

**A FEMINIST CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF TWO NOVELS *THE HANDMAID'S
TALE* by MARGARET ATWOOD AND *HİÇBİR AŞK HİÇBİR ÖLÜM* by İNCİ
ARAL**

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LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

RESISTANCE-REBELLION VS OBEDIENCE-SURRENDER

MASTER THESIS

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İSTANBUL, 2023**

PLAGIARISM

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.

20.06.2023

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ABSTRACT

The novels entitled "The Handmaid's Tale" (1985), penned by the esteemed Canadian author Margaret Atwood, and "Hiçbir Aşk, Hiçbir Ölüm" (1997), authored by the notable Turkish writer İnci Aral, serve as exemplary instances of heterogeneous narrative works with distinct "female" voices. These literary masterpieces illuminate the multifaceted conditions and societal roles pertaining to womanhood, originating from contrasting social, cultural, and political contexts. They delve into the attitudes and responses of women towards oppressive authoritative regimes and the constricting frameworks imposed upon them.

The social constructs of gender prevalent across diverse regions of the globe effectively hinder women from attaining personal autonomy. Within the confines of these two novels, women are portrayed as undertaking either successful or unsuccessful endeavors to reclaim their identities, which have been systematically denied for centuries by discriminatory patriarchal systems.

Subjected to political, religious, and cultural norms and conventions, women find themselves severely limited in terms of agency, decision-making capabilities, and opportunities for participation in society. This dire circumstance persists due to the perpetuation of traditional gender roles enforced by patriarchal forces. The fundamental human quest for love and acceptance, sexuality, passion, betrayal, ignorance, indifference, subjugation, disobedience, and rebellion are among the multifarious themes and facets addressed within the boundaries of the social structure to which women are subjected in both narratives. Moreover, these novels adopt second-wave feminist perspectives to dissect and evaluate the extent to which female characters are liberated from their shackles during their relentless pursuit of

identity.

Key words: Resistance, Rebellion, Obedience, Surrender, Patriarchy, Feminist Canon, Female Roles, Identity



ÖZET

Kanadalı saygın yazar Margaret Atwood'un kaleme aldığı Damızlık Kızın Öyküsü (1985) ve Türk yazar İnci Aral'ın kaleme aldığı Hiçbir Aşk, Hiçbir Ölüm (1997) romanları heterojen anlatı eserlerine örnektir. belirgin "kadın" sesleriyle. Bu edebi şaheserler, zıt sosyal, kültürel ve politik bağlamlardan kaynaklanan kadınlığa ilişkin çok yönlü koşulları ve toplumsal rolleri aydınlatıyor. Kadınların baskıcı otoriter rejimlere ve onlara dayatılan kısıtlayıcı çerçevelere karşı tutumlarını ve tepkilerini derinlemesine araştırıyorlar.

Dünyanın çeşitli bölgelerinde yaygın olan toplumsal cinsiyet yapıları, kadınların kişisel özerklik kazanmasını etkili bir şekilde engellemektedir. Bu iki romanın sınırları içinde kadınlar, yüzyıllardır ayrımcı ataerkil sistemler tarafından sistematik olarak reddedilen kimliklerini geri kazanmak için başarılı ya da başarısız girişimlerde bulunurken tasvir edilir.

Siyasi, dini ve kültürel normlara ve geleneklere tabi olan kadınlar, eylemlilik, karar verme yetenekleri ve topluma katılım fırsatları açısından kendilerini ciddi şekilde sınırlı buluyorlar. Bu vahim durum, ataerkil güçler tarafından dayatılan geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin sürdürülmesi nedeniyle devam etmektedir. İnsanın temel sevgi ve kabul arayışı, cinsellik, tutku, ihanet, cehalet, kayıtsızlık, boyun eğdirme, itaatsizlik ve isyan, her iki anlatıda da kadının tabi olduğu toplumsal yapının sınırları içinde ele alınan çok çeşitli temalar ve yönler arasındadır. Dahası, bu romanlar, amansız kimlik arayışları sırasında kadın karakterlerin zincirlerinden ne ölçüde kurtulduğunu incelemek ve değerlendirmek için ikinci dalga feminist bakış açılarını benimsiyor.

Anahtar kelimeler: Direniş, İsyan, İtaat, Teslimiyet, Ataerkillik, Feminist Kanon, Kadın Roller, Kimlik

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1. INTRODUCTION

More female voices are needed to understand their struggles to survive in societies and make their existence more visible and the world aware of women's issues and states from all over the globe to liberate women muted and entrapped under patriarchal and fundamentalist religious systems and their respective norms. The novels *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) by the Canadian author Margaret Atwood and *Hiçbir Aşk, Hiçbir Ölüm* (1997) by the Turkish author İnci Aral are perfect examples of diverse narrative texts and "female" voices that shed light on the varying states and roles of womanhood from completely different social, cultural and political contexts and their attitudes and reactions towards the controlling authority and cultural frames. Authors in general have their own particular visions of society and they have their own methods of portraying them in their works. In relation to the aforementioned literary works, Atwood offers insightful commentary on the state of the world and society, employing the genre of "dystopia," specifically focusing on feminist critical dystopia. On the other hand, Aral draws from her personal life experiences and pens a narrative that combines elements of autobiography and fiction, shedding light on the society she is part of, while adopting a Turkish feminist perspective to portray the world. Social constructions of gender in different parts of the world do not allow females to achieve individuality and these two novels portray women's successful or failing attempts to regain their identity, which has been denied for centuries by discriminating patriarchal systems. Both novels can be analyzed through the lens of Anglo-American critical feminist stance as the two women writers are preoccupied with the issues of womanhood experiencing the constraints of the culture and societal

rules and norms and exemplify how woman authors tackle their own writing in literature.

Concerning female writers' attempts to enlighten and create their own specific writing, Elaine Showalter and some other feminist critics stated that when male-centered discourse in



literature was analyzed, women were found to be rarely presented as women and realistically. As in Gilbert and Gubar's analysis (2000), too, they were portrayed in two ways; the woman as selfless, sacrificing angels who were taken as symbols of beauty and purity or the woman portrayed as a villain and victimizer symbolizing a monster. Women characters in male authors' novels were given almost no positive role even as a housewife. For this reason, feminist critics have started to analyze and identify common patterns in male authorship of their presentation and treatment of women so that such misleading interpretations, literary belittling of female authorship and textual harassment of women in literature could be exposed.

Upon analyzing the reasons why women write fiction, it is seen that they wrote because they need to find a form of self-expression to realize their potential and to define their own lives. They of course needed their own voice, which was supposed to be different from the males'. They wrote about ordinary women's lives, they were concerned with fiction, politics etc. However, women writers in the past used to imitate the male voice in their works but later they started to gain their own voice and used fiction to explore their own world and to remedy some of the deficiencies of their exclusion and isolation in literary practice.

The attitudes of female writers towards female characters in their own works seem to be different from those of male writers. Female writers who know their own gender better have been quite successful in depicting their inner worlds, their emotional ups and downs, and their hopes. However, it would not be entirely accurate to generalize this, as a male writer can also create a very well-drawn female character. In fact, the current view of feminist criticism is far from this understanding. Now, the focus is on how women perceive life with their

consciousness and how the male world is perceived from a feminist perspective, rather than how women live their daily lives in literature. "Gender", which refers to how one gender should behave, rather than the biological existence of women (and men), determines female consciousness, and it is entirely socially and historically determined.



Developing a sense of identity and self as a female seems impossible due to male-dominant structures in any society. Females subjected to political, religious and cultural norms and conventions have almost no space to act, decide and are given no freedom of choice to have a place in society due to the everlasting women roles assigned to them by patriarchy. Human search for love and acceptance, sexuality, passion, betrayal, ignorance, indifference, subjugation, disobedience, and revolt are among the issues and aspects treated within the constraints of the social structure to which females are subjected in both novels and the 2nd wave feminist perspectives will be used to analyze how and whether female characters are freed from their bonds or not in their quest for identity.

1.1.1 Significance of the study

It would be interesting to see the contrasts or similarities between the implied meanings of states of womanhood from the pens of two female authors who refuse to be labelled as feminist writers although their subject matter is centered on the struggles and the possibility of transformations of females through different subgenres, a dystopian and supposedly autobiographical fiction. The novels are examined in the light of feminist movements, specifically within the framework of the 2nd wave Anglo-American feminist stance focusing more on the feminist literary criticism. While women's striving for their status and identity against gender discrimination and oppression in all walks of life under patriarchal power and authority was a big issue, the status of woman authorship and readership in the period was also another significant concern for particularly woman writers who were neglected or belittled in literature by the male-dominated literary circles. Hearing the existence of female voices from the Eastern and Western parts of the

world, time-wise almost 10 years apart, and seeing how female issues are treated in World literatures from the mouths of female writers would be worth studying, too, to see the shared concerns, developments and possible diversity among the views under both societal and political contexts. Different perspectives would contribute to awakening of females and resolution of still- prevalent gender issues on a global scale. Analyzing these two novels in different subgenres and languages as well as culturally and contextually very different from each other but at the same time being “as vehicle for reproducing and contesting patriarchal images of women” (Weedon, 2007 in Pain & Sellers 2018) as one of the aims of Second Wave feminist criticism would probably be another good sample. It would also be an interesting exploration of these writers in search of their own voices as female writers attempting to achieve both aesthetic and political goals of their own by creating suitable narrative structures. It wouldn't be wrong to state that these two novels are infused with political commentary, too, as patriarchy is directly related to the gender politics of their specific contexts. As explained in the dictionary definition, “patriarchy refers to power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men.” (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary) The power relations manifest themselves in such forms like the sexual division of labor and the social organization of procreation and the internalized norms of femininity. Biological sexual difference is what patriarchal power bases its claims on the feminine.

Examining how women are represented by these female authors would also provide an opportunity to see how language is used to keep women in their subordinated or subjugated positions. As language is mostly dominated by male voices and is used as a tool for oppression, hearing female voices in these samples

and their presence of their own manifesting female authorship in literature would enlighten the fact what it means to be feminine and how liberating it is for them to write their own stories in oppressive patriarchal cultures. Representation of women as well as by women would be interesting to investigate while understanding the matters related to female predicament, their submissiveness to men and their struggle for freedom and emancipation.

The idea that the product of a specific cultural context can take on various forms - it may embody a society's core beliefs, challenge them, or even obscure an artist's own uncertainty towards these issues is taken as a rationale for this study keeping in mind the questions "how are women perceived and to what extent are females allowed freedom of choice by the males from different cultures?" in the backdrop of these novels as representations of female authorship enjoying intellectual and creative freedom.

In this dissertation, as the data collection and analysis tool, the two novels and secondary sources were used to conduct a descriptive qualitative analysis. Content analysis was made to answer the research questions.

1.1.2 Limitations of the study:

The novel *Hiçbir Aşk, Hiçbir Ölüm* hasn't been translated into English, therefore, translation has been needed at times for a comparative analysis. Translation of a literary text requires a specific skill so this might have been an obstacle in this sense.

This dissertation mainly aims to examine the two novels, namely *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) (THT hereafter) by Margaret Atwood, a Canadian author,

and *Hiçbir Aşk, Hiçbir Ölüm* (1997) (HAHÖ hereafter) by İnci Aral, a Turkish author. Through a critical feminist analysis, that is taking Anglo-American feminist discourses as a departure point, these works will be explored in the context of gender roles that have traditionally been assigned to women and their struggles to claim their identity. Specifically, the novels will be examined in terms of the women's resistance to and acceptance of oppressive patriarchal cultural, political, and religious norms. By investigating these themes within two different cultural contexts, this dissertation seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how women in different societies navigate and challenge gender norms for social change through the lenses of two female writers.

2 OVERVIEW OF FEMINIST THEORIES

2.1 First Wave Feminism

Feminism is concerned with the political and sociological theories and philosophies that deal with gender issues and difference, and fights against gender inequality and claims women's rights and interests ignored or not protected legally and strives to empower women in all respects. As it is understood today, it is about showing respect to the experiences of diverse women from all over the world, their strengths, sensitivities, perceptions, knowledge and most importantly, identities.

Feminism as a movement has struggled for almost two centuries and strived for imposed cultural roles and socio-political rights of women and started with the pioneer of the movement, Mary Wollstonecraft and with her work *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* dated 1792 in which she argues that women are not intrinsically inferior to men, but due to their lack of education, they seem to be so. Historically, the concept of 'waves' of feminism started to be applied in the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, the first 'wave' dates back to roughly the mid-nineteenth century until the 1920s. The movement has gained importance and momentum increasingly especially after the successful suffrage movement across three waves — the first wave being mainly political and referring to the women's suffrage movements, the second wave focusing on cultural issues associated with the ideas and actions taken for the liberation of women socially and the third wave mainly academic and intellectual scholarship. The first wave of feminism, in the 19th and 20th centuries, began in the US and the UK as a struggle for equality and property rights for women, by suffrage groups and activist organizations. The struggle for the vote remained the symbolic concern of first wave feminism.

2.2 Second Wave Feminism

The Second Wave is used to define a new period of feminist collective political and social activism which emerged in the late 1960's and had global manifestations as well as variations due to the diversity of contexts in feminist thought. The second wave of feminism of 1960s and 70s, was characterized by a criticism of patriarchy and authority in forming and redefining the cultural identity, selfhood of woman according to the principles adopted like increasing equality, having choice and right to decide, eradicating gender classification and stereotyping, ending sexual violence and promoting sexual freedom. The ways in which women have historically been marginalized, both culturally and socially were also addressed.

Therefore, the second wave feminists started to voice 'liberation' from the oppressiveness of a patriarchally defined society and focused on the female body itself, that is, how it is represented and how it is defined and interpreted within the biological difference. Consequently, in order to answer these questions, there emerged a great range of feminist theories such as liberal, Marxist/Socialist, postmodern, post structuralist, cultural, Ecofeminist, multi-social from then onwards. Moreover, because White feminists shared a common rationale, second-wave feminism started to include Black feminists like Bell Hooks, Michele Wallace, Alice Walker, Mary Ann Weathers, and Bettina Aptheker who consider not only gender but also race as a factor affecting females, too.

The second wave feminism began in the US in the early 1960s with the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. It criticizes the systemic sexism which sees women only within the boundaries of the home. Friedan states that women cannot realize themselves intellectually and creatively,

which results in their dissatisfaction. The feminist thinkers and writers like Mary Ellmann (*Thinking about Women*, 1968), Kate Millett (*Sexual Politics* 1969), Betty Friedan (*The Feminine Mystique* 1963) and so on constitute the major figures of the 2nd

wave (cited in Tong, 2009). Millett's work is an important example of how western social institutions operate as ways of handling and manipulating power, and how this also affects literature and other disciplines.

The French Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949) expressed her feminist ideas in her well-known declaration, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" – drawing attention to the fact that women have always been confined and identified as the "Other", the lacking, the negative, (Beauvoir, p.293) which Freud explained as "penis-envy" in his psychoanalytical approach to genders. The major motto of this wave, "The Personal is the political" started to be used as a result of the awareness of the distinction between females' domestic and males' public spheres. With the intention of getting out of their domestic and "granted" personal spaces, women started to enter into the male dominated territories of social life with regards to career and public spheres. The motto showcased women's cultural and political inequalities and called for action for women to identify how their personal lives were constrained as a result of sexist, discriminating power structures.

Some of the accomplishments during that period in the US in 60s were, especially under the presidency of John F. Kennedy, the improvements in legislation by granting women equal pay in employment, equal job opportunities, child care services so that they would be prevented from sex-based discrimination. In short, The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited employment discrimination based

on sex, race, color, religion, national origin. The National Organization for Women (NOW) was formed in 1966 and set a goal to guarantee equal rights for women but their attempts were not as successful as desired until today. However, the approval of the birth control pill in 1960 liberated women from the limitations of pregnancy and childbearing and brought about reproductive freedom.

During the second wave feminism, there was an exploration of the potential for significant social transformation that would render current social structures unsustainable, as they were embedded with patriarchal norms. However, the realization of these visions for social change hinged on the political allegiances and broader perspectives, such as liberalism, Marxism, radicalism, and other similar frameworks.

Second wave feminism marks key shifts in the politics of liberal and Marxist feminists, and is not just about the emergence of new radical feminism. During this period, debates emerged that were defined by what Kate Millett had termed 'sexual politics', such as the family, abortion, sexuality, the sexual division of labor, rape and domestic violence. Marxist feminists, in particular, experienced a marked shift from classic Marxist principles to a consideration of how gendered relations could be entered into a class-based analysis of power. The idea of inclusiveness fostered by the explosion of second wave radicalism encouraged the emergence of sub-groupings that allowed critical space for lesbians, women of color, and working-class women to participate. Furthermore, second-wave feminism included lesbians after the controversial incident where Friedan referred to them as a "lavender menace" and claimed that lesbianism was a women's liberation plot. Within a year, NOW had adopted a resolution recognizing lesbian rights as "a legitimate concern

of feminism.”

The notion that all women, regardless of their cultural background, share the same experience of oppression has been called into question by postcolonial feminism. This movement, represented by influential scholars such as Alice Walker, bell hooks, Gayatri Spivak, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, has challenged both the French celebration of textual pleasure and the Anglo-American analysis of textual content. Postcolonial feminists criticized the representation of nonwhite women as sexually repressed and uneducated, as well as the idea that all women needed to conform to a homogeneous identity as a means of achieving liberation. They argued that such thinking failed to acknowledge the diversity of women's experiences and

reinforced the very hierarchies upon which patriarchy and Western imperialism had been built. By recognizing and celebrating difference, postcolonial feminism sought to challenge the dominant narrative and create a space for the voices of marginalized women to be heard.

In recent times, discussions within the realm of American Feminism have been focused on several key themes, which have been deliberated by prominent scholars like Showalter, Lillian Robinson, Annette Kolodny and Jane Marcus. One of the key issues being debated is the relationship between female writers and male theories. These scholars have been raising questions on the extent to which female writers have been influenced by theories developed by male authors, and how this has affected their own work. Additionally, there has been a growing emphasis on the need for feminist theory and female language that can adequately represent the experiences of women, and not simply replicate existing patriarchal structures.

Another important issue that has been addressed in these debates is feminism's relationship to poststructuralist perspectives. While some feminist scholars have embraced poststructuralist theories as a means of analyzing dominant power structures, others have been critical of their emphasis on language and the dissolution of fixed categories, arguing that it undermines the specificity of women's experiences. Moreover, the debates have also delved into the continuing problems of political and educational activism within the feminist movement. Scholars have highlighted the challenges faced by feminists in translating their theoretical insights into meaningful political action, as well as the need for greater focus on education and consciousness-raising as a means of challenging oppressive patriarchal structures.

The emergence of consciousness-raising groups in New York and Chicago during the 1960s, which spread throughout the United States, was a significant outcome of second-wave feminism. Comprising of small groups of women, these gatherings provided a platform for women to voice their experiences of oppression and collectively raise awareness of their issues.

The impact of these groups was remarkable, as women developed a strong sense of sisterhood that effectively dismantled the feelings of isolation they had previously experienced.

2.3 Third Wave Feminism

Identifying the commencement of the third wave of feminism is complex, as there was no clear-cut shift in political ideology or feminist thought that defined the preceding wave. Nonetheless, it is noted that the vitality and momentum of previous

waves began to dissipate in the late 1980s. Since then, feminism has taken hold within academic disciplines such as women's studies programs, interdisciplinary fields like Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Post-colonialism, Ecological Studies, and Poststructuralism, thereby integrating them into its mainstream theories and operations. These theories and practices focus on topics such as language, writing, sexuality, alternate sexualities, and the representation of women from diverse backgrounds in mass media. In the present day, feminism exists in various forms such as liberal feminism, cultural/radical feminism, black feminism/womanism, and materialist/neo-Marxist feminism. Despite the era of post-feminism, these diverse movements continue to strive for the advancement and betterment of women's lives.

Despite living in a postfeminist era, there remains a need to raise awareness about the importance of questioning the seemingly natural signs of male/female differences. Scholars influenced by Judith Butler (1990) who argues that gender is a social construct, shaped by cultural and societal norms, and that it can be destabilized or subverted through acts of resistance and non-conformity, have started considering the possibility that the very assumption of an innate biological sex may actually be a cultural tactic to justify gender norms. In essence, Butler's work has helped to challenge traditional understandings of gender and to open up new possibilities for gender identity and expression. While one may not necessarily agree with this viewpoint, recognizing identities as cultural practices can lead to transformation. This, in turn,

can lead to a more flexible approach to identities, which are intertwined with other categories such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, social status, health, age, and belief.

It is important to acknowledge that feminism is not about advocating for female superiority but rather strives for gender equality. Feminists firmly believe in and respect an individual's informed choices, and reject the notion of a double standard in the judgment of individuals. Every person has the right to sexual autonomy and to make decisions about their sexual life, including when, how, and with whom they engage in sexual activity. Feminism emphasizes the need to challenge societal norms and prejudices that contribute to gender inequality, and instead promotes the idea of equal opportunity and respect for all individuals, regardless of gender.

The first wave feminists, who primarily emerged in the 19th and early 20th century, concentrated on gaining legal rights for women such as suffrage and property rights. Second wave feminism, which took place during the 1960s and 1970s, focused on addressing the issues of inequality that women faced in terms of sexuality, the family, the workplace, and reproductive rights. The movement aimed to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes that had previously confined women to limited roles in society. Second wave feminism also sought to bring attention to intersectionality, recognizing that women from different social, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds face different and unique challenges. Overall, the second wave of feminism was an important milestone in the fight for gender equality and inspired later generations to continue to challenge and dismantle patriarchal structures.

2.4 Anglo-American Feminism & French Feminism

The field of world feminist literary criticism is often divided into two schools: the Anglo- American School and the French School, despite criticisms that this division is inappropriate. The Anglo-American School is characterized by a focus on class and social criticism, and a

concern with the representation of women in literature, that is, the Anglo-American School emphasizes women's own cultural traditions and personal experiences. This approach is exemplified by Kate Millett's book *Sexual Politics* (1970) which criticized the suffocating and misogynistic representations of women in literature. However, this school has also been criticized for its emphasis on a male conspiracy and its insufficient attention to issues of race and ethnicity. However, despite their differences, both schools seek to challenge the naturalization of gender roles in society and argue that these roles can be changed.

In the mid-1970s, feminist criticism in the United States and Britain focused on women's experiences as portrayed in literature, and the careers, techniques, and topics of women writers. The goal was to identify and develop a women's literary tradition. Although early feminist critics opposed theory as male-influenced, they gradually embraced it. This tradition prioritized individualist thought and political actions such as equal rights amendments, dismantling gender-stratified education and economy, and critiquing male discourse and representation of women. Feminist critics like Kate Millet, Mary Ellmann, Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, and Susan Gubar examined women's self-representation and focused on the subject of women as writers. Elaine Showalter introduces the concept of gynocriticism, a criticism of

literature written by women who are active producers of meaning, not just passive consumers. Gynocritics construct a female framework for analyzing women's literature, focusing on female subjectivity, language, and literary careers. Major gynocritical texts include Patricia Spack's *The Female Imagination*, Showalter's *A Literature of their Own*, and Sandra Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's *The Mad Woman in the Attic*. It is important to recognize that feminism has evolved over time and encompasses various ideologies and goals.

In contrast, the French School developed out of a philosophical tradition and is more theory-oriented like focusing on language. French feminists like Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray drew heavily from poststructuralist and psychoanalytic theories, arguing that language is inherently

male-dominated and must be subverted to create a new, alternative writing that would escape the phallogentric discourse. They contended that all western languages are male-constituted and male-dominated and sought to develop a feminist writing that would arise from the unconscious and the body. Thus, French feminism shifted the focus onto language, drawing on Freudian models of infant development and Lacan's connection of language acquisition with sexual difference. Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray argued that language reflects a binary logic that groups positive qualities with the masculine side, leading to women's alienation from linguistic structures. As a result, women turn to a different discourse derived from a pre-oedipal "semiotic" period of fusion with the mother, called "écriture féminine." This form of writing dissolves generic boundaries, causal plots, stable perspectives, and meaning in favor of rhythmic and highly allusive writing, challenging the organizing principles of "symbolic" masculinized language. This transgression,

however, is not gender-specific and can be performed by anyone, including James Joyce who is cited as the major representative of “writing one’s body” on the margins of dominant culture.

The French Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* is a seminal text in contemporary feminism, published in 1949. De Beauvoir's argument is that throughout history, men have been considered the default human being, while women have been viewed as "Other." She contends that women have been denied individuality and responsibility, and have been treated as objects for men's use. De Beauvoir believes that for feminism to advance, women must reject the idea that they are inferior and aspire to be like men. Her work was widely accepted, except in British feminist criticism, which was more influenced by Marxist ideology. In summary, de Beauvoir's work laid the foundation for modern feminism by challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for women's liberation.

2.5 Feminist Literary Criticism & Gynocriticism

Feminist literary criticism stems from the feminist movement and involves analyzing literature through a feminist lens, with a focus on identifying and challenging male-dominated language and power structures. The critique seeks to uncover the ways in which literary texts reflect, support, or challenge patriarchal social systems. Feminist critics aim to highlight the unique contributions of women writers that deviate from male-authored works. The feminist movement has led to a rise in creative women writers and academics who challenge traditional stereotypes and gender roles. Early feminist works such as *A Room of One's Own*, *The Second Sex*, *Thinking About Women*, and *Sexual Politics*, have been instrumental in

stimulating this movement. The dominant literary creativity of the early nineteenth-century was paternalistic, and women writers were limited by male fantasies of the female. Women writers have responded with a madwoman or monster figure, expressing their rage and anxiety in the face of male-dominated literary models. Feminist criticism is concerned with exploring the asymmetrical male and female responses to the rise of female literary power and is dedicated to empowering women to break free from traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

When discussing the interest in literary critics in the work of women writers since the 1970s, it can be noted that while some have suggested that women writers have a different literary point of view, others caution against assuming that all women writers write alike. The influence of society, rather than biology, is emphasized as the reason for any differences in literary perspective. Gilbert's and Gubar's co-work (2000) highlighted particularly their argument that patriarchal ideology presents artistic creativity as a male quality, and the question of how women can generate texts if the pen is a metaphorical penis. Women are seen as objects rather than subjects in both literature and society, and there is also the issue of the medium in which they express themselves.

In discussing the impact of feminist literary criticism on the study of women's writing, Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929) which highlighted the obstacles women face in achieving authorship due to their material and intellectual deprivation and the patriarchal society's biases should be examined. Woolf argued that language is highly gendered and that women's writing capabilities are equal to those of men. French Feminism, with its linguistic and psychoanalytical analysis, also influenced Anglo-American literary criticism in some respects. Feminist critics suggest that women have a different literary point of view not because of biology, but because of societal influence.

The editors of the essay collection in an attempt to analyze women's writing, while compiling their works in an intuitive and practical manner, discovered that feminist theory was beginning to take shape. They saw "concern with society's beliefs about the nature and function of women in the world" as the concern of feminists and brought "personally felt reality" to the fore as a criterion. They emphasized the importance of personal experiences as a criterion for examining women's realities. The authors of the collection investigated art as a reflection of a society's cultural environment, which sometimes reinforced widely held beliefs, at other times challenged them, and sometimes concealed the artist's ambiguity towards these issues.

Elaine Showalter is a well-known feminist literary critic who is credited with introducing the term "gynocritics" to describe a feminist approach to literary analysis. According to Showalter, this approach is focused on creating a framework for literary analysis that is centered on the experiences of women, rather than adapting traditional male-centered models and theories. By prioritizing the study of

women's experiences and perspectives, gynocritics aims to create a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of women's literature. Showalter's work has been influential in promoting feminist literary criticism and encouraging scholars to explore the contributions of women writers throughout history.

In her various essays and edited collections, Showalter discusses different schools of feminist theory and their implications for literary criticism. For example, she finds the social theory of subcultures helpful in gynocriticism, as it allows for a nuanced understanding of how women's experiences and identities intersect with broader cultural and societal factors.

Elaine Showalter, addresses the issue of women as readers and writers in her *Towards a Feminist Poetics* (1985). Prior to the feminist movement, women mainly read literature written by men and were portrayed as weak and passive figures. Showalter argues that male dominance is evident in both literature and literary criticism, and that feminist critique has traditionally been male-oriented. With the rise of female writers, women began to assert their own literary perspectives. As Elaine Showalter explains it:

“It was through the women's liberation movement that we began to draw connections between our own work and our lives, to note the disparities between the identifications and ambitions that these attracted us, along with thousands of other women to study and teaching of literature and the limited and secondary roles women granted to female scholars...Feminism spoke to our lives and our literary experience with the fierce urgency of a revelation or a Great Awakening (Showalter, 1985 p.5).

As the early feminist writers were mainly concerned with social and political change, little attention was paid to literature and literary criticism at the initial stage of the women's movement. Many of the literary abstractions which

were claimed to be universal have in fact been described by male perceptions and options. According to Elaine Showalter, in its earlier years, feminist criticism concentrated on exposing the misogyny of literary practice: the stereotyped images of women in literature as angels or monsters, the literary abuses or textual harassment of women from literary history.

Elaine Showalter's influential book, *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), outlines the history of British women novelists' literary subculture in three distinct phases: feminine (1840-80), feminist (1880-1920), and female (continuing since 1920, with a new phase beginning in 1960). These phases overlap, and one writer may display characteristics from multiple phases. Instead

of solely analyzing famous female authors, Showalter includes 213 women writers in an appendix with "sociological" data to showcase diversity and generational links. Rather than exploring the idea of a female imagination, she examines how the self-awareness of a female writer has manifested itself in literature during a specific time and place, tracing this self-awareness within the tradition.

In using the term "gynocriticism," Showalter is describing a literary approach that evaluates the works of female authors without relying on the language and methods of analysis created by male critics and authors, as such methods can put women writers at a disadvantage. Through gynocriticism, Showalter aims to create a female literary canon by highlighting the works of female writers that have been overlooked due to the dominance of the Western canon, which mainly consists of male writers. Showalter believes that the female canon already exists and that these works need to be discovered to understand their value and contribution to literature.

She acknowledges that in its initial stages, women's writing imitates the dominant culture or group.

The “Phase of Imitation” also called the "feminine" phase by Showalter, refers to the early period of women's writing where female authors imitated the literary styles and themes of male writers. During this phase, female writers were not yet able to establish their own literary voice and were heavily influenced by the dominant culture and male writers. Showalter includes writers like Jane Austen, the Bronte sisters, and George Eliot in this phase.

However, the next phase, the “Phase of Protest” also known as the "feminist" phase, marks a period of rebellion and protest against the male-dominated literary tradition, male authority and values. During this phase, women writers began to reject the patriarchal values and standards of the past and instead focused on advocating for women's rights and empowerment. This phase mainly includes female writers of the modernist movement.

The third phase, “Phase of Self-realization” is the "female" phase, where female writers focus on self-discovery and celebrate the female self, their body, and sexuality. Showalter emphasizes the importance of studying the works of neglected female writers to create a female literary tradition. During this phase, female authors were no longer bound to imitate the dominant culture or protest against the male authority. Instead, they embraced their own unique perspective and experience as women and celebrated their own bodies, sexuality, and identity. This phase is often associated with the postmodern era and includes writers like Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath.

To sum up, Showalter's analysis of the historical development of female literary culture distinguishes between three stages: "Feminine", "Feminist", and "Female". The first stage is characterized by the adoption of prevailing modes of the dominant tradition and its views on social roles. The Feminist stage involves the rejection of these standards and the advocacy of minority rights and values, including autonomy. In the Female phase, there is a turning inward, a search for identity, and a self-discovery that is freed from the dependency of opposition. Although these stages overlap, Showalter suggests that the appearance of male pseudonyms until the death of George Eliot in 1880 represents the Feminine phase, while the period between 1880 and 1920 is the Feminist phase. Everything after that is the Female phase, with a new stage of self-awareness emerging in the 1960s. In this context, the second half of the twentieth century, marked by the rise of the dystopian novel, could be seen as a Female phase characterized by a search for identity. Therefore, by analyzing these three phases in "*A Literature of Their Own*", Showalter argues that feminist criticism can uncover a rich and diverse female literary tradition that has been largely neglected in the study of literary history. However, Showalter is also critical of male critics who attempt to incorporate feminist perspectives without fully acknowledging the role of patriarchy and their own privilege within it. She worries that these critics may simply end up competing with women rather than truly

engaging with feminist ideas and contributions. Her work in gynocriticism has been highly praised in feminist circles, although she is not considered one of the most radical feminists.

Despite these challenges, Showalter and other gynocritics have made important contributions to feminist literary criticism. They have worked to uncover and analyze the experiences and perspectives of women writers, as well as to challenge traditional literary categories and frameworks that have excluded or marginalized women's voices. This work often involves extensive archival research and close textual analysis, which builds on traditional methods of literary study while also expanding the scope of what is considered valuable or relevant in literary analysis.

2.6 Turkish Feminism

In Turkish feminist historical adventure, if many social issues have been shaped by Islam- West antagonism for more than a century, it should be noted that the issue of women is also shaped by the tension between these two fundamental concepts.

With regards to Turkish feminist movements, since the 1980s a generation of Turkish historians embarked on a similar quest to rediscover the voices of women who had fought for women's rights in the past. Actually, the process of women's legal and social emancipation in Turkey has its roots in the Ottoman Empire of the 19th century. Thus, the Turkish women's movement is as old as the women's movements in other Mediterranean or European countries such as Greece, Spain or Italy, where some women started to lobby for their rights about the same time.

When the history of feminism in Ottoman and Turkey is analyzed, it is observed that Ottoman women established their own organizations and publications during the Young Turk revolution in 1908. While many of these organizations were focused on charity, some were

more feminist and advocated for women's integration in public and professional life, the struggle against inequality and oppressive traditions, and support of female education. Women's magazines played a significant role in promoting feminist ideas and discussing topics such as gender equality, women's rights, and freedom. During World War I, women were mobilized to take active roles in the resistance movement. However, after the war, women went back to their traditional roles as mothers and wives. The Republican regime granted women certain rights such as the abolition of polygamy, the right to divorce, and equality in inheritance rights (Özsu, 2009).

The start of Modernization in Turkey can be traced back to the Ottoman period when it was seen as a social critique. The establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 gave shape to this movement, and women's emancipation became a crucial component of the Republican reforms. The modernization process in Turkey was based on paternalism, which provided a justification for the authoritarian rule of the state but also allowed women to become modern within the limits set by paternal authority.

Academic research on the women's movement during the late Ottoman era and early Republican decades was critical, while activism focused on feminist critique of civil law, women's participation in politics, domestic violence, honor crimes, and

the Kurdish issue. National historiography during the Republican era also emphasized women's contribution to the Turkish National Independence War.

The dominant concept of the early Republican era was "women's emancipation," which had a progressive connotation of liberation from backwardness or tradition but did not have a feminist implication. *Kadınlar Dünyası*, a journal published from 1913 to 1921, aimed to promote women's legal rights and included news and opinions from women around the world.

The journal highlighted the oppressive attitude of men towards women, and how women lacked the rights to live and be free.

During the Republican era, there were attempts to increase women's visibility in public spaces and the idea of "women's emancipation" remained a significant part of the national narrative, often presented in comparison to the Ottoman era. Historical studies on women, on marriage patterns, clothing, and women's associations based on Ottoman archival documents, were also conducted. The Kemalist ideology, named after Turkey's founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, institutionalized gender identities and relations, creating a distinct gender regime in Turkish society during the single-party era that differed from pre-Republican and multiparty eras. This gender regime and the consolidation of political power in the early Republican era is often referred to by feminist scholars as "the Kemalist discourse of women's rights," (state feminism) in which Atatürk is portrayed as the sole emancipator of Turkish women.

During a parliamentary session in 1934, the governing party used the old Turkic heritage and the idea of suffrage being important for democracy to justify the granting of women's suffrage. However, Turkey was not a democracy at the time but rather a one-party state with limited decision-making powers in the Grand National Assembly. Kandiyoti suggests that Atatürk's attack on the theological state focused on women as the most visibly oppressed group due to religious practices such as veiling, seclusion, and polygamy. Despite the early reforms, Kemalist reforms remained stagnant, especially in rural areas with weaker economic integration. The avoidance of civil marriage in favor of religious ceremonies, the marriage of underage girls, the denial of girls' right to education, and the emphasis on women's fertility were signs of the country's uneven socio-economic development. Consequently, significant gender relations such as the double standard of sexuality and a primarily domestic definition of the female role remained mostly unchanged.

According to Şirin Tekeli (2010), a prominent Turkish feminist, feminism has a long historical tradition in Turkey that dates back to the late nineteenth century Ottoman society, emphasizing that the 1980s, when the feminist movement gained momentum in Turkey, was not the first time feminism emerged in the country. She describes how women in Turkey were encouraged to go beyond their traditional roles, but with limitations. The women, she adds, were expected to have little ambition in their work to remain one-step behind men, and femininity and altruism were promoted as virtues for women. Despite the existence of an exceptional Kemalist elite, the “Kemalist revolution” did not transform patriarchal traditions in Turkey, but rather modernized and reproduced them. As a result, women's main role was still limited to the one they had in the family as a mother and wife, and

modern institutions aimed to produce modern housewives (Tekeli, 1995/2010). Deniz Kandiyoti argues that for a woman to enter public life, she must take on a genderless, and to some extent, a male identity, reaching the same point. (Kandiyoti, in Karataş, 2009). Meanwhile, Göle notes that whether in urban spaces or in public domains such as education, work, and politics, women's freedom is threatened by the societal perception of femininity as a threat to the social order, even demanding the suppression of individuality. As an example, Göle cites the female characters in Halide Edip Adıvar's *Yeni Turan* and Adalet Ağaoğlu's *Ölmeye Yatmak* novels. (Göle, in Karataş, 2009).

Necla Arat (2002), another prominent feminist, observes that the women's movement in modern Turkey is split between those who support secularism and laicism and those who support Islamist ideas. The women's movement in the Ottoman Empire was born during the Young Turk Revolution, and during World War I, it faced difficulties. After the founding of the Republic in 1923, the new regime, led by Atatürk, took strong steps to centralize the establishment of new associations under its control. The early republican women's movement in the 1920s had its origins in the Ottoman society of the late 19th century when women

discussed issues such as women's rights, education, and discrimination in various women's journals like the establishment of new periodicals such as *Mefharet* and *Demet*.

Since the 1980s, feminist scholarship in Turkey has emerged alongside the development of women's and gender studies in the West since the 1960s. Women's and gender history has been particularly important, as it has helped to reclaim the lost history of women and led to a shift in the way people think about the family, state, and public/private divide. By looking at these concepts in a more relational way, it has become clear that women have agency and played a more active role in history than previously thought. Feminist historians in Turkey have challenged the Kemalist discourse of women's rights, which claimed that women were granted social and political rights by the Republican regime without fighting for them. They argue that the Kemalist notion of women's emancipation was influenced by Western ideas and anti-imperialist nationalism.

Paternalism, derived from the Latin word "pater," which means father, refers to the act of treating someone like a child or exerting power over them for their own good without their consent. Although the intentions behind paternalistic actions may be benevolent, the methods employed can become oppressive when used to limit an individual's freedom and responsibility. In early modern Europe, the concept of father-rule served as the foundation for the patrimonial state and its sovereign arms. The Kemalist modernization in Turkey, led by Atatürk, supported women's visibility as a symbol of modernity while also encouraging their professionalization. Kandiyoti refers to this as "paternalist benevolence". Nükhet Sirman uses paternalism to explain how men acted as a medium to connect rural and

urban settings, forming the middle-class family and imagining the political society in Turkish modernization. While Kemalist reforms were aimed at gender equality, rural areas of Turkey remained untouched, and the country's uneven socioeconomic development persisted.

The CUP (Committee of Union and Progress) members had a similar mission to support women's modernization and initiated significant legal and institutional reforms to achieve this. However, their solution was conditional. Women were expected to achieve a balance between extreme modernity and traditional culture, which meant they were to be modern yet modest. Women were given a symbolic position to represent the Republic's modern outlook, and legal reforms complemented the move toward secularization of state and society. The legal reforms not only secularized the state but also changed people's daily lives. Compulsory primary school education for girls was introduced, and secondary schools, high schools, and universities were opened to them. Women received the right to vote and to be elected at both the municipal and national levels. These legal reforms meant that Turkish modernization emancipated but did not liberate women, replacing Islamic patriarchy with Western patriarchy. The family was reconfigured as an authentic core of society maintained through moral and domestic responsibilities held by women. The paternalist qualities ascribed to the family provided a model for the organization of social and political life, legitimizing and consolidating the authoritarian rule of the state in Turkish modernization.

The Kemalist modernization project aimed to transform Turkey into a modern, secular, and democratic nation-state, with fathers and male guardians redefined as agents of modernization who supported their daughters' education and professional

development, encouraging their participation in public life. However, women's modernization was conditional on maintaining their modesty and dignity, and navigating patriarchal authority was crucial. Mustafa Kemal's adopted daughters were seen as model citizens of the Republic, and their fathers played a crucial role in shaping their behavior and social status. The tension between fathers' support for

women's education and their wish to control their sexuality characterized their paternalist approach to women's modernization. While modernization provided new opportunities, it also subjected women to patriarchal authority. For example, the *Arkadaş* newspaper emphasized the

importance of dignity and modesty over coquetry, with respectable behavior a prerequisite for freedom and independence. This conditional modernization was part of the limits placed on women's progress by real or symbolic fathers. Women had to balance their desire for modernity and self-determination with the need to maintain their respectability and social status. Overall, women were gaining access to education and professional opportunities, becoming more socially active and fashionable, but their modernization was not entirely unconditional.

Feminist criticism argues that gender is not a natural occurrence but a societal imposition. Humans are born with both masculine and feminine traits, but culture values masculine traits more and rewards them with male identities, while punishing feminine traits with female identities. Women are taught that their ultimate goal is to be an "ideal wife and mother" and in Islamic societies, they are pressured to also be an "upstanding Muslim."

In Turkey's secular Republic, there was no prohibition on women wearing headscarves, but they were encouraged to adapt to Western dress codes. The headscarf became a symbol of backwardness and was expelled from the secularized public sphere. In 1969, the state's authoritarian control of the headscarf was challenged, and in 2003, the Law on Labor and Social Security was revised to include policy regulations for gender equality. However, the AKP's approach to gender equality has been conflicting, with a move towards conservatism in women's issues, such as defining the family as the most appropriate place for women. The AKP's neoliberal policies have created flexible and less secure working conditions for women, while preserving their traditional roles as mothers and wives. Patriarchal control is still relevant in Turkey's gender regime, and the power of actual and symbolic fathers rests on a religious conservative model.

The feminist movement that arose in Turkey after the 1980s had a significant impact and challenged the traditional roles and identities of femininity and masculinity. Instead of

solely focusing on gender equality, this movement aimed to redefine the concept of female identity within the context of sexual identity, and to promote this definition in a society where Islamic values are dominant. Until the 1980s, women were regarded as societal elements without a sexual identity (Kırkpınar cited in Karataş, 2009).

Despite the progress made, the second wave feminist movement in Turkey did not bring about a significant change in mentality. However, it did pave the way for previously taboo topics such as violence against women and sexual abuse within families to be discussed more openly. Following 1980, Turkey saw the emergence of various independent feminist groups for the first time.

The 1980s feminist movement, rooted in Marxist consciousness-raising groups, was later critiqued by feminist social scientists like Tekeli, Kandiyoti, and Sirman. Tekeli's book, *Women in the 1980s: Turkey from the Women's Perspective*, published in 1990, compiled critical work from left-leaning women scholars, revealing women's issues in modern Turkish history. The rise of popular feminism was also evident, with Duygu Asena's bestselling book, *The Woman Has No Name*, becoming a "manifesto of Turkish feminism," and her magazine *Womanly* having a significant impact on the popular dissemination of feminist issues.

In the 1990s, Ottoman women's movement in Turkey became a popular topic of study, previously neglected due to political and linguistic barriers. As a result, new women's institutions, including research centers and libraries, were established, and women in Southeastern Anatolia formed organizations to address domestic violence and honor crimes. Feminist journals also played a significant

role in debates on various issues, including honor crimes, domestic violence, LGBT rights, ethnic discrimination, and peace. There has been a recent focus on how Islam and modernity can coexist, particularly among younger generations born into debates on veiling and Islamist lifestyles. Islamist circles express a growing interest

in studying the history and sociology of early Republican generations to create new discourses and spark debates.

2.6.1 Introduction to Turkish feminist writers

Turkish women writers, too, have perceived feminism as a mission to protect women's rights. The protection of women's rights has generally evolved around the following issues:

- a. Access to education,
- b. Struggle for economic independence through brainpower,
- c. Challenging the opportunities to become a mother and a wife in addition to being a professional,
- d. Putting an end to violence against women,
- e. Advocating for women's sexual freedom,
- f. The right to take care of one's body.

These rights, which have been questioned and held by women writers in Turkish literature, have been the subject of many novels from the beginning to the present day. The novels written and the discussions around them have led to the perception and reorganization of many of the problems faced by women by society, in a process that spans approximately 115 years.

In Turkey, the notion of feminism was widely introduced in the 1970s and

1980s through translations and domestic works. However, it was not until after the 1980 military coup that actual feminist movements and consciousness emerged. During this period, writers like Adalet Ağaoğlu, Nezihe Meriç, Tezer Özlü, İnci Aral, Sevgi Soysal, and Latife Tekin produced works that criticized male dominance in areas such as femininity consciousness and women's liberation.

Modern women writers in Turkey often focus on the inner world of women, using associations to reflect their problems. Nezihe Meriç and Leyla Erbil are among those who

prioritize women's identity in their works. From the 1980s, other writers like Pınar Kür, Adalet Ağaoğlu, İnci Aral, Lâtife Tekin, Erendiz Atasü, Oya Baydar, Ayşe Kulin, Nazlı Eray, Aysel Özakin, Buket Uzuner, and Elif Şafak balance their artistic concerns with social issues and experiment with new forms. Narrative techniques and language are more significant than the subject itself in this type of novel. These women writers don't limit themselves to traditional narrative techniques but create innovative works by going beyond them.

İnci Aral (1944) also wrote novels that deal with women's issues, as was previously mentioned. She is said to exhibit a poetic narrative in her novels and short stories. In her novels, *Ölü Erkek Kuşlar (The Dead Male Birds)* (1991), *Yeni Yalan Zamanlar (The New Age of Lies)* (1994), she deals with female sensitivity, women's identity, and the conflict between traditional values and the life that must be lived. In her novel *Hiçbir Aşk Hiçbir Ölüm (No Love No Death)* (1997), she focuses on the relationship between a mother and daughter on the brink of divorce and whose mother tries to guide her with her experiences. These two women's problems are

enriched by internal monologues. *İçimde Kuşlar Göçüyor* (*Birds Are Migrating In Me*) (1998) and *Mor* (*Purple*) (2003) are among the well-known of İnci Aral's novels.

When it comes to how İnci Aral views gender differences in literature and women's writing, she summarizes her ideas this way;

In today's world, when it comes to quality literature, there is no distinction between male and female writers. In developed countries, a writer's works are evaluated within the criteria of literature. Template phrases like 'written with a woman's sensitivity' are not significant. (...) In Turkish short story writing, I believe we can talk more about the diversity of subjects and perspectives based on gender rather than the difference in discourse between men and women. (...) I do not embrace the view that gender creates immutable differences in people's linguistic, psychological, intellectual, and social conditions, and that it is reflected in literature and the superstructure. Instead of separating and exaggerating discourse differences, I advocate emphasizing the importance of the writer's sensitivity as a human being. I have always believed that the feminine and masculine aspects present in every individual are constantly in conflict, and people oscillate between the two.

Today, the partnership between women and men in thinking, language usage, and creative endeavors, as well as the commonalities in their ways of life and similarities, rapidly bring together the sensitivities that are inherently the same but are attempted to

be directed by society. The texts they produce sometimes exhibit similarities that can be perceived in reverse (Aral, 2003).

Aral's own life as a young mum while working as an arts teacher affected her writing and she created characters who were reminiscent of her experiences in her novels and stories. She mentions her hardships as a woman in a traditional marriage in her essay *Anlar, İzler, Tutkular* (2003);

My mother-in-law had taken over our lives; she was controlling us with great fervor. In addition to that, there were other reasons for me to be tense and unhappy. My hands had developed an allergy from washing baby diapers, and my hair was standing on end. Neglected, sleep-deprived, dazed, and excessively exhausted, I was going to school. One day, I suddenly saw myself in the mirror in this state and cried out loud (p. 42).

3 INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVELS

In the past, works created by women were often criticized and deemed inferior compared to those created by men. These works were known to depict women as vulnerable, exploited, oppressed, angry, isolated, and rebellious. The negative criticism that these works received often stemmed from the belief that women were biologically inferior to men and were not fit for creative pursuits such as writing. This belief was rooted in the Victorian notion of the female body and its supposed limitations and weaknesses. The act of childbirth was viewed as a direct rival to the creative process of writing. Moreover, it was widely believed that the female body was a weak instrument, making women incapable of producing quality work consistently. These notions were perpetuated by authors like Geraldine Jewsbury, who characterized the female body as prone to collapses, eclipses, and failures of power, rendering women unfit for the demands of creative work. Despite this negative criticism, many women persisted and continued to create works that challenged these stereotypes and beliefs. These works have since become recognized as significant contributions to literature, helping to dismantle the notion that women were not capable of producing quality creative work.

According to the theory of the "muted group" in society, women are often marginalized and their voices are not fully heard, while men are part of the dominant group and hold more power and influence. Anthropologist Shirley Ardener proposed a diagram with two circles, one representing the dominant group of men and the other representing the muted group of women.

In this context, the language of the dominant group is considered the norm and all acceptable language, while the muted group is expected to conform to this language. This can make it difficult for women to express themselves fully and be understood by the dominant group. The language used by women may be deemed inferior or unacceptable by the dominant group, leading to further marginalization and silencing of their voices. (Ardener, 1975).

In addition, the idea that "individuality is obsolete, and personality is a crime" suggests that women are expected to conform to societal expectations and norms, rather than expressing their individuality and unique personalities. This can further contribute to the suppression of women's voices and limit their ability to fully participate in society. It is important to recognize the impact of language and societal norms on marginalized groups, and to work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society for all individuals.

In the light of these ideas mentioned and considering women writers can express their worlds better taking their own cultural contexts as springboards, the two novels were analyzed with regards to their cultural context and the exploited female against male dominion that characterizes both Western and Eastern patriarchal cultures in the following parts of the dissertation.

3.1 Overview of *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood

Margaret Atwood is a Canadian author who has made significant contributions to the literary world as a novelist, poet, and dramatist. She has received numerous awards and

accolades for her work, including the Booker Prize, Governor General's Award, and the Arthur

C. Clarke Award. Aside from her literary accomplishments, Atwood is also a well-known environmental and political activist, advocating for issues such as climate change, women's rights, and freedom of expression. She has used her platform as a prominent author to raise awareness about these important social issues, and has been recognized for her contributions to society as a whole. Atwood's works have been translated into many languages and have been adapted into several popular television series and films. Her impact on the literary world has been significant, and her unique style and compelling narratives continue to captivate readers around the globe.

Through her poetry, essays, and novels, Atwood champions the importance of human rights and emphasizes the need to protect them. Her thematic concerns reflect her engagement with questions of Canadian national and personal identity, as well as wider humanitarian issues and power dynamics between men and women. Atwood's work serves as a call to action for the protection of individual freedoms and human rights, encouraging readers to engage in critical reflection on power dynamics and the need for social and political change. With regards to literature, Atwood puts forward her ideas this way;

Fiction is one of the few forms left through which we may examine our society not in its particular but in its typical aspects; through which we can see ourselves and the ways in which we behave towards each other, through which we can see others and judge them and ourselves (Devi & Swamy, p.131).

The Handmaid's Tale is a dystopian novel written by Canadian author Margaret Atwood and published in 1985. It belongs to a genre of utopian fiction and follows the story of Offred, a female narrator living in the Republic of Gilead, a new society established in the aftermath of environmental catastrophes in the United States. The novel is narrated by Offred, a female handmaid whose sole duty is to bear children for the ruling class. The book examines various themes such as gender, power, control, and the consequences of environmental degradation and

political extremism. Offred's perspective offers a glimpse into the oppressive regime that has stripped women of their rights and reduced them to mere vessels for procreation. The author portrays a dystopian world that serves as a warning against totalitarianism and emphasizes the need to protect individual freedoms and human rights.

Atwood's sixth novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, is described as a "study of power" which fully illustrates her maxim —" who can do what to whom and get away with it, even as far as death". Margaret Atwood's literary works delve into her concerns about womanhood and caution readers about the potential dangers that humanity may face. *The Handmaid's Tale* serves as a warning against the potential consequences of oppressive regimes and patriarchal systems that strip women of their rights and reduce them to mere "vessels for procreation" as she puts it. Atwood's exploration of power extends beyond political power, encompassing

personal power dynamics that exist within heterosexual couples as well as the corporate power of global capitalism. Rather than endorsing the traditional "Victor/Victim" power dynamic, Atwood advocates for a different kind of relationship in which power games and power imposition are rendered obsolete. She presents an optimistic and humanistic alternative in which the human heart remains a key factor, ultimately leading to the downfall of totalitarian regimes.

Atwood, sharing Kate Millett's perspective, believes that power structures are pervasive and influence all aspects of society, which can be analyzed through a political framework. In her book *Survival*, she expands on her political definition by identifying four "basic victim positions" that apply to personal and political realms. These positions involve denying victimhood, blaming external factors, refusing to accept victimhood as an inevitable role, and being a creative non-victim who takes control of their own life. Atwood astutely observes that the power dynamics present in broader societal, cultural, and political contexts also permeate the most intimate human relationships, with men and women portrayed as political prisoners of

a sexist society, constrained by roles of victor and victim that are reflected in their relationships with each other and the world around them.

The word 'dystopia' was coined by John Stuart Mill in 1868 and it means 'a bad place'. The dystopian genre rose in popularity after the 1950s and is characterized by limitations on freedom of thought, action, and imagination.

Dystopian fiction serves as a reflection of the author's present concerns regarding existing events and technologies, rather than a prophecy of future events. The genre functions as a warning or a critique of the present socio-political and cultural systems that the author deems problematic. By projecting these issues into an imagined future, the author can explore their consequences and highlight their potential dangers. Through this process, dystopian fiction can be seen as a commentary on the contemporary world, providing insights into the author's worldview and contributing to public discourse on pressing issues of the time.

Dystopian works often critique the social and political realities of their time, and more recent works have focused on the position of women in society since the 1960s and 1970s. This period saw women fighting against inequality with regard to sexuality and reproduction. Dystopias are indirectly built upon utopian narratives and offer an alternative to sometimes naive utopian ideas. They are presented as otherness, leading to an attitude of estrangement, where familiar language is used to guide the reader to accept a new, possibly controversial setting. Feminist utopian literature centers on gender-related issues, examining how gender manifests through human interactions with the environment and power dynamics within communities. In a society that is oppressed by authoritarian governments, it is troubling because individuals may be struggling with their sense of self. In a

dystopian world, it is unsettling to see people oppress others based on gender, which is a common feature of postmodern dystopian societies where identity is lost. It raises the question of whether men establish their identities

by oppressing women in societies ruled by fear and dehumanization, where women face double oppression from the government and patriarchal structures. The government in dystopian societies often uses religion as a means to exercise power, imposing strict rules that limit socialization, recreation, and business ownership, leading to a breakdown of order and control over people's bodies and lives.

Throughout different cultures, races, and classes, women are commonly viewed as the "other" gender and are consistently marginalized. Despite the efforts of feminist movements demanding equality, women remain subjected to oppression. In dystopian societies, women experience a double layer of oppression. They face political and authoritarian power and male and sexist oppression. A dystopian society strips away the basic human rights of its citizens, and the term "human" encompasses all genders or even no gender at all. It is important to note that men in such societies are not exempt from the loss of freedom and identity. Although they may not experience oppression in the same sense as women, they still lose their free will and control over their lives. They are deprived of recreational activities, have minimal control over their businesses, and must face the uncertainty of having the right to live, much like any other person in society.

In the epilogue of *The Handmaid's Tale*, it is revealed that the story is actually a compilation of various tapes, which will later be decoded by Professors Pieixoto and Wade at a conference as noted in the Historical Notes at the end of the novel. These tapes tell the story of a woman named Offred, which is a name

derived from “Of Fred”, the higher rank Commander, called Fred”, and who shares her experiences living in the Republic of Gilead, a dystopian society formerly known as the United States of America, where a religious fundamentalist- Puritan party has taken control. She is allowed to survive after catastrophic events in her previous life just because she can bear children to the Commanders whose wives are infertile due to the environmental contamination and radiation before Gilead.

In the novel, the American democratic institutions are quickly abolished in a coup, and power is seized by a group called the Sons of Jacob, who espouse a new ideology. This "revolutionary" power is characterized as "naked" because it relies on fear, brainwashing, and strict surveillance by the security forces, such as the male characters called “Angels”, “the Guardians”, and “the Eyes”. In this society, everyone is obsessed with obtaining some form of power, even if it is minor, due to scarcity. At the top of the power pyramid are the "Commanders," who embody patriarchal social authority. The regime controls births due to a fertility crisis caused by environmental toxins and justifies this control with a biblical story. The medical system determines women's fertility, and doctors use their power to obtain sexual favors from Handmaids, whom they can also classify as "Unwomen" and send to the feared "colonies" if they are deemed infertile. The novel and the TV series graphically depict the control of reproductive rights through the repeated occurrence of the "Ceremony," where Handmaids are ritualistically raped by their Commanders.

Due to the infertility problems, ruling authorities have created a hierarchical system for procreation. Offred, as a fertile "handmaid," is assigned to bear children for her assigned "Commander," named Fred. However, the Commanders are

already married to women of higher status called the "Wives," who often despise the handmaids for their role in bearing their husbands' children as the handmaids are entitled to have sexual intercourse with the Commanders. For this reason, the handmaids are treated like prostitutes and are part of a rigid social hierarchy that includes other classes of women such as the "Marthas," being the servants, the "Aunts," who educate and instruct the handmaids, the "Jezebels," who work as the official prostitutes for men of higher classes and the "Econowives" who represent the lower classes and do not have servants and so they have to take up the role of both Wife and Martha. There is also a group of older and/or rebellious 'Unwomen', who are not fit to bear children and who are used as disposable workers to clear toxic waste in the colonies. In this so-called republic or a

Christian fundamentalist dictatorship, these females categorized with different functions are at the mercy of males to live or perish as there is only a limited number of females who can give birth for the continuation of the society.

The handmaids' objectification and commodification are evident in their appearance and conduct. They are required to wear red, symbolizing their blood, which also means they are defined as the breeders and their class, and wear a white hood with wings that obstructs their vision and shields them from being seen.

In Gilead, the rules governing relationships are strict and even the Commander's Wife, Serena Joy, struggles to abide by them at times. Despite the strict rules and hierarchies, even those in positions of authority like the Commander's Wife, may feel trapped and powerless. While the handmaids are forced to have sex with the Commanders, it is also a difficult experience for the Wives who must witness and

allow the 'Ceremony' to take place repeatedly. If Offred were to become pregnant, Serena Joy would be granted some reprieve from this ritual. To increase the chances of this happening, she arranges for Offred to sleep with Nick, one of the Commander's 'Guardians'. Although Offred initially despises the idea, she begins to enjoy the human connection and eventually develops a secret relationship with Nick. This relationship rekindles painful memories of her life before Gilead with her husband Luke. The handmaids, who are forced to participate in the Ceremony with the Commanders, also suffer but find moments of solace and humanity in unexpected places. Offred's relationship with Nick represents a small rebellion against the rigid expectations placed upon her, but it also highlights the longing for connection and intimacy that she and other characters in the novel experience. This contrast between the dystopian society's dehumanizing practices and the basic human needs and desires that persist despite them underscores the bleakness and tragedy of the world Atwood has created.

Atwood leaves the reader at the end with the hope that there is a possibility of escape from the system. The reader also learns about the existence of safe havens for nonconformists called the 'Underground Femaleroad'. The fact that the tapes containing Offred's story were discovered in one of these safe places implies that she was able to escape the oppressive regime of Gilead.

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the sudden coup that erased American democratic institutions overnight is a revolutionary exercise of power by the Sons of Jacob, who became the architects of the Gileadean regime. The power of the regime is enforced by the Angels (army), the Guardians (police), and the Eyes (secret police), through brainwashing and strict surveillance, inspiring fear in the society. Power is scarce,

even in a menial form, in this highly stratified society, and everyone is obsessed with obtaining some. At the top of the power pyramid are the Commanders, who embody patriarchal social authority, with Commander Frederick (Fred) Waterford at the summit. The ruling class takes control over births, and doctors have the power to classify women as fertile or not and can send the Handmaids to the colonies as "Unwomen" if they report them for infertility. The Ceremony is the ritualized rape in which Handmaids are impregnated by their Commanders, visualizing the control of reproductive rights in the novel.

The regime in Gilead is based on a view of power as a process of domination by virtue of authority, supported by public torture and executions, aimed at eliminating political enemies. The use of public torture and executions, such as Salvagings and Particutions, hanging bodies, reinforces the authority of the ruling class, that is domination by authority.

Atwood has noted that women also hold positions of power in Gilead like the Aunts, as women in a society with some power will gladly take positions of power over other women. The authoritarian regime is based on the traditional separation of private (female) and public (male) spheres, and the maternal Aunt Lydia is one of the most prominent figures in this female collective. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, two groups of women hold power in the oppressive regime

of Gilead. The Aunts, while not as powerful as the Commanders, wield significant authority as enforcers of the patriarchal system. On the other hand, the Wives, represented by Serena Joy, have lost their public power and must rely on their influence in the private sphere. This power dynamic creates a struggle between Serena Joy and Offred, who is both under her control as a Handmaid and holds sexual power over her as the Commander's mistress. As Atwood notes, power in Gilead is constantly shifting and relative, as individuals use any means necessary to gain even a small amount of power in a society where it is scarce.

3.2 Overview of “*Hiçbir Aşk, Hiçbir Ölüm*” by İnci Aral

Hiçbir Aşk, Hiçbir Ölüm, written by Turkish author İnci Aral and published in 1997, delves into the lives of a mother named Sara and her daughter Simden, against the backdrop of social and political upheaval caused by a military coup in Turkey. Set within a traditional society, the novel explores the intricate dynamics of their complex mother-daughter relationship, as they navigate lives ensnared by internal conflicts and external constraints imposed by the patriarchal order. It portrays their acts of rebellion and resistance against authoritative figures and the systemic forces seeking to exert control over their lives. The novel is based on the author's own experiences and memories of her life full of conflicts and personal traumas in general, thus an autobiographical account to a greater extent, and partly fictitious, and thus differs from *The Handmaid's Tale* in terms of its subgenre. It seems that the author has been in an attempt to connect her unique story, which individuals have considered "fate" of the general and sexist society between mothers and daughters, to the many tragic stories. In the face of these dilemmas, in

order to write this apparently unique experience of her own, she writes the novel which becomes a process of revealing how mothers and daughters flow into that river, which all women experience to a greater or lesser extent, through seemingly "unique" paths. As the author herself reports, this novel aims to depict the contrast in the mother-daughter relationship,

and despite this contrast, it emphasizes the repetitive nature and cycle of their lives in some way and Sara's reliance on her beauty, too. She also highlights that when this beauty fades, the female experiences a sense of emptiness. However, upon a deeper analysis of the novel, it is observed that the author not only explores a mother-daughter relationship but also addresses many of the issues concerning womanhood, drawing inspiration from her own experiences and discussing it within a patriarchal cultural context.

Sara and Simden are the two protagonists of the novel and their inner journey to their female "selves" as a way of self-discovery as well as their complex relationship as a mother and daughter are treated through their perspectives. The protagonists take turns in telling their own stories as narrators together with an omniscient narrator, the author herself. The author uses different techniques like stream of consciousness or inner monologues to take the reader to the remote parts of the characters' inner lives and to uncover their souls struggling with their internal conflicts forced by the external life governed by the patriarchy.

3.2.1 The Story

Simden is on the verge of divorcing her husband Ömer because he had engaged in a relationship with another man despite being married, and he chose that man over her. During the same period, Simden's mother, Sara, fell asleep with a cigarette in her hand due to taking sleeping pills while being intoxicated, resulting in a fire in the bedroom. She was severely injured and burned. Simden visits her mother in the hospital, while Sara fights for her life, they both frequently reflect on their past and examine their lives and their relationship with each other.

Sara, whose first name is Halise, lost her mother at a young age and attended boarding school at the İzmir American Girls' College. After being abandoned by an American officer with whom she had a relationship during her high school years, she went to Istanbul to study

English literature. She later married a prosecutor whom she met during her journey. Sara gives birth to a daughter (Simden) from this marriage. However, due to the failure of the marriage at an early stage when Simden was still a baby, Sara attempts suicide. As a result, her husband leaves her, damaging his career, and takes Simden with him. They tell Simden that her mother has died. However, one day when Simden is attending boarding school, Sara visits her and reveals that she is her mother. After this event, Simden starts spending her summer vacations with her mother.

Sara, a beautiful woman, has had relationships with many men after her divorce from her first husband. She marries Suat Bey, whom she meets during her singing career, and after Suat Bey's death, she inherits a large fortune. Sara, who is attracted to money, luxury, and fame, successfully uses her beauty to attract wealthy men and leads a glamorous life. Simden, who fails to establish an emotional closeness with her mother, benefits from these financial opportunities but always remains in her mother's shadow. Simden, who is studying medicine, prefers a more modest life compared to her mother. After marrying Ömer, she quits her job and dedicates herself to art. However, when she reaches the stage of divorce with Ömer, she begins to reassess her life and question herself. Sara, on the other hand, becomes engulfed in a pessimistic state of mind as she rapidly loses all her capital, including her beauty, with old age and seeks refuge in Simden. But when she fails to find the warmth she seeks from Simden, she turns to alcohol and painting. Reflecting on her life on her deathbed, Sara loses all meaning in life when she completely loses her physical beauty. During the intensive care days, the mother and daughter question their relationship with each other and express regret for their failures. The novel concludes with Simden going to her mother's house after Sara's death. Understanding

once again how much her mother meant to her in her deceased mother's home, Simden has a dream and decides to give a new direction to her fragmented life.



Simden is presented as a young woman who has a troubled marriage at the very beginning of the novel. She discovers her husband, Ömer has had an affair with a young man after seeing them kissing each other but she finds no courage to leave her husband, and questioning in an emotional pain she criticizes herself about lacking dignity and honor;

Hemen o gece terk etmeliydi evi aslında. Ama bunun yerine oturup onun kendini haklı çıkarmaya çalışmasını dinlemişti. Tıpkı geri zekalı biri gibi. Şimdi üç ay sonra bile hiç olmazsa ertesi gün neden çekip gitmediğini, vazgeçemediği şeyin ne olduğunu düşünüyordu. Ömer olmadığı kesin olduğuna göre niye bu kadar onursuz ve ilkesiz davranmıştı? Çünkü, ama neden, diye isyan ediyordu aklım, diye düşündü. Neden hiçbir suçum olmadığı halde düzeni baştan aşağı bozulacak olan ben olmak zorundayım? O bir başkasını- bir erkeği hem de- sevdiği için benim onca yıllık çabam, yatırımlarım boşa mı gidecek? (HAHÖ pp.9-10) (Translation in Appendix no.1)

Later on, it is understood that Simden's mother left her when she was a child and they have never had a proper mother-daughter relationship as expected in a traditional society. Both her marriage and relationship with her mother pose a dilemma in her life to overcome to emerge as a strong woman and plan her life accordingly. Although she is not dependent on her husband economically, she is not ready to emerge as a free soul as she feels emotionally attached. As a child she was not aware of the facts that shaped her mother's life. As an adult too, she makes little attempts to understand her mother. She has her insecurities due to being abandoned by her mother and reared by her grandmother and dad. Sara damages her sense of dignity and identity. She, at the end, gets rid of dependency and comes to terms with her flaws and dilemmas.

Sara, on the other hand, is depicted as a marginalized and once very beautiful but now an old woman and mother. She acts impulsively, and goes after her passions. She changes her name from Halise to Sara to pursue a life of her own, that

might reflect her desire to gain a new identity, resisting the given legal birth name implying that this is not what she wants.

She is an artist but leaves university education. As a seemingly very strong woman, she breaks her ties with everything, even her daughter at an early age and on. She fails to build a strong bond with her daughter. She is not attached to anything that will block her way out. As

a young university student, she marries impulsively and starts to live in a rural place that would restrict her in many respects as a woman. She marries several times and has a love affair with a young man but ultimately, she ends her life committing suicide. Both Sara and Simden experience the traumas of their existence as females in a male-dominated culture, but in the end, they come to terms with their own evils in their mother and daughter relationship.

4 FEMINIST AND STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE NOVELS

4.1 Analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale*

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) is analyzed as an attempt to depict how the female body can become a "political vessel and an object to promote and impose a patriarchal, conservative and repressive authority" and the females' quest for identity by resisting, which Atwood is concerned with, that is, the expression of the female voice in particular in their struggles.

The Handmaid's Tale is a feminist dystopian novel that portrays a society in which women are completely oppressed and forced into strict gender roles and restrictions, including enforced sexuality. Atwood's exploration of a society that has deteriorated from an ideal utopia addresses the relevant environmental issues of the time, such as climate change and pollution that have decimated the population. The novel portrays women as vessels for bearing children, subjected to sexual slavery and language that reinforces their subjugation, resulting in psychological damage. This representation of a dystopian society highlights the issues of female submissiveness and the erasure of women's identity in patriarchal theocratic states. By examining the feminist dystopia and the struggle for women's freedom in the novel, this analysis aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges women face in their quest for equality in a male-dominated society.

The Handmaid's Tale is told from the female point of view of the protagonist Offred who, like all fertile women in Gilead, is forced into servitude as a Handmaid and ordered to produce babies for the governing elite. Non-fertile women are assigned to menial domestic roles ("Marthas") or to the reeducation of the Handmaids ("Aunts") in line with the dictates of the system. Women are not allowed to read or even to keep such a basic element of their identity as their real names; instead, they are given a composite name identifying the man they belong to, so that the narrator of the story becomes "Of Fred. Atwood, however, clarifies that it was her intention to keep the name of the narrator a secret since "so many people throughout history have had their names changed"

4.1.1 Individuality / Objectification of women

In this society, individuals are not raised to embrace their individuality but rather to serve as representatives of their social class. As Christine Gomez puts it (cite), In Gilead, women are relegated to predefined roles that serve men. The wife embodies a decorative function in blue, the daughter is submissive and silent in white, the middle-aged Martha serves as a housekeeper in green, and the Handmaid, dressed in red, represents the sole purpose of childbearing, Jezebels have non reproductive sex; Aunts train Handmaids. Each woman accepts her position as a victim, considering it an inevitable outcome dictated by biology and historical circumstances, particularly in a time when birthrates among Caucasians have sharply declined. Personal growth and development are not encouraged or allowed. Additionally, the process of procreation in this mechanized system completely removes love and intimacy from the equation. Sex is merely used as a means to pursue pleasure, devoid of any emotional connection or purpose in producing

offspring. To put this differently, the female characters find themselves relegated to the status of "unwomen" when they no longer serve a purpose in Gilead's pursuit of procreating healthy citizens. What is noteworthy is their apparent lack of resistance or desire to escape their debased positions. They have internalized the societal perception of themselves

through the lens of men, defining their social identities solely based on fulfilling men's sexual desires.

The women who resist and rebel in the handmaids' society face severe consequences. This is how the oppressive authority exploits the women and their bodies. Ofglen, in order to protect the secrecy of May Day, chooses to end her own life through suicide. Moira's attempt to escape is unsuccessful, and she is forced into a life of prostitution at Jezebel, the city's brothel, before eventually being sent to the boneyard. These examples demonstrate that in order to survive in Gilead, the handmaids are forced to surrender their autonomy. The oppressive regime of Gilead aims to strip women of their individuality, reducing them to passive bodies solely responsible for reproduction.

The protagonist Offred stripped of her presumably original name June, assumes the role of a Handmaid within the household of a prominent commander, an assignment that results in the relinquishment of her personal identity. Renamed "Offred," a fusion of "of Fred" denoting her ownership by the commander, she is obligated to engage in sexual relations with him as part of a complex arrangement. In an intricately orchestrated ceremony mandated by society, Offred assumes a physically positioned role, lying between the legs of the commander's wife, symbolically resembling a surrogate womb for the purpose of procreation.

Therefore, the female is seen to have no identity, reduced to an object of a service.

The utilization of women as instruments in the industrialization of domestic labor necessitates a shift in how both genders perceive women. To uphold the political system, women must internalize the notion of being commodities. This perspective is enforced upon Offred at the Red Center, as evident in her own self-descriptions. She acknowledges her significance and scarcity, stating that she cannot simply blend into another landscape, as she is deemed a national resource (Atwood, 65).

In order for women to truly be recognized as citizens with rights, they must possess a clear legal identity as individuals. However, this is unattainable in Gilead, where women are denied such rights. The pursuit of human dignity for women requires the cessation of their bodies' commercial exploitation in advertising and the prevention of their exploitation in motherhood by the state or religious institutions as is being discussed today. The names also symbolize one's legal identity but within the oppressive regime, it becomes imperative for the Handmaids to relinquish their past lives and the values they held dear. The regime aims to erase their former personalities and modes of self-identification, employing various methods to achieve this goal. One such method is the alteration of their names. By bestowing new names upon them, the regime seeks to cut off the connection between their past identities and their current existence as Handmaids. This act of renaming serves as a symbolic tool to reinforce their subservience and reinforce the erasure of their individuality.

While Gilead imposes modesty in dress, reducing the exploitation of women's bodies in one sense, it nonetheless exploits them for the purpose of

procreation. Consequently, women cease to be recognized as individuals with legal rights and are reduced to mere resources. The notion of "freedom from" violence, as advocated by Aunt Lydia, is deceptive, as it only shields women from non-sanctioned violent crimes or rapes (Atwood, 24). Violence or coerced sexual acts perpetrated by the Wives, Commanders, and government officials, however, are sanctioned. This concept of "freedom from violence" serves to protect women solely as reproductive vessels owned by others.

In the pre-Gilead era, women not only fulfilled their reproductive roles but also actively participated in the production of goods, technology, and information. Offred, like her mother who raised her as a single parent, had been engaged in work and self-sufficiency. However, men perceived women's involvement in productive activities outside the household as a threat. Consequently, as Offred informs Luke, the government enacted a decree prohibiting women

from owning property any longer (Atwood, p.178). With the loss of property ownership, women themselves became regarded as possessions. They were stripped of their autonomy and reduced to objects of ownership rather than individuals with rights and agency.

The loss of individuality within Gilead is accompanied by harsh consequences for those who dare to defy the rules. In the face of disobedience, physical punishment is inflicted as a means of maintaining control. Furthermore, if a handmaid is deemed infertile, she is left with two grim choices: to be sent to the Colonies, where she is reduced to an "Unwoman" and forced into labor, or to be relegated to the role of a prostitute in the notorious establishment known as Jezebel.

In the oppressive society of Gilead, handmaids are dehumanized and treated as mere machines, devoid of personal autonomy and reduced to objects.

Another way of oppressing women and stripping them of their identities is to prohibit them from reading. In Gilead, women are deliberately kept ignorant about their circumstances and the government's issues. Reading is strictly forbidden as it might lead to the formation of independent thoughts and opinions. Publications specifically targeting women are deemed especially dangerous, as they often depict liberated women who dress and live according to their own preferences. Such publications do not conform to the government's-imposed rules of female submission.

Offred describes herself as if she is “made of smoke, as if I’m a mirage, fading before their eyes” (p. 85). Upon thinking about her family and friends, she adds, “They might as well be nowhere, as I am for them. I too am a missing person” (p.103). The systematic pressure placed upon her to fulfill the role of a Handmaid, tasked solely with reproductive purposes for the Commander and his wife, becomes an undeniable manifestation of her diminishing identity. As a mere instrument, Offred's sense of self dwindles, rendering her a ghostly presence engulfed by the overwhelming control and manipulation of Gilead's dystopian society.

Those women at Jezebel, on the other hand are perfect examples of how even educated women are made invisible. The women working in the whorehouse are subjected to strict regulations that control every aspect of their lives, including their work schedules, breaks, and even punishments for gaining weight. As the Commander explains, these women come from various professional backgrounds, such as sociology, law, and executive positions in industries like fast-food chains or hotels. This reveals that these women, who have been dehumanized and reduced to mere commodities, were once educated and held respectable positions in society. In contrast, men enjoy their own dynamics and privileges without facing similar penalties, highlighting the stark contrast in the positions of men and women in this society.

The suppression of identity of the Handmaids is maintained through the Aunts. Those Aunts who are in charge of teaching Handmaids their main role of “breeding” and who are also enjoying some sort of authority talk about the faults of the women in pre-Gileadian society and accuse them of not fulfilling their major duty and calling them “sluts”;

Some women believed there would be no future, they thought the world would explode. That was the excuse they used, says Aunt Lydia. They said there was no sense in breeding. Aunt Lydia’s nostrils narrow: such wickedness. They were lazy women, she says. They were sluts... They made mistakes, says Aunt Lydia. We don’t intend to repeat them. Her voice is pious, condescending, the voice of those whose duty it is to tell us unpleasant things for our own good... All of us here will lick you into shape, says Aunt Lydia, with satisfied cheer (pp.144-146).

As such, the Aunts represent the spokespeople of the patriarchal authority and brainwash the Handmaids, implying that women in this society are abused even in different roles they are given. The aunts using the little power granted to them are unaware of the agenda of the system and that they are inevitably abused, thus lose

their identity, too. Power as a dangerous tool used by the regime causes the Aunts to betray even their sisters creating an imbalance among the same sex.

4.1.2 Motherhood and Housewifery

There are diverse women characters in the novel representing different functions assigned to them. One of them is Serena Joy, a famous singer in the past, who is a significant character as the wife of the Commander, notable for her role and transformation. Interestingly, she initially embraced an anti-feminist stance and championed the idea of women assuming traditional housewife roles when the Republic of Gilead was established. In Serena's view, being a devoted housewife, caring for the home and children, was the epitome of a woman's purpose. However, the irony lies in the fact that Serena herself does not possess the ability to conceive children, rendering her inadequate according to society's standards of a good wife. This discrepancy fuels Serena's frustration throughout the novel. Margaret Atwood, through Serena's character, aims to shed light on the superficiality of the preconceived notions about women. Even in contemporary times, the notion of a good wife is sometimes narrowly defined by these traditional roles. Through Serena, Atwood delves into the consequences and complexities that arise when a woman strives to conform to this idealized image of a wife, illustrating the potential outcome and inner turmoil that may ensue.

4.1.3 Marriage

Marriage is portrayed as an institution that has been radically transformed and subverted within the dystopian society of Gilead. The novel presents a distorted and oppressive version of marriage, highlighting the power dynamics and control

exerted over individuals within this totalitarian regime. In Gilead, marriage is stripped of its traditional notions of love, companionship, and mutual respect. Instead, it becomes a means of enforcing social order, procreation, and maintaining strict hierarchies. The primary purpose of marriage in Gilead is to facilitate reproduction, particularly through the role of the handmaids, who are assigned to high-ranking Commanders for the sole purpose of bearing children.

Marriage in Gilead is characterized by a lack of agency and autonomy for women. Handmaids like Offred are reduced to mere vessels for procreation, devoid of personal desires or choices. Their bodies are tightly controlled, and their identities are erased, as they are given names based on their assigned commanders. The concept of consent is completely disregarded, as handmaids are subjected to the "Ceremony," a ritualized act of sexual intercourse that is more akin to reproductive duty than an expression of love or intimacy.

Atwood's depiction of marriage in the novel serves as a critique of patriarchal control and the manipulation of gender roles within society. The novel underscores the dehumanizing effects of a society that reduces women to their reproductive capabilities, denying them agency and relegating them to a subservient status. Furthermore, Atwood explores the complex power dynamics within marriage, particularly in the case of the Commander and Serena Joy. Their relationship is presented as a façade, where Serena Joy, despite being an architect of Gilead's oppressive system, is trapped in a loveless and unfulfilling marriage. While all the women are vulnerable in the novel, despite their seemingly comparative power, the wives are also with limited options which are constantly exploited in married life. They are humiliated while they have to watch the

handmaids being impregnated in their laps by the husbands as the system enforces them to do so. The wives are equally victimized in the hands of the patriarchal authority, having no voice of their own.

Overall, "The Handmaid's Tale" portrays marriage as an instrument of control and subjugation within the dystopian world of Gilead, critiquing the oppressive gender roles and the loss of personal autonomy experienced by women within this society.

4.1.4 Language

It is clear that in any oppressive system, language use is under strict control or even is prohibited. In an effort to distinguish handmaids from men in the novel, they were stripped of

the ability to write, read, and use certain words, as well as anything associated with rationality or intellectual thinking. The handmaids' speech is restricted to a limited set of words, preventing them from fully expressing their thoughts and stifling their intellectual capacity. As Offred reflects, "It was like using a language I'd once known but had nearly forgotten" (THT,p.156). This means that by controlling language, females are also controlled and possess no identity to resist as the system dictates.

In public, the handmaids are compelled to engage in scripted religious exchanges as a form of communication: "'Blessed be the fruit,' she says to me, the accepted greeting among us. 'May the Lord open,' I answer, the accepted response" (THT, p.29). These prescribed dialogues not only serve as a mechanism imposed by

the authorities to restrict the sharing of personal information among the handmaids, but they also serve as a way for the handmaids themselves to assess whether their counterpart is a compliant member of Gilead. Offred emphasizes that due to this reason, no one can be trusted: "During these walks she has never said anything that was not strictly orthodox, but then, neither have I. She may be a real believer, a Handmaid in more than name. I can't take the risk" (THT, p. 29). However, language not only functions as a tool for control but also as a means of resistance and rebellion. But at the same time, spreading fear through language restriction is a method to suppress the identities of the females.

To ensure the triumph and perpetuation of their system, the authorities implemented deceptive religious beliefs alongside a militaristic structure. They established educational facilities like the Red and Rachel and Leah Reeducation Centers, specifically designed to indoctrinate fertile women. The primary objective of these centers is to manipulate and control the trainees, compelling them to remain silent and obedient. Atwood, acknowledges the oppressive nature of such tactics, stating, "The ultimate goal of suppression is to silence opposing voices, eradicate free expression, so that only the voices and words of those in power prevail" (quoted in Wood, p.140). The handmaids are strictly forbidden to speak publicly and

among each other especially with their wings around their heads which disable them to both see and talk easily. However, Offred reveals; “We learned to lip-read, our heads flat on the beds, turned sideways, watching each other’s mouths. In this way we exchanged names, from bed to bed: Alama. Janine. Dolores. Moria. June” (p.4). Despite the prohibition, the females find ways to raise their voices, indicating that it is still a possibility to demonstrate their essence.

Since almost all verbal expression is forbidden, Offred becomes alert to all sensory images, which is quite contrary to what she experienced in her past life. This gives her a chance to notice the things she used to ignore, which contributes to her awareness and quest. For example, she recognizes the significance of the images before Gilead. She regrets while thinking of her husband Luke, “...paid more attention, to the details, the moles and scars, the singular creases, I didn’t and he’s fading. Day by day, night by night he recedes, and I become more faithless” (p.346). This is both an opportunity to go on and resist what she sees in the oppressive world of Gilead and a lack of past images of her married life and daughter which are fading in her mind;

The kitchen smells of yeast, a nostalgic smell. It reminds me of other kitchens, kitchens that were mine. It reminds me of mothers; although my own mother did not make bread. It smells of me, in former times, when I was a mother. This is a treacherous smell, and I know I must shut it out (p.62).

Controlling memory and expression is thus a very powerful means to maintain oppression but Offred gradually becomes more connected to the outer world, once she totally ignored, passing through some stages manifesting her female self, her sexual life full of passion and her ability to conceive a child.

4.1.5 Religion

The act of engaging in sexual intercourse with the Commander serves as a tangible manifestation of the Old Testament's narrative, particularly when Rachel's words to Jacob are considered as Atwood uses this as an allusion in her text before the story.

And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no Children, Rachel envied her sister, and said unto Jacob, Give me Children, or else I die. "And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel; and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of thy womb? And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have Children by her (Genesis, 30:1-3 in THT).

The authorities in Gilead have discovered scriptural justifications to validate their mistreatment of women. In this oppressive society, Offred, a Handmaid in her early thirties, has been assigned a singular role and purpose: to bear children. Within the confines of oppressive regimes, particularly in the context of gender dynamics, women often find themselves subjected to various forms of abuse under the deceptive cloak of religious justification. These regimes exploit and distort religious doctrines to oppress and mistreat women, using the guise of faith to legitimize their actions.

When religion's role is analyzed with regards to women's rights in Pre-Gilead America on the verge of a transformation to a totalitarian, patriarchal system, motivated by their disdain for divorce, pornography, and abortion, Christians in the society of the novel prohibit all three practices. Additionally, they strip women of their rights to own property or possess personal finances, placing all assets under the control of their husbands. Women who have undergone divorce but are still capable of bearing children, like Offred, are deemed guilty of committing adultery.

The males are not regarded as the responsible ones who commit adultery and rape but the females. This is how patriarchy, thus, radical religion treats and perceives women as the sole responsibility holders for any kind of violence. Under the pretext of a population revitalization initiative, Gilead interprets the biblical text in a literal manner, using it as justification for the government-approved act of rape known as the impregnation ceremony, which the handmaids are compelled to endure on a monthly basis.

4.1.6 Resisting norms and patriarchy and Gaining identity

Offred, fueled by her personal strength to a certain extent, overcomes her fear of the Commander. However, she recognizes the danger in her lack of fear. Her resistance takes the form of internal struggles rather than overt actions, as she understands the power of speaking out against those in authority. It might be stated that Offred's resistance lacks the rebellious energy. Towards the end of her story, Offred undergoes a transformation, acknowledging the true power of the regime and submitting to it in order to survive. She resigns her body to the use of others, emphasizing her desire to continue living in any form. According to Atwood, escaping domination is impossible as power permeates every aspect of society. Offred's resistance becomes a mere fantasy, but her true strength lies in her counter-narrative to Gilead's social doctrine and her ability to confront horrifying events.

Within Offred's world, she finds solace and inspiration in her friendship with Moira, who embodies all the qualities that Offred aspires to possess. Moira is portrayed as a person of open-mindedness and freedom, characteristics that permeate her persona throughout the entire narrative. Notably, her bisexuality adds an extra layer to the perception of her confidence and self-assuredness. Moira

emerges as a symbol of strength and hope for Offred due to her unwavering determination to fight for her beliefs.

Moiras trajectory offers an intriguing perspective to consider. Similar to Offred, she too endures punishment, albeit for different reasons. Moira is sent to the Red Center due to her bisexuality, a condemnation in this oppressive society. Despite facing the same fate of becoming a Handmaid like Offred, her indomitable spirit propels her to resist what seems like an inevitable destiny. Choosing to escape the confines of the Center, Moira becomes an exceptional figure who demonstrates to Offred that it is indeed possible to combat and challenge oppression. According to Eleonora Rao's book, *Strategies for Identity: The Fiction of Margaret*

Atwood, (Rao, 1993) Moira is a remarkable character who manages to preserve her sense of self and resist the indoctrination of guilt and evil that the handmaids are subjected to at the Center. Rao emphasizes that Moira successfully navigates the oppressive conditioning imposed upon the handmaids, emerging as a symbol of resilience and defiance.

In Offred's recollections of their friendship before the grip of oppression tightened, each fragment holds a specific purpose. These memories serve to instill strength, evoke laughter, and, most importantly, instill a sense of hope within Offred. Moira emerges as a bold and rebellious figure, staunchly refusing to accept the subjugation of women and vehemently rejecting the notion that any class of individuals has the right to dominate and rule over others.

Offred finds herself taken aback when the Commander displays a surprising interest in her, suggesting they attend a costume party and subsequently making

advances of a sexual nature. In the Republic of Gilead, Handmaids are strictly designated for procreation purposes, engaging in sexual relations solely with their assigned masters to conceive children. However, the Commander, evidently dissatisfied with the stringent and puritanical regime, seeks solace and release through Offred, despite blatantly violating the very rules he is supposed to uphold. The Commander becomes a source of assistance for Offred, and in return, she employs her body as a means of exerting a certain level of control over him. As she reflects, "It's difficult for me to believe that I have power over him, of any sort, but I do; although it's of an equivocal kind... There are things he wants to prove to me, gifts he wants to bestow, services he wants to render, tenderness he wants to inspire" (p. 210). Despite the oppressive circumstances, the Commander willingly discloses official information to Offred, breaking the rules he himself helped establish. Additionally, he goes against protocol by providing her with magazines and lotion, items that she is forbidden to possess or use. This shows that even those in authority as males are oppressed and cannot fulfill their dreams and personal wishes openly, even if this fact does not

justify males' treatment of females in this way, seeing them as objects and exploiting their bodies.

However, Offred seizes the opportunity presented by the Commander's attention to carve out some personal freedoms for herself, recognizing that she is nothing more than a mere object of amusement to him, incapable of entrusting him with her genuine emotions. She must exercise caution, as the discovery of her illicit sexual relationship with the Commander, outside of the officially sanctioned mating sessions, would undoubtedly result in severe punishment if brought to the attention

of Serena Joy, the Commander's wife. Offred enjoys this game with the Commander as she feels her power, even if it is not a big deal, to have a bit of freedom.

In the context of Gilead, where the oppressive regime aims to control and suppress the individual identities of its handmaids, the absence of mirrors serves as a symbolic removal of self-reflection and self-awareness. Mirrors, traditionally considered as tools for introspection, are conspicuously scarce within this society, deliberately denying the handmaids the opportunity to witness their true selves.

However, an exception to this absence of mirrors can be found within the hidden realm of Jezebel's, the forbidden space where the Commander secretly takes Offred. In this illicit environment, where women are expected to emphasize their sexual allure and physical appearance, a mirror defiantly remains intact. Offred observes, "they haven't removed the mirror, there is a long one opposite the sofa. You need to know here what you look like" (p.314). This juxtaposition highlights the contradictory nature of Gilead's oppressive system, where handmaids are denied self-perception in most instances, yet within this particular domain, the importance of physical appearance remains paramount.

Seeking a sense of self amidst this distorted reality, Offred yearns to see her reflection, confessing, "I feel stupid; I want to see myself in a mirror" (p.300). In her interaction with the

mirror, borrowed by the Commander from Serena's room and held for her, Offred recognizes that the privileges granted to her, such as engaging in activities like playing Scrabble with the Commander and having access to fashion magazines, create an illusion that she holds some significance to the Commander. However, the realization dawns upon her that these superficial trappings, including the clothes and makeup provided by the Commander, serve only to objectify her as property, reinforcing the harsh realities of life within Gilead.

This revelation underscores the stark gender disparities at play within Gilead. While the Commander, as a male figure, enjoys the freedom to bend or break the rules of this patriarchal society, Offred, as a mere instrument of procreation, is relegated to a subservient role, compelled to serve the regime's purpose. This realization marks a significant turning point in Offred's personal growth, as she begins to grasp the intricacies of her existence within the confines of Gilead's oppressive regime.

Atwood subtly demonstrates how women, within a patriarchal state, can no longer be suppressed into silence. The seemingly passive demeanor of the Handmaids in Gilead can be interpreted as a strategic act of revolution, aimed at securing their survival. However, they are far from being completely voiceless. Engaging in an underground movement known as May Day, in which Offred was an active participant and Nick is hinted to be involved, they establish their own secret language born out of necessity. As Offred recounts, "We learned to whisper almost without sound... We learned to lip-read... In this way we exchanged names, from bed to bed (p.2)". Through their apparent passivity, Offred and her fellow Handmaids not only manage to endure but also actively resist the oppressive

regime.

While it may appear that Offred remains silent or is forcibly silenced, she cleverly maneuvers to defy her oppressors. In a subtle act of defiance, she decides to withhold her child from the barren Commander, asserting her ownership alongside Nick. By reclaiming agency

over her own body and the fate of her child, Offred can be said to silently challenge the power dynamics imposed upon her.

Within the confines of her oppressive reality, Offred discovers a genuine connection with Nick, a fellow employee serving the Commander and his wife. Their relationship, however, comes with immense risk, as Nick faces the threat of death should their forbidden liaison be exposed. Despite this danger, the couple feels compelled to pursue their secret affair as a means of asserting their shared humanity. In each other's embrace, they find solace and an outlet for expressing the profound emotional needs that their society ruthlessly suppresses by imposing rigid, predefined roles upon both men and women. Their relationship proves that there is still hope for a better world and this is an indication that such a relationship based on love can be an outlet for their emancipation.

Among the women who were courageous enough to rebel against the system to get their rights as females are Offred's mother and Ofglen but at a great cost. Offred's mother was actively engaged in the feminist movement in the society "before," participating in actions such as burning pornographic material and advocating for women's right to abortion. She expressed frustration towards

Offred's lack of interest in the women's movement and her tendency to take her rights for granted. Offred recalls her mother's words, "You, young people don't appreciate things... You don't know what we had to go through, just to get you where you are" (p.131). Offred's mother harbors concerns about the consequences of complacency in this regard, a fear that ultimately proves to be justified as she is later sent to the Colonies after Gilead's establishment.

Additionally, Ofglen, a fellow Handmaid, emerges as a seemingly braver woman than Offred. Ofglen actively participates in the resistance movement and goes beyond the accepted boundaries of relationships among Handmaids. She shares valuable information about the

resistance with Offred and urges her to pass on any information she receives from her Commander, which Offred hesitates to do. When Ofglen chooses to end her own life rather than be captured by "The Eyes," Gilead's secret police, Offred experiences relief, knowing that Ofglen is now unable to disclose any information about her. Offred reflects, "She did it before they came. I feel great relief. I feel thankful to her. She has died that I may live. I will mourn later" (p. 298). Instead of grieving, Offred expresses her feelings and in a way reveals her ignorant attitude just as she did before when her mother strived for women's emancipation to keep their identity. This might be interpreted as a kind of betrayal to her own gender, which is also represented through the Aunts who were given a bit of authority to keep the Handmaids true to their functions as submissive and obedient objects. In this sense, even having a little power is dangerous leading to betrayal and it renders the resistance futile.

With regards to the mistakes done in the past, in June's or Offred's narration of her story, she reflects on how society operated by deliberately turning a blind eye to certain issues, emphasizing that ignorance and ignoring are not the same thing. She suggests that most people are not the ones making headlines; instead, they live on the margins of society, in the unnoticed spaces between stories, which affords them a certain degree of freedom. Even in her own past, June considers herself invisible, regretting that she did not actively oppose the rise of the Gilead regime like her mother and best friend Moira did. She acknowledges her own contribution to the problem and hopes that forgiveness, including self-forgiveness, can be found in the future despite their collective complicity and invisibility.

The handmaids possess the ability to subvert the very act of exploitation imposed upon them. Despite suicide being considered a religious sin, it becomes a powerful statement of reclaiming control over their bodies. Ofglen, a member of the May Day community, demonstrates this by sacrificing herself. In doing so, it can be interpreted as a means of asserting autonomy and preserving the integrity of the resistance movement she believes in.

The handmaids make efforts to assert their individuality in such ways, too. One example is Janine, who reclaims her real name after giving birth and before being reassigned to another household. Offred refers to her as Janine instead of her assigned name. Offred herself also reveals her true name to Nick, her lover, which becomes a way for her to regain a sense of her own identity. Additionally, many handmaids engage in acts of rebellion against the oppressive society as a means of reclaiming their individuality. They secretly assist and support one another, as demonstrated when they provide extra sugar packets to Moira, who is being

punished. These acts of solidarity, such as passing the sugar packets from bed to bed, highlight their enduring sense of community and connection.

4.2 Analysis of *Hiçbir Aşk, Hiçbir Ölüm*

The novel starts with Simden's recollection of what has happened in her marriage through flashback. Her new world upon deciding to leave her husband is not ideal for the existing standards of the society but a huge improvement for freedom, creates a new order for the first time in her life. Her confrontation with her mum is also another improvement for emancipation of the set codes and now she gains an insight into her mum's leaving her when she was a child.

In order to understand the women in the novel, the stories of the two women should be clarified to provide the context. Firstly, there's the story of Sara, the mother. Secondly, the reader is given the story of the daughter, Simden. Sara's story goes like this;

As mentioned earlier, the novel revolves around the mother-daughter confrontation, marriage, attachment, and sexuality, Sara, whose real name is Halise Gülsün, has been through three marriages and had various relationships at different times. Two of Sara's marriages ended in divorce, while the third ended with her husband's death. Neglected by her family during her childhood, Sara grows up as a rebellious child. She is a woman who has learned to conceal her

emotions and experienced loneliness at an early age. During her high school years, her long- term boyfriend David leaves her after their relationship without informing her, causing a major breakdown for Sara. On the train to Istanbul for university, she meets her first husband, Çetin. Months later, when she encounters Çetin again, she

decides to give up her university education, packs her bags, and goes to the small town where Çetin serves as a prosecutor, choosing to marry and live with him. However, this decision does not bring happiness to Sara. She sits in front of a window for days, determined to defend her previous life and cling to it. She is a tough woman who is also from İzmir, has graduated from college, and is full of youthful passion. An unexpected marriage, a long journey, a new town, a mother-in-law, and a child that follows, all force Sara to confront her true identity. When her child turns three, Sara becomes even more rebellious and restless. There is no beauty, joy, or excitement left in their relationship, only mutual misunderstanding and cruelty between her and her husband. After divorcing, Sara leaves her child and continues her journey alone.

After experiencing the first setbacks in her life, Sara, who is not even twenty-five yet, realizes that only those who have money are entitled to enter the realm of humanity and understands the necessity of doing whatever it takes to become wealthy. According to her, especially for a woman, the easiest way to rebel and be strong is to possess money.

When Sara marries her second husband, she is twenty-six years old, while her husband is fifty-eight. With this marriage, she acquires the title of a lady and her first significant material possession. According to Sara, there is nothing in her life that hasn't come at a price. Her most important asset, which has always guided her thoughts, relationships, and life, is her beauty. After eight enjoyable but loveless years, her husband passes away. Sara enters into her third marriage, but she eventually cheats on her husband, leading to the end of their marriage.

4.2.1 Motherhood

Acar (2014) states that the issue of mothers and daughters, is actually a matter of womanhood for all of females. It is a silenced matter, determined even before life begins. It is the matter of women whose existence is recognized solely through being "someone's mother, daughter, wife"; in other words, the "status of womanhood" that has been voiced in Turkey and elsewhere for many years. She cites Aksu to support her claim about the patriarchal power dynamics at home which puts women at a disadvantageous state;

The design of the home as a place distant from the filth of the world, innocent and clean, with men venturing out into the 'external' world while leaving women and children in this pure place, is perhaps one of the most influential and powerful patterns of the culture we live in, maybe even the foremost. The sanctification of the home and the family has served to render completely invisible what takes place within it. Consequently, while inequalities, violence, domination, abuse, and oppression within the family are ignored as issues of the 'private' domain, the continuity of power dynamics within the home and their connection to the outside world have been concealed (p.3).

When the status of womanhood is considered in this culture concerned, what comes to mind is the length of the skirt worn, the message conveyed by giggling on the streets to men, the natural expectation of serving older brothers and fathers, the ideal of being a "bride and mother" always added alongside any ambitions a woman may have for her future, the fact that despite the increasing freedom in experiencing sexuality across generations, the initiative always falls to men and the cost of this freedom always falls on women, the concept of "managing the man" that has settled in the ears of almost every young woman to some extent, the association of giving up one's profession and social life when giving birth with natural maternal instinct, and the fact that no matter how egalitarian a man may be, she cannot seem to escape the role of being the provider and sustainer of the

“home”. The place defined as the "private domain," no matter how active a role a woman takes in the public sphere, never ceases to be her primary area of responsibility.

Rich (1976) in her *Of Woman born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* also states that “in order for all women to have real choices all along the line, we need fully to understand the power and powerlessness embodied in motherhood in patriarchal culture.” The experience is unique to her, encompassing her identity as a woman, a poet, a feminist, and a mother. However, it is an experience shaped by societal norms and expectations, which are imposed in diverse forms on women universally.

The exclusion of narratives concerning mothers and daughters can be seen as a result of existing in a culture where, as highlighted by Irigaray (cited in Rich, 1976), the "masculine" is inherently deemed more valuable than the "feminine."

Baltaş also adds, instead of collectively rebelling against the oppressive male-dominated system, why is there a tendency to engage in conflicts primarily with mothers rather than fathers, or with daughters more than sons? This seems to involve a logical fallacy. However, upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that the mother-daughter relationship is more complex than it initially appears. In the context of a society controlled by men, the relationship between a mother and her daughter does not typically foster collaboration and rebellion. Instead, the mother often unconsciously perpetuates and sometimes completes her own powerlessness and passivity through her daughter. As a result, the symbiotic and sometimes complementary bond established in the womb persists throughout their lifetime. It is as if the mother cannot truly give birth to her daughter and set her free

into the world. Conversely, the son does not belong to the mother; he is an individual whom she nurtures and guides for a certain period to establish his own independent life. However, the daughter, throughout her life, is elevated to be an extension of her mother and is portrayed as dependent rather than independent.

Aral presents this conflicting state of womanhood focusing specifically on the trans- generational aspect of female identity construction. Sara as the mother accepts her flaws but as an independent woman “Motherhood” has been her dilemma in her life as she desires a life of her own and motherhood has never been a favorable choice for her.

Writing about mothers may mean going back in history and documenting all women who have been labeled sinful or sacred by men, from ancient religious myths to witch hunts to mark their existence as creators and individuals. To this end this might have been one of the reasons why Aral wrote this novel centered around the conflicts between a mother and daughter in search of their identities and who have rebellious attitudes to the present male dominated culture.

As Marianne Hirsh (cited in Baltaş) states that "A mother, in her relationship with her daughter, is actually trying to resolve her unresolved relationship with her own mother.", Sara has the same issue with her own mother, and so does Simden with her mother.

Gendered society causes women to give up their identities or one's own self instead of their experiencing motherhood as one of the rare and valuable experiences in a woman's life.

4.2.2 Marriage and Divorce

İnci Aral, who doesn't have a positive view of marriage theoretically, believes that when a relationship is not based on cultural and economic freedom, marriage kills creativity, especially for women, and diminishes passion and excitement. Indeed, the author's belief is reflected in married female characters in stories and novels as well. Women who cannot bear the responsibility brought by marriage and lose their excitement during the marriage period prefer divorce instead of struggling to find a solution to their distress. In line with Aral's thoughts, her character Sara feels alienated as she cannot conform to the traditional married life and she doesn't want to be isolated in this way because marriage does not give her what she wants from

life. Her husband accuses her of not taking responsibility in marriage and being selfish in her manners in this institution. This might be interpreted as the challenge or even a threat to male's expectations and authority. Her husband says; "Evlilik hayatına uyum sağlayamadın sen! Gayret göstermedin. Ta bastan beni aldattın ve hiç sevmedin. Sorumsuz ve başıboş olmak istiyordun... Artık gönlünce yaşa..." (HAHÖ, p. 126) (Translation in Appendix no.2)

Sara, who has been married three times, ended her first marriage due to the mismatch of pleasures and different perspectives on the world between her and her husband, as well as Sara's young and inexperienced nature during her search for identity. Sara dreams of becoming a famous singer, sings in a bar for a while and gets involved with various men. Her second marriage ended due to her husband's death. Then she marries for the third time, a very wealthy man. She views his wealth as an escape and an easy way out for herself. However, this marriage, built

on money, did not bring Sara much satisfaction, and it didn't last long, resulting in adultery and a divorce. Her infidelity is an indication that she cannot succeed in finding her identity and fulfillment in this marriage, and that money will not bring her happiness.

Sara explains her thoughts on marriage as follows: "Every marriage ends with murder. It is death for a woman. A woman should be free." (HAHÖ, p. 21) Sara, who is both beautiful and intelligent, loses her vulnerability towards men and tries to recreate herself. Her beauty and femininity have caused her a great deal of trouble, yet she still seems to seek masculine qualities in men.

On one hand, she is very realistic, yet she is both romantic and ambitious, unwilling to exert much effort but having many expectations. She has been unable to find a balance in her search for her feminine identity and in her choices because her parents' marriage and problems during her childhood have also affected her. Due to her belief that her own experiences have resulted

in an unsuccessful marriage, she also disapproves of her daughter's marriage. It is impossible for Sara to have a serious relationship, and it is also unlikely for her to live with a man for a long time. Sara's ideas and feelings about men are described this way; "Herhangi bir erkekle sürekli ve yorucu bir ilişkiye girmek istemiyor. Pesinde bir gölgeye gereksinim duymuyordu. Dinlemek, oyalayıp avutmak zorunda kalacağı birine dayanacak gücü yoktu." (HAHÖ, p. 40) (Translation in Appendix no 3)

When the story of Sara's daughter, Simden is observed, to understand her views on marriage and men, a young woman who had to end her eight-year marriage emerges. After discovering that her husband had kissed another man, Simden learns

that her husband is bisexual, which makes her feel degraded as a woman. However, she doesn't see a sudden divorce as a solution because it would mean that everything she had done in the marriage until that day would go to waste. She had decided to marry her husband Ömer after living together for two years. In this sense, she is advanced according to the values of the day and society. When divorcing, she believes they should show the same sensitivity they showed when getting married. It is not Ömer that she can't give up, but the fact that her whole order will be completely disrupted without any fault of her own. She doesn't want to lose her dignity and the eight years of investment she has made.

Simden, who believes that marriage is not in accordance with human nature, sees it as an institution where a long-lasting intimacy based on sincerity and love cannot be sustained. In fact, she realizes that there is nothing she enjoys doing together with her husband anymore, but she cannot admit it to herself. Throughout their marriage, Simden, who has been directing her entire life according to her husband, fails to be herself. She realizes, albeit late, that she is in a situation where she is an extension of Ömer. However, she does not have the power to reverse this situation. Throughout their relationship, Simden lives in a way that she becomes childish in front of her husband, explaining things to him, and feeling the need to defend herself in a

submissive manner. Marriage appears to be a safe harbor for her, and on the day she got married, she felt a great relief; however, she realizes that this relief is not lifelong. It is expressed as such; “Ama şimdi insanın ömür boyu aynı sakin limanda yaşayamayacağını görüyordu. Ya karaya çıkmalı ya da denizden denize açılıp yola devam etmeliydi” (HAHÖ, p. 19). (Translation in Appendix no 4). The situation she is in, is definitely an example of how married women behave in marriage according

to the standards set by patriarchy and how they involuntarily at times struggle to get out of marriage which consumes them.

Simden's main problem is that she lacks the courage to exist on her own and cannot create a unique and independent identity as a woman. Despite dropping out of her anesthesia specialization training in the name of marriage, her husband is either unaware of it or it is considered the default in such a society. She receives no support or respect from her husband regarding continuing her profession or in terms of her freedom as a woman. Despite being only thirty-three years old, she is hopeless in every aspect, starting with herself. She loses her enthusiasm for life, becomes a lonely and indecisive woman with a consuming sorrow in her heart. She is unaffected by any beauty and cannot even share her feelings with her mother. Her despair and realization of the situation is expressed; “Karsısında oturan erkek ona yabancıydı artık. Simden apansız, şaşkınlıkla fark etti ki gerçekte, sevilmiş bütün erkekler onları seven kadınlara yabancıydılar” (HAHÖ, p. 189). (Translation in Appendix no.5)

After being betrayed, Simden experiences different emotions and doesn't confront with and meet her husband for three months. Consequently, what she desires is not passion, a happy marriage, or living with someone any longer. She only needs warmth and trust.

According to her mother Sara, Simden couldn't be an honest woman; she couldn't learn to spend a man's money, take care of herself, dress well, or attract attention to herself. But Sara's approach to marriage and her coping strategies as a female do not work, either. In her youth, raised with the difficulties of a divorced family, Simden was against marriage and decided to

marry only when she found true love, and once married, she decided not to get divorced. However, things didn't unfold as she had thought. Despite carrying the fear that she will never be loved again and won't be able to establish a close relationship with any man, she decides to get a divorce. Until this decision, she had not felt the desire to rebel, and had even been afraid of it. Now, she thinks that she needs to recognize the hidden women within herself, bring them out, and believes that the time has come for it.

4.2.3 Resisting norms and patriarchy and Gaining identity

According to Aral, Sara's stance towards money is influenced by her past experiences in a town during her first marriage. These experiences have made her open to various adventures and risks. However, there is a strong underlying sense of feminine freedom that has always been a part of her. Her desire for a comfortable life and financial security is driven by the belief that her beauty makes her deserving of such a life. Aral emphasizes that without this courage, Sara would not be able to pursue her goals effectively (Aral, 2008).

İnci Aral interprets Sara as follows;

Sara has closed herself off to her own body, her beauty. She prefers a relationship with men based on material exchange. Her way of survival is 'making others pay'. She even tries to buy her daughter Simden's love. Having lost the power to define her female identity, she has developed her own defensive language and form. This language has been formed from the perspective of those who oppress, from the world of the 'upper class'. It is fueled by artificiality, greed for money, and selfishness. She doesn't care much if the prey becomes the hunter, or if the hunter's body becomes the prey (Aral, 2003. P.95).

5 CONCLUSION

Women writers throughout history have faced limitations, including the lack of 'a room of their own' yet they have played a significant role in shaping and expanding the literary community. Despite these challenges, their contributions have not always been fully appreciated or recognized, and it is important to acknowledge and celebrate their impact. Both writers in this sense should be appreciated for being the mirrors and voices of their own cultures by representing the female canon.

Through a meticulous examination employing the insightful lens of Showalterian analysis, one discerns a plethora of striking parallels within the pages of both novels. These literary works effectively illuminate the intricate quandaries surrounding the imposition of prescribed female roles, encompassing the realms of motherhood, wifehood, and the objectification of women as mere vessels of desire. Moreover, they adeptly shed light on the pervasive influence of patriarchal structures upon the diverse manifestations of womanhood, while simultaneously underscoring the resolute endeavors of the female authors to articulate their own experiences of oppression through their profound narratives, ultimately striving to forge a distinct and authentic feminine canon alongside the development of their fictional personas.

The notion that child-rearing is a domain exclusively suited for women, particularly birth mothers, and that they bear the ultimate responsibility for intensive mothering, presents a problematic scenario. Such a belief places women under immense pressure and instills within them an intense sense of guilt, often leaving them feeling unfulfilled in various aspects of their lives. They are

compelled to question the morality of their choices and the adequacy of their mothering, particularly if they choose to pursue their personal aspirations outside the confines of their homes.

Sara living in a traditional culture, serves as a striking example of a mother deemed irresponsible for leaving her daughter, with accusations leveled against her for prioritizing her own legitimate needs, aspirations, and desires. The societal expectation for women to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their children and husbands stems from a patriarchal construct, which ultimately contributes to the oppression of women. Both as mothers and daughters, Sara and Simden, as well as Offred and her mother, become subjects of victimization, burdened by the predetermined activities and expectations of motherhood imposed upon them by the patriarchal system. Offred is supposed to act as a machine to give birth as a handmaid through enforced maternity. Although she had a daughter in her pre-Gilead world, she was forced to leave her due to the dictates of the puritan society.

When it comes to the relationships between mothers and daughters, even the daughters themselves, namely Simden and Offred, accuse their progressive and rebellious mothers of selfishness in their choices, as they too have been conditioned by society to think in such a manner. Consequently, it can be argued that irrespective of their motives and circumstances, women across different cultural contexts must confront the societal forces that seek to suppress them, as they strive to forge their own unique identities.

Halise, in her quest for self-discovery, embarks on a profound transformation by adopting the name Sara, while June finds herself bestowed with the name Offred

by her authoritative "owner," the Commander. In this poignant dynamic, both women bear witness to the cruel stripping away of their individual identities, a consequence of the suffocating weight of societal expectations imposed upon them. Sara, recognizing the impossibility of living authentically as Halise, confronts the existential struggle inherent in their plight. Her decision to shed the name she was bestowed with reflects the profound lengths to which she must go to carve out her existence within a society that seeks to confine and suppress her true self.

An alternative idea of masculinity will give rise to men who are comfortable with not having unquestionable dominance over others in society. An alternative masculinity will inspire men to be emotional, concerned, expressive, empathetic and hence able to handle grief. Men who will be inspired thus will also understand how gender equity will benefit not only women but also men themselves. The practice of cultural traditions not only commodifies women but also reinforces an ambiguous notion of masculinity. This perpetuates issues of dominant masculinity, suppressed femininity, and the loss of identity in any culture. These customs have been oppressing women for centuries, and it is necessary to criticize them not just from a perspective of women's empowerment but also gender equality. By challenging conventional notions of masculinity, alternative forms of masculinity can be offered.

In the traditional sense, women have historically sought their sense of self and identity within the framework of their roles as wives, mothers, and daughters. However, this identity is not one that they willingly embrace, but rather a construct imposed upon them by patriarchal norms and expectations. It is a learned behavior that becomes ingrained in their consciousness.

Yet, within the narratives of both novels, we witness a remarkable divergence from this prescribed and relational identity as experienced by the female characters. It is through their personal struggles and subsequent awakening that they reject this imposed framework, ultimately seeking emancipation from the shackles of societal expectations.

As a consequence of their newfound awareness, these women cease to define themselves solely in relation to others - as someone's daughter, wife, or mother. Instead, they strive to break free from these conventional ties, recognizing the importance of their individuality as human beings. In doing so, they courageously defy the confines of gender discrimination and emerge as liberated women, transcending the limitations placed upon them by society.

Their quest for independence and self-realization signifies a transformative journey, where they cast off the chains of prescribed identities and venture into uncharted territory. By seeking separation from these relational roles, Sara, Simden, Offred and her mother and also other females in the novel reclaim their autonomy and assert their inherent worth, becoming the embodiment of newfound freedom and empowerment.

It is evident that the domestic and social environments depicted in both novels contribute to the development and intensification of a particular type of psychological distress, a kind of neurosis experienced by the female characters. In the case of Offred and Simden, their past traumas, fears, and insecurities from childhood create internal conflicts that render them passive and confined within the apparently comfortable confines of their marriages. However, when they are confronted with challenges, they come to a realization of their predicaments and

embark on an existential journey to escape from their mundane and habitual patterns of life. Simden achieves this by liberating herself from her troubled marriage and severing ties with her past, particularly her unhealthy relationship with her mother. On the other hand, Offred transcends her past existential crisis by willingly engaging in an emotional and physical affair, thereby reclaiming her autonomy. As a result, both women no longer suffer from the burden of their previous existential dilemmas and as Atwood herself describes, refuse to accept victimhood as an inevitable role and transform into a creative non-victim who are in control of their own lives. The patriarchal power dynamics thereby can not permeate into the intimate human relations.

As issues of gender, sexual and racial identity continue to overlap, so, too, will the language of feminism need to keep up. But if the women's movements of the past have taught females anything, it is that political change tends to follow social change, keeping in mind that 'the personal is political' and language and literature can be a major force in doing that change. As elucidated by Judith Butler (1990), gender is not an inherent biological trait but rather a construct intricately intertwined with cultural and societal norms. It is a malleable concept that can be challenged and undermined through acts of resistance and non-conformity, particularly in the realm of female identity and expression. However, such endeavors often come at a price, as the prevailing power structures and social expectations tend to impose consequences on those who dare to defy them. However, it is noteworthy that the female protagonists and characters

in both novels embark upon transformative journeys towards selfhood, ultimately attaining a profound appreciation and affirmation of their female identities, physicality, and sexuality. In this process, the authors themselves carve out distinct literary voices and contribute to a rich female literary culture, boldly rejecting the limitations of stereotypical portrayals of women and challenging the historically ingrained notion of female writing as inferior within the confines of a male-dominated canon.



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7 APPENDIX

7.1.1 Translated quotes

1. She should have left the house that very night, actually. But instead, she sat there and listened to him trying to justify himself. Just like a fool. Even now, three months later, she wondered why she didn't leave the next day at least, and what it was that she couldn't let go of. Since Ömer was definitely not the reason, why did she behave so dishonorably and without principles? "Why, but why," she rebelled in her mind, she thought. "Why do I have to be the one whose life is turned upside down without any fault of my own? Will all my years of effort and investment go to waste just because she loved someone else – a man, no less?"
2. "You couldn't adapt to married life! You didn't make an effort. From the beginning, you cheated on me and never loved me. You wanted to be irresponsible and carefree... Now, live as you please..."
3. "She didn't want to enter into a continuous and exhausting relationship with just any man. She didn't need a shadow chasing after her. She didn't have the strength to tolerate someone she would have to listen to, distract, and console."
4. But now she saw that one cannot live in the same calm harbor for a lifetime. She had to either get ashore or set sail from sea to sea and continue on her way.
5. The man sitting across from her was now a stranger to her. Suddenly, with a sense of surprise, she realized that in reality, all the men who had been loved were strangers to the women who loved them.