and the western culture: an “enlightened” mother and a “masculinized” social actor (Kandiyoti, 1995); chaste (Kadıoğlu, 1993), morally strong, virtuous, a modern partner of a man, “modern[ized] but modest” (Kadıoğlu, 1993), responsible of the education of the generations (Durakbaşa, 1998a: 36) and “a good mother, loyal wife and Muslim woman” (Toska, 1998, p. 75).

Female Authors From Tanzimat Era To Modern Period

Emine Semiye (1864-1944) was the daughter of a famous historian and statesman, Ahmet Cevdet Pasha and sister of Fatma Aliye. She was an Ottoman prolific author, a politician, journalist and teacher who supported women's education and professional life both in her novels and articles published in notable journals. She produced novels and stories involving biographical traces and criticism of the domestication of women. Emine Semiye was one of the first Ottoman Muslim educated women (Karaca, 2011) who attended to a formal school (Kurnaz, 1991, p. 30). In 1882, Emine Semiye worked as a Turkish and literature teacher in İstanbul and other towns (Karaca, 2011). She wrote articles for *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete (Newspaper for Ladies)*, *Kadın (Woman)*, *Saadet (Bliss)* and *İzler (Traces)*, a math textbook and novels *Sefalet (Poverty)* and *Gayya Kuyusu (The Pit of Hell)*.

Emine Semiye contributed to the Ottoman women movement (Kurnaz, 2012) by establishing charity organizations to support women's suffrage. In 1897, she founded *Şefkat-i Nisvan Cemiyeti (Charity for Women)* and became a member of Committee of Union. While dealing with politics and writings, Semiye dedicated her life for the education of girls because she believed that education was essential for a prosperous nation. She travelled the country and educated girls in the distant places. Emine Semiye used her pen to educate not only women but also the Ottoman society (Karaca, 2011: 298).

In her article, “Kadınlık” (“Womanhood”), Semiye criticized the domestication of women and social identity imposed on women. The concept of “womanhood” was enriched and developed by Emine Semiye and Fatma Aliye and it aimed at investigating the condition of the Ottoman women in the patriarchal system, suggesting solutions to the gender inequalities and providing the Ottoman women a westernized modern world blended with the traditions. The main aim of the founders of this group was to educate women, help them find jobs, realize the issues of their society and be enlightened because for them the enlightened women could find their self-identities as an individual (Zihnioğlu, 2013, p. 45).

As mentioned before, the Ottoman feminists accepted education as the only salvation of girls and Emine Semiye underscored this issue in her novel, *Muallime (Tutor)* (1901). The novel is about the significance of education for women. İdris Molla is a teacher and he educated his daughter Bihbude. When blamed and dismissed from her uncle's home, Bihbude becomes a tutor in the house of Mahsul Bey. However, she was abandoned by her fiancé who accused Bihbude with adultery. The novel underscores how education saves the life of a woman who faced difficulties.

Similar to the intellectuals of the Tanzimat period, Emine Semiye underscored the significance of women's education for healthy families and a prosperous nation. Therefore, in her article “İslamiyet'te Feminizm” (Feminism in Islam), she stated that with education, women would begin struggling for their identity and rights in patriarchal societies. For her, the women were the most prominent part of the society, yet their potentiality was restricted by men “...medically, there is no difference between the mind of men and women” [...tıbben kadınla erkek dimağı arasında hiçbir fark yoktur] (Emine Semiye, nd, p. 5). Reacting against the belief that considers women as the shadows of men, Emine Semiye used a critical attitude in her writings.

Fatma Aliye (1862-1936) was the first woman novelist who became the symbol of Turkish feminism (Esen, 2000, p. 120). She was the daughter of a significant bureaucrat and historian intellectual Ahmet Cevdet Pasha and the sister of Emine Semiye. Fatma Aliye was brought up in a conventional family and a conservative society in which there were problems of arranged marriages, polygamy and unfair treatments towards women. However, her family was highly educated and she had the chance of realizing her potential. She could not get a regular education but was interested in her brother's books and French, which she learned from a tutor. Having lived in a gender segregated society, she had the opportunities to use her skills due to her father's effort and sympathy.

After she got married, she was forbidden to read or write by her husband but after giving birth, Fatma Aliye became ill and her husband realized her passion for reading and writing. She translated the novel with the name of *Meram* under the pseudonym “Bir Kadın” (“A Woman”). Although nobody believed that it was translated by a woman, the positive comments encouraged her to continue. She wrote *Hayal ve Hakikat (Dream and Reality)* with Ahmet Mithat Efendi under the name of “A Woman”. Using her real name in 1892, she published *Muhadarat (Muhazarat)*, which was later placed in The Women’s Library of the World’s Fair Catalogue. During 1892 and 1915, she wrote novels, *Udi* and *Nisvan-ı İslam* and wrote journals in *Hanımalar Mahsus Gazete (Newspaper for Ladies)*, *Kadınlar Dünyası (World of Women)* and *İnkılab (Reform)*.

Fatma Aliye dealt with gender relations, women and Islam, impacts of westernization, women’s education, arranged marriages, and the roles of women in the Ottoman Islamic culture. Based on the conflicts emerged during the 19th century about the western world and Islam woman, Fatma Aliye coined a term “Islam woman” which referred to the enlightened and educated woman while preserving the traditional way of Islamic culture (Zihnioğlu, 2013, p. 48). She advocated the equality between men and women (Canbaz, 2007, p. 66), which she believed had a significant place in Islamic codes. Therefore, for her men and women were equal and thus should be treated equally (Canbaz, 2007, p. 66).

In her famous novels, Fatma Aliye depicted Turkish women as intellectual, educated and economically independent, yet, leading a life appropriate for their traditions. The teacher in *Refet* and a music teacher in *Udi* were portrayed as brave, intelligent and decent women who blended the western way of life with Islamic codes. Similarly, in *Muhadarat*, Fatma Aliye focused on the marriage and women’s role in marriage. The female character, Fazıla marries Mukaddem due to her father’s choice. Although she is depicted as an obedient passive girl, she accepts the marriage to escape from her family, and thus, she makes her own choice. After divorcing Mukaddem, Fazıla marries Remzi with her freewill. In the novel, Fatma Aliye depicts the ideal woman: a good mother, a good wife, a good Muslim, educated, virtuous, hardworking and determined and modern (Argunşah, 2012, p. 56).

Nezihe Muhiddin (1889-1958) was an author, activist and a pioneer of feminist movements. She was born in 1889 in a wealthy and intellectual family in İstanbul (Zihnioğlu, 2013, p. 35). Her father was a judge and her mother was the daughter of Ali Şevket Pasha (Coşar, 2006, p. 33). After the formal education, she continued her education at home with tutors and completed her training of Darülmualimat (Dik, 2012, p. 4). She was the leading figure of *Kadın Birliği (Women’s Union)* established in 1924 (Zihnioğlu, 2013, p. 150). In 1909 she worked as a science teacher at Kız İdadî Mektebi (Girls High School). Highly influenced by her father and cousins, she grew up in an environment of political discussions and learned about the western politics and culture. Muhiddin became the head of İttihat ve Terakki Kız Okulu (Union and Progress Girl School) in 1909 and she wrote articles about sociology, psychology and pedagogy in newspapers as *Sabah* and *İkdam* to create an awareness for gender issues. She was the chief-editor of *Kadın Yolu (Woman’s Path)* (Zihnioğlu, 2013, p. 169) and the author of *Türk Kadını (Turkish Woman)* (1931) in which she praised the Ottoman women in the women’s suffrage movements. During her professional life as a teacher and director at schools, her main goal was to raise Turkish girls in accordance with the European schools (Baykan & Ötüş, 1999, p. 25).

Nezihe Muhiddin was an activist who dealt with politics by organizing seminars and establishing institutions for women’s awareness and she was a member of *Osmanlı Müdâfaa-i Hukuk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti (Ottoman Women Rights Advocate Union)* which was established in 1913 to create an awareness of women’s rights (Çakır, 1991, pp. 6-7). Nezihe Muhiddin became the leading figure of the journal *Kadınlar Dünyası (World of Women)* (Çakır, 1991, p. 91-97) and built *Türk Kadın Birliği (Turkish Woman’s Association)* with her friends in 1924. This association was considered to be the first women suffrage movement of Turkish women. She devoted her life on educating girls at schools, organizing seminars for women to gain professions, training women about their rights in society and became one of the most effective contributors of women’s right of voting in 1935.

Nezihe Muhiddin focused on the false modernization and westernization of the Ottoman women and advocated that ideal women should be educated and working. Fatma Aliye’s “Islam woman” concept was replaced by the “Turkish woman” throughout the end of the First World War by Nezihe Muhiddin

For Nezihe Muhiddin, the woman who possessed the traits of Turkish woman concept was the one who adapted the European rationalism and secularism based on science rather than the religious superstitions, was aware of her rights and fought for them, was acquainted with the economic and politic issues of her country and suggested solutions, protected the national issues and participated in the public spheres (Zihnioğlu, 2013, p. 77).

Her main goal was, therefore, to depict the new “Turkish woman” as equal to men in her notable novels:

The writer, who mentioned about the negative impacts of social change, the consequences of wrong practices of westernization in her novels, advocated the ‘educated-professional woman’ that she considered as the ideal woman while criticizing the ‘elegant woman, salon woman, westernized women’ (Erdoğan, 1998, p. iii).

[Romanlarında sosyal değişimin olumsuz yönüne, batılılaşmanın yanlış uygulamalarının sonuçlarına değinen yazar, olumsuz olarak gördüğü ‘artist kadın, salon kadını, batılı kadını’ tiplerini eleştirerek, ideal kadın olarak gördüğü ‘eğitimli-meslek kadını’ tipini savunmuştur]

According to Doğan (2007), Nezihe Muhiddin “plays the role of a father who educates the society through a traditional culture and nationalistic discourse” [geleneksel kültür ve milliyetçi söylem doğrultusunda toplumu eğiten bir baba rolünü üstlenir] (p. 12). In her famous novel, *Benliğim Benimdir!* (*I Have My Self!*) (1929), the main character Zeynep is a slave girl who was sold to Nusretullah Pasha when she was thirteen. The story revolves around her attempts to kill herself in order to escape from the oppressions of the patriarchy and slavery:

In my mind, a word without a definite aim goes around like a black winged butterfly: Escape, leave! But where...and to whom? ... I cannot expect from death anymore. I could not have it for twice (Muhiddin, 2006a, p. 75).

[Fikrimde hiçbir hedefi olmayan bir kelime, siyah kanatlı bir kelebek gibi dolaşıyordu: Kaçmak, gitmek! Fakat nereye... ve kime? Artık ölümden halas bekleyemedim. İki defasında da bana yâr olmamıştı!]

In the palace, Zeynep learns the piano and reading and falls in love with the son of the pasha. However, she is raped by the father and becomes his wife. Labelled as a prostitute, a thief and a fraud, Zeynep becomes the victim of the male dominated society. Nezihe Muhiddin not only criticized the conditions of women in a male dominated society but also focused on the essentiality of women’s education.

In her article “Türk Kadınları Mebus Olmak İstiyor” (“Turkish Women want to be Deputy”) in *İkdam* published in 1929. Nezihe Muhiddin (2006b) summarized the attempts of all feministic authors: “It is meaningless to tell us wait. Does it mean women are inexperienced? ... What are we going to wait for? For women reborn with another nature?” [Bize bekleyiniz demek manasızdır. Yoksa kadın henüz tecrübesizdir, demek mi isteniliyor acaba? ... Neyi bekleyeceğiz? Kadının başka bir hilkatla dünyaya gelmesini mi?] (p. 280). However, Nezihe Muhiddin was frustrated with the movements, ignored by the public and lost her life in a mental hospital:

It has long been claimed that women were given their rights by the Kemalists and that they did not need to fight for them... Through the initiative of Nezihe Muhiddin, women did fight for their rights, including political rights, and sought full equality. Women’s struggle was suppressed, Nezihe Muhiddin was silenced and the founding fathers could claim a tabula rasa – over which they could rewrite women’s history as the granters of women’s rights (Zihnioğlu, 1998, p. iii).

During the Turkish Independence War, women substituted men in public spheres for labor force, helped the army force as nurses, contributed to the economy of nation and provided environment for their children and elders. Through the Republican regime, reforms provided women certain suffrage rights in marriage, education and politics to appear in the western world. Therefore, women were accepted as the hidden figures of the national war. One of the most prominent heroines of the Independence War was Halide Edip Adıvar (1884-1964) who supported women’s suffrage with her pen. Her father, Edip Bey, provided her a western education with private tutors and she graduated from the American College for Girls in 1901, as the first Turkish and Muslim student. She was also aware of the traditional way of the Ottoman culture due to her grandmother: “grows up slowly, being nourished by both the eastern and western culture; she either listens to the prayers of her Sufi grandma or feels the influences of the English discipline that an occidental father admires” [doğu ve batı kültürlerinden beslenerek usul usul büyür; kah Mevlevi bir anneannenin yakarışlarını dinler, kah alafranga bir babanın hayran olduğu İngiliz terbiyesini varlığı üzerinde hisseder] (Adıvar, 2005, p. 300).

In 1911, Halide Edip Adıvar worked for *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* (*Organization for the Elevation of Women*), which provided childcare and nursery classes for women and participated in *Türk Ocakları Derneği* (*Turkish Hearths Association*) where she constructed the concept of “the new woman”. Adıvar (2005) explained her ideology of equality among genders: “This work imagines the era in which women will have the right to vote, and their life and human relations will be fairly and equitably” [Bu eser, kadınların oy sahibi olacağı, hayat ve insan münasebetleri makul ve muntazam olabileceği bir devri tahayyül ediyordu] (p. 187).

Similar to Fatma Aliye and Nezihe Muhiddin, Adıvar stated the significance of women’s education and created an alternative woman who combined the traditional expectations with modern life. According to Acar (1990), it was a national priority for feminists to establish a society similar to the West: men and women have equal status in

society to achieve common goals of the nation. Therefore, feministic writings of this new period reflected the perception of women not only as mothers and wives but also as patriotic citizens and the equal status of women with men in nation. For Adivar, therefore, it was inevitable for women to break the chains of patriarchy and establish an independent self for the national identity. For her, the “enlightened women” would become “enlightened mothers” to empower the national improvement:

Women need to learn as much as men do, need to learn everything. In this case, the key concern of women cannot be different from that of men... Yet, these new needs should not let women avoid fulfilling their principal responsibilities, even cooking. No matter how high the knowledge that women possess, it must be in a perfect harmony with their womanly responsibilities, discretion and the role of governess [...] A woman, first, is an Ottoman, a patriot. ... The rights of a country are a thousand times more important and honourable than those of women. Thus, while yelling out for their rights, women must remember that these rights are for breeding a child for the homeland (qtd. in Demirdirek, 1993, pp. 38–40).

[Kadınlar, erkekler kadar öğrenmeye, her şeyi öğrenmeye muhtaçlar. Bu hususta kadınların mevzuu erkeklerinkinden başka olamaz... Fakat bunları vezaif-i hakikiyelerinden, hatta yemek pişirmekten bile çekindirecek tarzda temessül etmemeli. Bildikleri şey ne kadar yüksek olursa olsun vezaif-i nisviyelerine, muhakemelerine, mürebbiyelik rollerine ahenktar bir mükemmeliyet vermelidir [...] Bir kadın evvela Osmanlı, bir vatanperverdir... vatanın hukuku kadınlık hukukundan bin kat mühim ve muhteremdir. Onun için kadınlar bugün hukukumuz diye haykırırken bunu kendileri için değil, vatana yetiştirecekleri evlada lazım olan terbiyeyi verebilmek için olduğunu der-hatır etmelidir]

Women were accepted to be the mothers of the nation to educate the future and Mustafa Kemal emphasized the essentiality of women’s education as:

as time passes, science, progress, and civilization advance with giant steps and we are aware of this. The education that mothers have to provide to their children today is not as simple as it has been in the past. Therefore, our women are obligated to be more enlightened, more prosperous, and more knowledgeable than our men. If they really want to be mothers of this nation, this is the way... our enemies claim that Turkey cannot be considered a civilized nation, because she consists of two separate parts, men and women. Can we shut our eyes to one portion of a group, while advancing the other and still bring progress to the whole group? The road of progress must be trodden by both sexes together, marching arm in arm” (Abadan-Unat, 1974).

For Halide Edip Adivar, the ideal woman was supposed to blend the “Turkish nationalism and the Westernization ideal” (Jayawardena, 1986, p. 40); “a conservative modernist woman”; “educated [...] dressed in the new styles and attuned to Western ways - [...] yet whose role was primarily in the home [...]”. They still had to act as the guardians of national culture, indigenous religion and family traditions...” (Jayawardena, 1986, pp. 12-14); modern but modest; nationalist; religious; educated; a virtuous wife and a sacrificing mother and “emancipated but unliberated” (Durakbaşı, 1998b, pp. 140-41). In other words, Adivar’s “Republican woman” was the combination of traditional and modern.

The new woman of the Republic was ‘an educated-professional woman’ at work; ‘a socially active organizing woman’ as a member of social clubs, associations; ‘a biologically functioning woman’ in the family fulfilling reproductive responsibilities as a mother and wife; ‘a feminine woman’ entertaining men at balls and parties” (Durakbasa, 2002:147). Halide Edip Adivar was highly aware of the women problem in Turkey at the time of a national awakening, and therefore, her feministic views were discussed within a national framework as is seen in her famous novel, *Ateşten Gömlek (The Shirt of Flames)* (1922). The main character Ayşe is woman who has lost her son and husband during the war and who replaced her husband’s role as a patriot. She rides horses, fights with men, appears in battlefields, wears men’s clothes and becomes the symbol of “İzmir defence” (Adivar, 2005, p. 68). Also, Ayşe is a traditional Turkish female who is aware of her responsibilities as a woman: “There is always lace or sewing in her hand” [Elinde daima bir dantel veyahut dikiş]’ (Adivar, 2005, p. 45), she does the chores and serves men. Throughout the novel, Adivar takes her from the battlefield and assigns her the role of a nurse because Halide Edip was also aware of the fact that the society was not ready to accept a woman who is “strong, independent, determined and self-sufficient” [güçlü, bağımsız, kararlı ve kendine yetebilen kadını kabule hazır değildir] (Argunşah, 2015, p. 50).

Although women acquired certain rights after the Republic, there were still obstacles to the liberation of women in Turkish culture. Turkish feminists and scholars claimed that Turkish women were unrepressed but unliberated (Kandiyoti, 1987; Arat, 1989; Tekeli, 1995) and there was a clash between the western-traditional women due to “the necessary continuation of the patriarchal domination of men over women” (Tekeli, 1995, p. 10). Therefore, the cultural dilemma and the identity crisis of women became the prominent issue of women writers who focused

on the dichotomy among women and the clashes in the modernized Turkey. Turkish feminism after the 1980 presented the sense of autonomy, self-identity and liberty in the new modern world. Pınar Kür, İnci Aral, Ayla Parla and Leyla Erbil are the leading figures of the contemporary Turkish feminism. Many Turkish feminists have examined the perception of women by the patriarchy and Saktanber (1995) concluded that there were two opposing women in the 1980s: self-sacrificing mothers and virtuous wives or “available women” for men (p. 198).

Leyla Erbil is one of contemporary female authors who dealt with the themes of marriage, love, relations and self-realization of women in the patriarchal Turkish society. In her many works, Erbil has depicted two opposing females. One is defeated in man’s world, oppressed under patriarchy, imprisoned and struggle with the repressed desires. The other rebels against the norms of the society, refuses to be restricted in domestic spheres and struggles for self-identity and individualistic existence. Therefore, unlike the women writers of the previous periods, in modern period, Erbil’s novels represent the individualistic struggle of women rather than a community-based struggle.

In *Tuhaf Bir Kadın (A Strange Woman)* in 1971, Erbil dealt with the women’s roles in society and woman’s resentment in patriarchy. In the novel, Nermin states that women are passivized and isolated in patriarchal societies. The condition of woman is explained within the dualities as “Islam/west, tradition/modern, equality/difference and private/public” [İslam/batı, gelenek/modern, eşitlik/farklılık, ve mahrem/namahrem (özel/kamusal) gibi mevcut ikilikler çerçevesinde] (Göle, 1997, s. 30). Although Nermin lives in a modern world, she is still trapped within the norms of patriarchy. When she goes to a club, men humiliate and abuse her (Erbil, 2005, p. 78) because women are seen as indecent and sinful. However, Nermin defends with a feministic way: “Atatürk opened these doors to me, who are you trying to put the Turkish woman into those dark dens again?” [Atatürk açtı bu kapıları bana, sen kim oluyorsun da yeniden o karanlık deliklere tıkmaya kalkıyorsun Türk kadınına ha?] (Erbil, 2005, p. 79). The only desire of woman in the novel is freedom: “If I cannot be happy without gaining my liberty, if the world resists giving it to me, it means I will not be happy” [Ben özgürlüğümü elde etmeden mutlu olamayacaksam, dünyada bana bunu vermemekte direnmekteyse mutlu olamayacağım demektir...] (Erbil, 2005, p. 22).

Conclusion

After the Tanzimat reforms, the Ottoman women gained rights in education and involved in business and social organizations. However, women were still expected to stay within the domestic spheres as wives and mothers, with their traditional roles imposed by the patriarchy. Due to the changes in the western culture, in the Tanzimat Period, the reform acts provided women a modernized world. Feminists of this period aimed at informing the women about the changes and their rights in notable magazines and journals. Emine Semiye, Fatma Aliye and Nezihe Muhiddin were the notable female authors that became the voice of the Ottoman women. Having developed the concept of “womanhood”, Emine Semiye and Fatma Aliye tended to examine the condition of the Ottoman women in the patriarchal system by offering solutions to the gender issues, suggesting solutions to the gender inequalities and awakening the women’s attention about their potentiality and power. While Emine Semiye advocated the superiority of women in society and emphasized her ideas with a critical attitude in her writings, Fatma Aliye supported the idea of equality among genders and she coined a new term: “Islam woman”. For her, this new woman referred to the enlightened woman capable of blending the western modernity with the traditional Islamic codes (Zihnioğlu, 2013, p. 48). Throughout the end of the First World War, “Islam woman” concept was replaced by Nezihe Muhiddin’s “Turkish woman” concept which adapted the western modernism and secularism to participate in the politic, economic and social spheres of the Turkish culture (Zihnioğlu, 2013, p. 77).

After the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, feminists focused on the nationism, equality of gender and women’s education for a prosperous nation: “a good mother, loyal wife and Muslim woman” (Toska, 1998, p. 75). The previous concepts developed by the Ottoman feminists were replaced by Halide Edip Adıvar’s the “Republican woman”: educated, nationalist, conservative but modern, religious, virtuous and sacrificing (Durakbaşa, 1998a, pp. 140-41). In modern periods, Turkish feminists reflected the cultural dilemma and the identity crisis of women in their writings. In Leyla Erbil’s novels, women characters are portrayed in a struggle between their desire of independence and the society. Erbil’s heroines are trapped within the norms of society and struggle to break the chains of the patriarchy for liberty. Therefore, it would not be wrong to state that the literal slavery of women like Zeynep in Nezihe Muhiddin’s *Benliğim Benimdir!* became a symbolic slavery of women throughout the modern era in Turkish literature.

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