

**Three Generations of Turkish Women through the Literature of
Three Turkish Women Novelist: Duygu Asena, Erendiz Atasü and
Elif Şafak**

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**Üç Kadın Romancının eserlerinde üç nesilden Türk kadını:
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Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)

- 1) Türk Kadını**
- 2) Üç Nesil**
- 3) Türk Edebiyatı**
- 4) Türk Fenimizmi**
- 5) Kadın Yazarları**

Anahtar Kelimeler (İngilizce)

- 1) Turkish Woman**
- 2) Three generations**
- 3) Turkish Literature**
- 4) Turkish Fenimism**
- 5) Women Authors**

ÖZET

Bu yüksek lisans tezi, modern Türk kadın imajını üç çağdaş Türk kadın edebiyatçının eserleri aracılığıyla incelemektedir. Bu bağlamda Duygu Asena, Erendiz Atasü ve Elif Şafak'ın eserleri incelenmiştir. Eserlerinin birçok dile çevrilmiş olması sayesinde bu yazarlar hem Türkiye'de hem de yurt dışında birçok kadın okuyucuyu etkilemişlerdir. Araştırmanın amacı kapsamında her biri bu yazarlardan bir tanesine ait olmak üzere üç tane kitap seçilmiştir: Duygu Asena'nın *Aynada Aşk Vardı*, Erendiz Atasü'nün *Bir Yaşadönümü Rüyası* ve Elif Şafak'ın *Baba ve Piç* kitapları. Bu kitapların hepsinde okuyucu üç ayrı kuşaktan (anneanne, anne, kız) kadın karakterlerle tanışır ve kadının Türk toplumundaki yerinin yılların akışı içerisindeki bir panoramasını gözlemler. Tezin ana bölümünde üç kitabın ana karakterlerini oluşturan dokuz Türk kadınının kapsamlı bir analizi yer almaktadır. Daha sonrasında her yaş grubundan karakterlerin (anneanne, anne, kız) aralarında karşılaştırılmasına ve gerçekten bu kadın kahramanların Modern Türk tarihinin gerçek Türk kadını profiliyle örtüşüp örtüşmediklerinin incelenmesine çalışılmıştır.

ABSTRACT

The present thesis examines the modern Turkish woman images as depicted in the Literature of three modern Turkish women writers. More specifically it deals with the work of Duygu Asena, Erendiz Atasü and Elif Şafak. Three modern and pioneer writers, whose work have influenced many women in Turkey and abroad, since many of their books have been translated in several languages. Three books have been chosen for this purpose, one book from each author; Duygu Asena's "Love was in the mirror" (Aynada aşk vardı), Erediz Atasü's "A midlife dream" (Bir yaşdönümü rüyası), Elif Şafak's "The bastard of İstanbul" (Baba ve Piç). In each book the reader meets with three generation's women – the grandmother, the mother, and the daughter- and observes the panorama of woman's status in Turkish society through the years. In the main part of the thesis there is a broad analysis of the figures of the nine Turkish women who consist the main characters of the three books. Later on there is a comparison between the characters of each age (grandmother, mother, daughter) and an attempt to examine whether the literary women heroines represent the real Turkish woman of three deferent periods of the modern Turkish history.

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Introduction

A few years ago I found my self in the hamam of Besiktas, amongst all these Turkish women of every age and social class. Within the mystical atmosphere that was created by the spherical little windows in the ceiling –the only windows that exist in a hamam– and the steams, I was watching those women washing themselves one moment with cold and the other with hot water, and I was trying to observe their attitudes, their body language, the way they treated each other and the issues that were occupying their conversations. Old bodies, young bodies, fat bodies, thin bodies, smiley faces, serious faces, expressions full of joy, looks full of pain, women expressing their sexuality, women covering their secret parts. The Turkish Woman... I assume that my typical Mediterranean appearance did not betray in any way that I was a foreigner, but I was sure that amongst those women there were some certain codes and connotations, and common secrets that only a woman that grew up in Turkey could understand. As I was looking at those women, it came to me that just right next to us, there was the hamam for men. So close yet so far, since no woman can enter there. I could not keep my self from wondering whether the motive of the separate hamam reflects (to) the Turkish society. Thus, from that day in the hamam I started thinking of what “Turkish woman” means and what her role is in the society and furthermore the history and the status of Turkish feminism.

A research on the subject made it apparent that many of the women who played an important role in the Turkish feminist movement, both in the beginning of it but also in its recent history, are in the same time well know novelists. Thus, I have decided to combine my will to “decipher” Turkey’s woman and my love for literature in order to draw Turkish women portraits. However, before entering the world of literature, I believe it is necessary to take a look at the reality of Turkey, in order to understand the ambiance and the situations taking place in its literary books.

Turkish feminism through history

“Pay attention to every corner of the world, we are the eve of the revolution. Be assured, this revolution is not going to be bloody and savage like a man’s revolution. On the contrary, it will be pleasant and relatively quiet, but definitely productive. You must believe this, ladies!”

(Fatma Nesibe, Istanbul 1911)

Debates concerning the position of women in Turkish society have consisted an important issue in the political and ideological agendas of the Ottoman and Turkish states at three crucial moments. The first was during the reforms that took place in the Ottoman period and were instituted through the activities of the Young Turks in the middle of the nineteenth century. The second face of the debates took place in the early years of the establishment of the Turkish Republic and culminated in the enfranchisement of women in 1934. However several observers have called it as “state feminism”. The third rise of the feminism issue in Turkey happened after the military coup of 1980 and is considered to be most important one since the main actors seem to be women and was developed in opposition to “state feminism”.¹

It seems that feminism in Turkey has its roots in the 19th century Ottoman society, when educated urban women started dealing and writing about women’s rights. At that period the Sharia, the traditional Islamic legal code was the base of the Ottoman family and society. Thus, the husband was required to provide housing for the family that consists of his property, the woman was obliged to obey her husband and the children were considered to be the husband’s children. As far as the termination of a marriage was concerned the husband only needed to say “I divorce you” three times, but the wife was required to ask her husband to dissolve the marriage, and if he refuses she should go to court and request a judge to do so. Even the first codified family law of 1917 was based on the Sharia. It was at that time and under these circumstances that a small circle of educated women started to participate in public debates about women’s rights. As a result, issues like female education, polygamy

¹Nüket Sirman, *Turkish Feminism: A Short History*, Women Living Under Muslim Laws Periodical, Dossier 5-6, December 1988 – May 1989, p.2

and discrimination are discussed in newly emerged women's journals conferences organized by educated women from the middle and upper classes.

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the new Civil and the new Penal Code which were adopted in 1926, had put an end to Family Law based on the Sharia. In the same time Atatürk through his speeches encouraged women to enter professions. At that time tensions between republican leaders and women activists take place, and consequently novelist Halide Edip who played an important role in the war of independence left Turkey and only returned after the death of Atatürk, and Nezihe Muhiddin, leader of the Turkish Women's Union, an association demanding political equality and the right to vote for women, was prosecuted and forced to leave her position. In 1935 the Turkish Women's Union was dissolved. It wasn't earlier than 40 years that a new grass roots women's movement emerged again in Turkey.²

According to Nüket Sirman, feminism has burst out in the Turkish political scene in the later half of the 1980's. It was firstly in 1983 that several feminist publications and public meetings had started making an impact on political and intellectual circles in Istanbul and Ankara. Later on, in March 1986 a group of women delivered a petition signed by 7000 women demanding the implementation of the United Nations Declaration of Women's Rights, that according to which its signatories were obliged to accord citizens equal rights regardless of sex, and which Turkey had officially signed. In May of the same year 3000 women marched in Istanbul to protest against the physical abuse of women. In parallel, European feminists were translated in Turkish and various publications such as magazines, literary novels and pamphlets became available in bookshops, and also public conferences and discussion panels denouncing the abuse of women in the home, in media and in legal stature took place.³ Women who call themselves feminist were organized in various small groups. Through many activities and various publications, women raise the issue of the oppression of women as a major area of struggle in contemporary Turkish society.⁴

² Op.cit., p2

³ Ibid. p.1

⁴ Ibid. p.7

In the beginning of the 90's women realized that it was necessary to do more than just talking about women rights and how they are the victims of a sexist discrimination. They realized that there was the necessity for a feminist political movement which would provide more radical solutions. It was also apparent that in order to fight the multiple oppressions against women, they had to construct radical transforms in the family ground, in the law and health section and in the education field.⁵ Indeed, within this period and the years following 2000 several important achievements took place. While women organizations were increasing, it is with their demands and struggles that some serious legal arrangements concerning woman's position were done in the Constitution, the Family Protection Law, in the new Civil Law and in the Turkish Penal Code.⁶ "Reforms to the Turkish Civil Code have granted women and men equal rights in marriage, divorce and property ownership. A new Penal Code treats female sexuality for the first time as a matter of individual rights, rather than family honor. Amendments to the Turkish Constitution oblige the Turkish state to take all necessary measures to promote gender equality. Family courts have been established, employment laws amended and there are new programs to tackle domestic violence and improve access to education for girls. These are the most radical changes to the legal status of Turkish women in 80 years. As a result, for the first time in its history, Turkey has the legal framework of a post-patriarchal society."⁷

⁵ Sevgi Uçan Çubukçu, "1980 Sonrası Kadın Hareketi: Ataerkilliğe Karşı Meydan Okuma", in F. Berktaş (ed.), *Türkiye'de ve Avrupa Birliği'nde Kadının Konumu: Kazanımlar, Sorunlar, Umutlar*, KA-DER Yayınları, İstanbul, 2004, p 72

⁶ İnci Özkan Kerestecioğlu, "1990'larda Kadın Hareketi: Demokrasi ve Eşitlik Talebi", *ibid*, p 76, 90

⁷ http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=311&film_ID=10&slide_ID=30

Women in modern Turkish society

The status of Women's Labor

“In Turkey, both urban and rural women do work in addition to their households tasks. In rural areas, more women work, both numerically and proportionally, than in urban areas.”⁸ However, by the second half of the 70's the number of urban women seeking employment increased and therefore competition rose. Yet after 1980 the potential for the creation of employment opportunities in the industrial sector began to decline and the rate of growth of the service sector that was still growing was insufficient for the increasing size of the labor force. In the economic situation of the 80s and 90s factors like the Islamic disapproval of women's paid work, the obstacles to women's employment created by the patriarchal structure of the family and women's disinclination to work created the marginality of women in the labor market. Furthermore, women's participation in the Turkish Labor force is smaller than that of men.⁹ In our days “forty-two percent of women who work are actually unpaid family workers, mainly in agriculture. In urban areas, the participation rate stands at only 18 percent. In addition, in Turkey, balancing work and motherhood remains very difficult – as evidenced by the fact that 63 percent of women who work do not have a child under six years of age. Childcare facilities are extremely limited, or absent altogether.”¹⁰

⁸ Yıldız Ecevit, “The status and Changing Forms of Women's Labour in the Urban Economy”, in Şirin Tekeli(ed.), *Women in Turkish Society*, Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1995, p 81

⁹ *ibid.* p 83

¹⁰ http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=311&film_ID=10&slide_ID=30

Women and Education

Since the establishment of the republic the number of women educated in Turkey is much smaller than that of men and in addition as the educational system reproduces the dominant male ideology, women are oriented towards a lower level of economic opportunities, and jobs and positions with less social prestige. Thus women are driven into work that is related to their family role, instead of choosing jobs which are directly concerned with production. Furthermore the quality and quantity of education has not helped women to improve their social position. Men still hold the major decision-making power. The role that is considered suitable for a woman is that of the married woman who struggles with an intensive labor and wears herself out. The several gender-based discriminations that take place in the educational system serve to perpetuate those values which society attributes to women.¹¹

In theory, primary school attendance is compulsory and free of charge. Yet, it was estimated in 2002 that 873,000 girls and 562,000 boys between the ages of 6 and 14 are not enrolled in education. In addition to that, in rural eastern Turkey, many girls are not registered at birth, placing them beyond the reach of the state.

Since 2003, there has been a series of new initiatives to boost enrolment, including a national campaign, *Haydi Kizlar Okula (Girls let's go to school)* to achieve 100 percent primary school enrolment. Of the 273,000 girls approached by 2006, 223,000 were enrolled. Teachers with the help of the village *muhtar* (headman) and *imam* are trying to convince parents to send their daughters to school. In order to achieve that a monthly cash incentive was offered for each child, and the funds distributed directly to mothers, through accounts opened in their name. For poor families, it amounts to a significant sum.

Levels of education *are* increasing and every generation of Turkish women is better educated than their mothers. In the 20-24 years age group, some 34 percent of women have completed secondary or third-level education, compared with 16 percent of women aged 40-44 years and just 3 percent of women aged over 60 years.¹²

¹¹ Fatma Gök, "Women and Education in Turkey", in Şirin Tekeli (ed.) op.cit. pp 131-135

¹² http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=311&film_ID=10&slide_ID=30

Sexuality and marriage

Seda Kaya Guler in 2003 has published the interviews she made with several modern Turkish women regarding their experiences and beliefs concerning their sexuality and issues around love relationships and marriage. According to the results of these interviews, women over thirty years old learned the first things about sexuality and sexual life mostly from their friends that have already had sexual experiences and from some women magazines, but most of them they learned everything during their own first experiences, that is from their male sexual partner, since those years sexuality was not an openly discussed issue. It continues by saying that a big number of women have not lived any sexual experience before marriage, not even touched his hand, and they put themselves under the control of the society. The ideal woman for Turkish society is the woman that will have her first sexual experience in her wedding night, and she will never have any kind of sexual relationship with another man even if her husband dies. Still, the number of women who support sexual freedom, choose to live freely and according to their own will, and have sexual experiences without getting married is increasing day by day.¹³

As far as the issue of marriage is concerned, it seems that women are more interested in getting married than men and there are several reasons for this. For a woman marriage means living in her own house, becoming free from her father's authority and control, since very often a girl from her teenage years notices that she is not allowed to do the things she wishes to do, and life in her father's house becomes a nightmare for her. In addition to that, a girl who gets married can anymore live her first sexual experiences. Another factor that drives a woman to marriage is the belief that under the aegis and economic welfare of her husband she will be protected, or in the case that the husband belongs in a higher and wealthier class, the woman has the chance to live a better life.¹⁴

¹³ Seda Kaya Güler, *Aşk, Seks ve Kadınlara Dair*, Epsilon Yayınları, İstanbul, 2003, pp 12-13

¹⁴ Güler, op.cit, pp 153-154

Turkish literature through years –Turkish woman in Literature

According to Elif Şafak the Turkish novelists have, from the beginning, have mixed up “paternity” with “novel writing”. Our first novelists had written their work with the mission of paternity; and we could not get rid of this cultural heritage. As the novelists were trying to be the father of both their heroes and their readers, they tried to establish an absolute control over their text and thus they have calculated in detail and configured everything in advance. They did not let their novel freely float and surprise themselves. Those are the absolutist novels of paternalist novelists. They do not flow they just stand still. They do not take the readers inside. When the development of the Turkish literature is followed, it can be observed that most of the novels have been written with similar engineering calculations and desires for paternity.¹⁵

In the pre-Republican period, literature is hardly developed and woman and her problems are treated only indirectly or by way of implication. However, there are some writers like Şemsettin Sami, Sami Paşazade Sezai and Nabizade Nazım, who can be considered as the pioneers in bringing the various problems regarding women to the agenda and in producing certain female figures.¹⁶

During the 20’s and the 30’s the protagonist writers in Turkish literature were men. Some of them are Memduh Şevket, Kenan Hulusi, Halikarnas Balıkcısı. The topics that dominate that period’s literature are dealing with the relation of the peasant with the society and nature, who most of the time were against him, with the lives of bureaucrats and those who are struggling to survive in the small and big Turkish cities.¹⁷ As far as the woman issue is concerned, men authors of this period through their plays, like Atatürk, they express the necessity of women to gain the position that they deserve in the society. On the other hand, a misunderstanding of the modernization is occurred, and often these writers are expressing the concern whether the modern woman becomes immoral and unethical. In fact, even the more

¹⁵ Feridun Andaç, *Edebiyatımızın Kadınları*, Dünya Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 2004, p.265

¹⁶ Füsun Altıok Akatlı, “The Image of Women in Turkish Literature” in N. Abadan-Unat (ed.) *Women in Turkish Society*, E.J.Brill, Leiden, 1981, p 225

¹⁷ Στάθη Πηνελόπη (Stathi Pinelopi), *Δέκα Γυναίκες Συγγραφέες στην Σύγχρονη Τουρκία (Ten Female Authors in Modern Turkey)*, Finiki, Athens 2000, p.12-13

progressive writers of the time like Yakup Kadri, Peyami Safa and Reşat Nuri, more than anyone strongly criticized and objected to the westernization of the Turkish woman. Furthermore, they praise and present as a model woman, the women who are generous, attached to their family and husband, honorable and obedient. Women that don't work, don't take care of their families and care only for their appearance are highly criticized. The ideal woman is the one that manages both to work and earn her own money and to be a good wife and a good mother. These male authors also insist that women always need a man to guide them, especially in such liberal environments. Well known female authors of the times though, like Halide Edip Adivar and Cahit Uçuk claim that a woman can be successful and moral in the same time.¹⁸

The configuration of woman identity in Turkish Literature is very much related to the political, economic and cultural development and transform that took place in the country. In literature as well as in society, according to both men and women, through the years women in Turkey have been more liberated but not really free. In the years between the 40's and the 60's, in many literary books the main women characters are women that are not proper for marriage and incapable of creating a good household. On the contrary, the heroines are more concentrate on their sexuality. Also, in many of the novels the concept of love and the concept of sexuality are often conceived as the same thing, both by male and female characters. On the other hand most of the books praise the women who in an ethical way, working day and night, succeed to raise their children by their own, either because the husband is dead or he has abandoned the family. In this period's (40's –60's) literature two types of strong women are depicted; the one who always thinks of others and gains her power from serving her family, and the one who is concentrated on her self and her carrier. From these two types the first one is the more popular.¹⁹

The major characteristic of women's literature in the 70's and the 80's is that it is mostly the women authors that draw the images of woman. It may be said that these images are realistic and contemporary. This time women are seen through the eyes of women in a completely new light. Famous women writers of this period are Adalet

¹⁸ Ramazan Gülendamlar, *Türk Romanında Kadın Kimliği*, Salkımsöğüt Yayınları, Konya, 2006, pp 29-30

¹⁹ *ibid.*357-358

Ağaoğlu, Nezihe Meriç, Leyla Erbil, Füzuzan, and Sevgi Soysal. Their books deal with issues like the freedom of women, the conflict between the pro-Western ideology and the values of the traditional family institution and education, the battle of women against any kind of oppression against them, and the participation of women in the political scenery of the country.²⁰

In the years to follow, in Turkish Literature there are three approaches towards woman. The first is the one that is based in the traditional narratives and presents two kinds of women, the one who has forgotten her femininity and the other who has based her being in her sexuality. The second approach is showing women who are using their sexuality and their self as a commodity. The third one refuses to treat woman as an inferior gender and is observing her in the framework of her human side and her gender. The authors who choose the third approach are describing the human-woman, who has femininity, courage, fears, self-sacrifice, takes initiatives, knows when to compromise, and in every aspect is equal to man. Today the woman in Turkish Literature begun to resist to the oppression against her and started deciding for herself. Yet in order to do that she will have to fight with the injustices of the patriarchal society. In the beginning of this new movement in literature, there was a great reaction against the authors, especially against the women writers who were struggling in the literature track. It may be said that nowadays in Turkish Literature the lead belongs to the women authors.²¹

The present thesis will concentrate on modern Turkish women authors that mostly adopt this third approach and will attempt to draw the portraits of the female characters depicted in their literature. More specifically, will analyze the work of Duygu Asena, Erendiz Atasü and Elif Şafak. Three modern, pioneer, and feminist writers, whose work have influenced many women in Turkey and abroad, since many of their books have been translated in several languages. Furthermore, both the authors and their literature played an important role in the history and the progress of the Turkish feminist movement. Three books have been chosen for this purpose, one book from each author; Duygu Asena's "Love was in the mirror" (Aynada aşk vardı), Erendiz Atasü's "A midlife dream" (Bir yaşdönümü rüyası), Elif Şafak's "The bastard

²⁰ Altıok, op.cit. 230-231

²¹ Stathi, op.cit. pp 22-25

of İstanbul” (Baba ve Piç). In each book the reader meets with three generation’s women – the grandmother, the mother, and the daughter- and observes the panorama of woman’s status in Turkish society through the years. In the first book the relations between the three women are clearer and closer to the standard relationships created by the society, where as in the second book, the grandmother is more in the off-stage of the story, and we get to know her and her life through the narrations of her daughter Feride. Furthermore, Feride is not the real mother of Şirin, but still we meet in Feride a real mother. In the third book Elif Şafak is creating relationships that may shock the reader, since the mother in the same time is the aunt of the daughter.

CHAPTER I

Duygu Asena

“Love was in the mirror”

Duygu Asena

“I soon figured out that writing about butterflies and cooking every day was not for me. I had to give a message”.

“Escape the vicious circle. Fight for your rights”.²²

Duygu Asena was born on the 19th of April in 1946 in Istanbul. She is a graduate of the Istanbul University with a degree in pedagogy, and for a certain period she had worked as a pedagogue. In 1972 she started working as a journalist in Hürriyet newspaper and besides her writing in a number of newspapers she was also the editor of several journals like *Kadınca*, *Onyedi*, *Ev Kadını*, *Bella Bayan*, *First*, *Kim* and *Negatif*. From the 1980’s onwards, Duygu Asena became a leader of movement for women’s rights and status in Turkey with her publications in the media. She wrote about marriage, inequality and violence against women. During the years between 1987 and 2004 she published 8 books that have affected the lives of many Turkish women. A number of her books like *The Woman Has No Name (Kadının Adı Yok)*, *Actually There Is Also No Love (Aslında Aşk da yok)* and *Heroes are always Men (Kahramanlar Hep Erkek)*, have been translated in several languages and became best sellers not only in Turkey but also abroad. Duygu Asena died of brain cancer, which she had been battling for two years, on 30th of July in 2006.

Duygu Asena was a brave and a decisive woman, who couldn’t tolerate a society and a world controlled by men and all her life, was struggling for women’s rights, for sexual equality and for women to realize that they are not inferior to men. Yet, Asena’s greatest gift to women is her contribution in discovering their sexuality and gender identity. Furthermore, she fought against sexual harassment, family violence, and honor killings.²³ According to Şirin Tekeli a pioneer Turkish feminist, Duygu Asena is a determinant actor in the development of feminism in Turkey and her first

²² Turkish Daily News, 31 July 2008

²³ Tümay Tuğyan, “Duygu Asena- Söylenecek Sözü Vardı”, in *Kıbrıs Yazıları*, Sayı 3 /Yaz-Güz 2006, p 133, pp 137-138

book *The Woman Has No Name (Kadının Adı Yok)* is the manifest of feminism in Turkey.²⁴

Duygu Asena in an interview she gave to the writer Feridun Andaç, she explained that in 1978 when she first started the editing of *Kadınca*, although she had to go against her boss she transformed the journal in to a journal that defended women's rights. The readers became her friends and confidants and she discovered that women are lonely and desperate. She noticed that women did not talk about themselves, their sexuality and relevant issues like menstruate, visiting the gynecologist, having an abortion. She shares with us how she was frustrated by the injustice made against women and how she was always expressing in every way her contradiction to this phenomenon. As far as her books are concerned she stated that while she was writing she was not thinking of anything and that the only thing that she wanted was to pass everything she knew and to be helpful to others.²⁵

Asena's literary women have experienced life and from this struggle for some of them came out as winners and some of them were defeated. The thing they have in common is that at some point they all suffered for love and for the sake of the man they love they neglect themselves and their needs.²⁶

²⁴ ŞirinTekeli, "Şirin Tekeli'den Duygu İçin" www.bianet.org, (01/08/2006)

²⁵ Andaç, op.cit , pp 117-119

²⁶ Tuğyan, op.cit. ,p 135

“Love was in the mirror”

“Once more women, once more men, once more love...

Three generations of women; grandmother, daughter, granddaughter...

Nilüfer is listening Hitler in Berlin.

Nilgün is watching astronauts landing on the moon.

Nil finds herself in Sting’s concert...

We observe the three of them in the age of 16, in the age of 35 and in the age of 42.

And of course they are all in love...

Their love stories are sometimes painful, sometimes funny and some other times are sensible.”

Abstract from the back cover of the book

This book was selected to serve the purposes of the present thesis for the reason that it presents three generations of Turkish women and furthermore the entire book deals with the question of feminism and being a woman in modern Turkey. In the following pages three main heroines Nilüfer, Nilgün and Nil will travel us through the contemporary history of Turkey and through their ideas, feelings, thoughts, and wishes concerning love, sexuality, marriage, career, education and above all being a woman... a woman in Turkey.

Nilüfer

The reader first encounters with Nilüfer when she was a young girl in the age of sixteen. She is the oldest child of her family and according to the principles of the time – the year of 1936, she is in the right age for marriage. Thus she is forced to welcome every eligible with his family, until her family decides who the best husband for her is. In the first chapter of the book Nilüfer through her prayer is expressing how unhappy she is living with her family, since within four walls her mother is always crying and her father never smiles. Especially after loosing her young sister she deeply feels that nothing was real, nothing really existed, including herself, and that good people are unprotected and suffer in their whole life.²⁷ Yet she expresses the wish to finish school: “Dear Lord at least give me the permit to finish school”.²⁸ Indeed thanks to her father she was not obliged to get married at once, and so she was able to continue attending her classes. Her plan was to finish school, and then to sew and brocade, or use any knowledge the school would have offered her in order to earn her own money. The idea that she would have her own money excited her.²⁹ The only place that makes her joyful is the environment of the school. She wishes for the school years never to end, as in her house could never be as independent and happy.³⁰

Nilüfer falls in love for the first time when she was still a student with a young man called Ali that one day came to her school to deliver her something her aunt had sent her. Although in their first meeting nothing happened between them, Nilüfer exhausted herself by thinking of him and realized that this was an one sided love, and since she knew nothing on the subject she started crying.³¹ Later on though, she and Ali get married and for a year she is happier than ever, until Ali dies. After that, she gets married two more times, not because she really wanted but because her family did not support her, and she as a woman in that society could not take care herself and her baby without the presence and the support of a man. She lived in misery and sadness thinking of Ali until the day she died. Once though, she surprised herself and her environment by stating that women also get angry, women are not different than

²⁷ Duygu Asena, *Aynada Aşk Vardı*, Doğan Kitap, İstanbul, 1987, p50

²⁸ *ibid.* p 10

²⁹ *ibid.* p 11

³⁰ *ibid.* p 22

³¹ *ibid.* p 36

men, and that if they had allowed her to study she could have been a great doctor and wouldn't force herself to get married and be stuck in a house all day.³² It was then that she realized that the only one who could take her out of her misery was herself and that although her family and her general environment always tried to limit the possibilities of her being autonomous, she was responsible for her situation. Then she decides to leave her second husband, and go back to her family.³³ Yet, later on in order to get rid of the misery and depress of her house, and since she did not realize that it was her strength that motivated to divorce her second husband, she decides to get married for the third time.³⁴ Still, when her third husband died, she could not even go shopping by her own, since she all these years she never knew how shopping is done, or how much things cost. She does not know where to pay the house bills, and then the water and electricity are cut of. She despairs and cries. Consequently, in the age of fifty-seven she closes herself in the house and becomes a sick and weak woman.³⁵

Nilüfer at her youth years enjoys the fact that she is a beautiful woman and that people around her notice that, but she knows nothing about sexuality, but even as a grown up woman she was never familiar or comfortable with the subject either. Once that her daughter Nilgün described how she and her classmate girls happened to see nude men that were swimming next to their school, Nilüfer told her that she should have never look at them, and she got really furious with her daughter when she asked her whether she would have refused to look if she was in her place.³⁶

Nilüfer as a mother is not as strict and faceless as her mother, but still she is not open minded enough to understand her children and embrace them. Once she complained to her daughter that her mother never hugged and told her that she loves her, but Nilgün wanted to tell her mother that she almost never does this either.³⁷ One other time she called her daughter a whore just because she was sunbathing in the garden of her friend's house.

³² Asena, op.cit. p 171

³³ ibid. p 185

³⁴ ibid. p 214

³⁵ ibid. p 239

³⁶ ibid. p 40

³⁷ ibid. p 83

In a conversation between Nilgün and Nil, Nilgün is explaining her daughter how her grandmother lived her whole life in unhappiness. She was a very beautiful but unhappy woman that surrendered herself in her misery and accepted her destiny as she believed that everything was a matter of luck, without giving herself the right or the chance to fall in love and be happy again. In the age of forty she considered herself to be an old woman, and she believed it was ridiculous for a woman in her age to love and be loved again.³⁸

³⁸ Asena, *op.cit.* p 88

Nilgün

Nilgün is one of the daughters of Nilüfer who as a teenager of the sixties (more specifically we are in the year of 1964), in the age of sixteen is more interested in enjoying life and flirting than being a good student. Still she wants to finish school and become someone great and important like a pilot or astronaut.³⁹

Young Nilgün is very fond of flirting and being in love, but she never permits a man to use her or treat her badly. Once that a young boy was flirting both with her and another girl, Nilgün in order to give him a lesson she had bitten his lips and made them bleed while they were kissing.⁴⁰

As far as her sexuality is concerned, as her family never taught her anything on the subject, Nilgün learns the first things from her friends and her boyfriends. Her neighbor, a girl in her age, first shows her how to masturbate. She describes how much she liked this new experience, and how she started doing it everywhere, but still she knew she had to do it without anyone else realize what she was doing and she should tell anyone about it.⁴¹ Moreover, when Nilgün gets pregnant is complaining for the fact that no one ever talked to her about birth control methods, and especially is blaming her mother for always refusing to answer to her questions concerning sexuality issues.⁴²

In the matter of relationships and marriage Nilgün believes that in order for two people to live together in the same house and share their lives, they should love each other and express it often. She thinks that marriage is a constitution that everyone is suppose to take seriously, but most couples don't really experience it since there is no love amongst them.⁴³ In a way she is criticizing the constitutions and the principles of her time. As a grown up she happens to have a relationship with a man younger than her, and when her daughter Nil opposes to this situation, Nilgün explains her daughter that most people are after happiness in their whole life and they don't just sit and wait

³⁹ Asena, op.cit. p 12

⁴⁰ ibid. p 27

⁴¹ ibid. p 55

⁴² ibid. p. 136

⁴³ ibid. p. 84

for good things to happen on their own, and that she is one of them.⁴⁴ Yet, when she was younger she had decided to get married with Nil's father without being certain of her feelings, of why she wanted to get married to this man, and without showing her real self, but instead acting according to her husband most of the times.⁴⁵ Furthermore, everything related to the wedding was decided by the groom's family, and did not allow Nilgün to take part in the procedure.⁴⁶ In the age of 27 Nilgün realizes that she is not happy in her marriage and that in order not to end up like her mother she has to escape. Thus, even though no one agreed with her decision she divorces her husband.⁴⁷

Nilgün manages to enter the university in the department she wanted and she expresses how happy she is that she has done this. In addition, she managed to convince her husband's father to let her work in his company, in the advertise department and she is very excited with the idea.⁴⁸ Later on, when she gets pregnant, her husband's family is trying to convince her to stop working. Nilgün in reaction to that she is trying to have an abortion, the last thing she wants is for a baby to ruin her career, but eventually she decides to keep the baby.⁴⁹ Besides her baby, her work is the only thing that gives her happiness.

It seems that Nilgün is a very considerate and supportive mother. Every time Nil is sad or frustrated Nilgün is always next to her trying to find solutions and make her daughter feel better and see things in a positive way, as for example in the weight issue, she is always reminding her daughter how beautiful she is and that all she needs to do is diet. Nil feels ugly and hideous and she wants to kill herself but Nilgün with love and caress she makes her feel better.⁵⁰ Yet at the same time she is being very protective and tries to keep a track on her daughter's life and new acquaintances, especially when they concern the opposite sex.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Asena, op.cit. p 88

⁴⁵ ibid. p 94-95

⁴⁶ ibid. p 125

⁴⁷ ibid. p 162

⁴⁸ ibid. p 126

⁴⁹ ibid. p 136

⁵⁰ ibid. p 19-20

⁵¹ ibid. p 32-33

According to Nil, Nilgün's daughter, Nilgün sometimes is doing certain things, only because she is obliged to, she has to follow the rules and she has to act as a modern and civilized woman.⁵²

⁵² *ibid.* p 108

Nil

Nil is the only child of Nilgün and she has grown up without her father next to her since her parents took divorce when she was a little child. The only short activities she does with her father is to go with him to the theatre or to a patisserie once in a while. She never shares anything with him, and she doesn't even know how to treat to a father. She believes that children never talk about personal issues and never share their problems with their father.⁵³ On the other hand she pretty much loves and admires her mother to the point of thinking her mother as the perfect human being. She shares everything with her and is very much influenced by her mother's life style and principles, although as a teenager she is often frustrated that her mother is playing such a role in her life.⁵⁴

Nil as a teenager is having problems with her weight. She is in a constant diet, trying to lose kilo, which gains right after she loses them. She is never comfortable with her body and generally she is suffering from a big complex concerning her appearance.⁵⁵ She only feels contented when she becomes thin and her clothes look beautiful on her.⁵⁶ It is then that she enters in relationships with the opposite sex, but usually these relationships end as soon as she gains kilo again. Thus she is constantly suffering and in her opinion the only way to find happiness is to lose weight, wear provocative clothes and have men flirting with her. It is then that she gradually stops eating and becomes anorexic.⁵⁷ In the same period she started using too much make up, extreme clothes and dyes her hair blonde. In addition to that she decides that she doesn't like her breasts and decides to have a plastic surgery.⁵⁸

She is a girl exploring her sexuality, respecting herself in the same time. When one of her boyfriends tried to force her in to having sex Nil reacted and decided to throw him out of her house.⁵⁹ On the other hand though in the age of eighteen she is having

⁵³ Asena, op.cit p 18

⁵⁴ ibid. p 32

⁵⁵ ibid. p 20

⁵⁶ ibid p 29

⁵⁷ ibid. p 157

⁵⁸ ibid. p 168-169

⁵⁹ ibid p. 99

sex for the first time with her dentist, a married middle-aged man who has managed to convinced her that they will be a couple.⁶⁰

Nil is a very progressive and open minded young woman, who believes that everything is normal and that everyone is responsible for themselves. She is criticizing her mother's generation of not applying their believes such as *Make love not War*, but instead like the former generations kept their virginity for their husband.⁶¹ She is very much bored of the people who are concentrated on money, expensive cars, and they talk about football and shopping. Once, she found herself with a man that tried to impress her by telling her about how rich he is, Nil gave him a piece of paper writing that she doesn't have a private plane but she can enjoy the services of all the planes of the world and there is not a place in the world where she hasn't been in.⁶²

When Nil meets Cengiz, he helps her accept her self, he shows her how beautiful she is, and reminds her that she doesn't have to try to be someone else all the time. Nil realizes that there in no meaning in always being stressed and irritated. She starts enjoying the moment without trying to control every thought and every movement. With Cengiz Nil decides to make a new beginning in life, to love herself as she is and let herself fall in love. She finds her own unique rhythm and while looking in the mirror she finds love.⁶³

⁶⁰ Asena, op.cit. p 111

⁶¹ ibid. p 132

⁶² ibid. p 194-195

⁶³ ibid. p 333-334

CHAPTER II

Erendiz Atasü

“A midlife dream”

Erendiz Atasü

Erendiz Atasü was born in Ankara in 1947. She graduated from the Faculty of Pharmacy, Ankara University in 1968, and was a professor of pharmacognosy in the same institution until her retirement in 1997. She has four novels, six story collections, four collections of essays, and various awards. Some of her short stories have been translated to other languages and been published in anthologies in Great Britain, United States, France, Germany and Holland. Atasü's work has been subject to various literary researches from the point of view of both context and form. Problematic themes such as the alternative history of women, surveying the Republican reforms with a feminine perspective, the conceptualization of sexual relationships and feminine sexuality by women themselves; and textualities such as the usage of imagery and language have been worked upon.

Erendiz Atasü has stated to Buket Aşçı that she believes that there is such a thing as women's fiction. An author's identity is neither shallow nor simple, but is rather, a complex of various identities. I believe we - as readers - must respect the author's choice of identity - which results either from a deliberate or probably subconscious approach - while he or she is creating. I think that some of our woman writers such as Adalet Ağaoğlu, Tomris Uyar prefer to emphasise their identities as an intellectuals. On the other hand, Pınar Kür, Latife Tekin, İnci Aral, Ayla Kutlu do not draw back their female identities while creating. You can place me in the latter group. What is meant by the term female identity is an area much wider than the narration of female experience; and it seems to me these two concepts are mistaken for one another very often. And of course women's fiction is not written only for the female reader and clearly addresses the whole of humanity in spite of some contrary assertions.

My definition is that women's literature has some specific tones and vibrations that claim the emotions, sensations, experiences and culture forced upon women by their subordinate social position, or all these sentiments and experiences acquired by women during their struggle to transcend their subordination.

It is undeniable that one of the voices silenced by women's suppression is that of their sexuality. When one refuses to suffice by expressing the experience of a female body

between the lines, like a vague shadow, but attempts to actually narrate it using words, one has to face the challenging rudeness of language which needs to be broken in order to create a female discourse; let alone the difficult task of shaping into words an ages old silence of feelings and sensations. I daresay all the languages of the world would force a woman writer to create a new discourse if she dares write about sexuality. I wonder if there exists any language that does not contain words of scorn for the female body and female sexual experience.

In an interview she gave to Feridun Andanç she declared that: “I think that being a woman is an essential factor in my being a writer. Life in many ways, is an adventure of discovering and being oneself, even if one is not aware of it. I dare say that writing is the most important - if not the only- way of being my true self. During the adventurous struggle of being oneself, the contradictions and the conflicts between being a full person, and being a woman (womanhood as a gender carries a lot of social restrictions), the miseries female bodies suffer under the double standards of sexual morality suppress women's lives, and make them difficult.

I am inclined to accept the notion of women's literature. I would like to emphasize that by this notion I mean works created from a stand point of criticizing patriarchal structures, rather than those witnessing women's lives, or narrating women's sufferings. And I am one of those who think that women writers' approaches to plot, discourse, and imagery tend to display qualities distinct from those of men.

I have written numerous articles on women's subordination, and liberation, approaching the matter with feminist consciousness, which is the direct way of expressing myself as a writer. Fiction is different though: Works of literature should not at all adopt the characters of a manifesto; otherwise they would lose their inherent attributes. A fiction writer should be capable of penetrating into the inner worlds of his or her fictional characters, whether they are male/ female, young/old, rich,/poor, thus identifying with them, as well as viewing them from a critical distance which is the media where the impacts of a writer's feminist consciousness would be apt to be discovered.”⁶⁴

⁶⁴ www.erendizatasu.com

She also said that it has always been important for her to understand the women of her past, her grandmother and her mother since she knew that she can not truly find herself without understanding them.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Andaç, op.cit. p 138

“A midlife dream”

A Midlife Dream narrates the story of Feride during two different time periods; one of which is from the end of seventies until our days and the other is from our days to the year 2025. During those times Feride struggles for the political view she defends under Turkey’s social and political turmoil and at the same time she experiences different love affairs. While working in a revolutionary organization within the framework of leftist struggle, she crust her own passions next to an husband for whom individual relationships do not matter a lot; while the second husband provides her with the warmth which was lacking in the first there were other frustrations waiting for her; and finally she is attached to young Kamuran - nearly at the age of her son - with a fresh love. Those three men entering her life make her experience three different love affairs. *Ferhat* who is giving her a brutal love, *Sedat* where she takes refuge in his affection, *Kamuran* who could have been an antidote to her loneliness and escaping youth and *Şirin*, Ferhat’s daughter, with whom she had a special mother-daughter relation apart from these three men.

Abstract from the back cover of the book

The author commenting on her book she stated the follow: “As for my novel...We, the women, usually criticize those middle aged men running after young women. And we are right. There is such an inequality in the situation of our gender that the burden on the shoulders of an abandoned middle-aged woman can not be underestimated. On the other hand, the man can not be considered as totally wrong. Understanding that the “youth” is escaping of one’s hands upsets a human being and directs him/her towards youngsters. Being incapable of seeing ourselves in the man’s situation, we, the women, also have to live such experiences, although we do not mention about it and our interest remains mostly platonic. The situation of a middle aged woman is really tragicomic; as while missing the youth she would still hesitate to open her ageing body to the sight and touch of a young man, and would feel her age more and more. Should I emphasize that those sensual and sentimental vicious circles are “side products” of “social gender”. *A Midlife Dream*’s background lies on such sentiments and intuitions, and such things follow. More openly, it is the story of a woman, who

does not really know herself, and who is swept out of her consciousness, facing her homosexuality a bit late and painfully. The hero of the novel is Feride, a woman who falls in love with men only platonically. She does not fall in love with a man but only with his image, yet she is not aware of it. One of the things fascinating me the most about life are the deep traces marked by one generation to another, unrealised at first sight, escaping from our sight. People die but the traces they left, at first usually ignored and not taken into account, continue their effects in one way or another. The section entitled as “After Life” in the book is not about the other life, it is devoted to discovering the traces Feride left behind which silently affect those who are still alive. ...Moreover an attentive reading will also make it clear that the real problematic of the novel is – maybe more than the questioning of the repressed homosexuality – to make the reader feel this continuity in life.”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Andaç, op.cit. pp 143-144

Feride's mother

The reader gets to know Feride's mother, a refugee from the Balkans, through Feride's memories and narrations to others about things concerning her mother. According to Feride, her mother was a strict woman, with a judgmental approach who failed to understand her daughter and her needs, and the result was to deprive from her daughter the affection that she needed from her mother.⁶⁷ While Feride is looking at her parent's pictures hanging in the wall, she slightly remembers her mother, something that shows that Feride's mother was never essentially next to her.⁶⁸ She remembers a gloomy house and her mother always sad. On the same time Feride is accusing her mother of excessive sentimentalism, since she decided to give her daughter the name Feride from the heroin of the book she was reading when she was pregnant.⁶⁹ As a mother she was always overprotective, with a constant worry that something bad may happen to Feride. She was especially anxious that men will hurt her daughter, on the other hand though she was always telling Feride to get married and have kids the soon as possible.⁷⁰

Feride's mother was always bragging of how much she loved her husband, but in the same time she was saying that both she and her sister were destroyed by the men they loved. "I have become neurasthenic" she was saying, "You can discover any kind of sickness in my body". Feride remembers the lack of love in their house; she remembers that there was no sexual attraction amongst her parents and that they were like sister with a brother.⁷¹ Later in her life Feride discovers why her mother while loving her father yet she was deeply sad. Apparently her mother fell in love with the same man that her sister did, and for the sake of her sister kept it for herself. Then she met Feride's father, a man she loved like her own child and not like her man.⁷²

⁶⁷ Andaç, op.cit. p 46

⁶⁸ ibid. p 43

⁶⁹ ibid. p 41

⁷⁰ ibid. p 118

⁷¹ ibid. p.113-114

⁷² ibid. p. 140

Feride

Feride is a passionate, honest, idealist, responsible and loving woman that during the years from 1970 until 2000 finds herself in the idealistic and social democrat profile of Turkish Republic's urban intellectual middle class, and it is in this frame that defines herself, her life and her believes about the society.⁷³

In the beginning of the 70's, when society wanted women to preserve their virginity until marriage, Feride not only disobeys to those rules but also creates a relationship with a married man –Ferhat, and when his wife dies, she gets married to him and becomes the new mother of his daughter Şirin, when she was still a little child. During their love relationship before they get married, Feride was deeply in love with Ferhat, but after the marriage she started wondering why she fell in love with him in the first place. After Ferhat's wife died in a car accident, the tragedy made Feride's feelings dry, and the reason she accepted to marry him it was because she was almost thirty year's old and she wanted to be a mother and because of his 3 and a half year's old daughter Şirin that saw in Feride the mother she had lost.⁷⁴ Feride refused to play the role of the woman who would accept her husband's leadership role. She was suffocating in the environment that wanted her to accept everything from her husband with kindness and understanding. She was so desperate that she started thinking of suicide, or ways to abandon her marriage and her female hypostasis. All she got was Şirin, as after two miscarriages she had abandon the idea to have her own children.⁷⁵

Two years after Ferhat died, Feride decided to get married with Sedat, a colleague of hers. In Sedat she found security, trust, love and respect and Sedat loved Feride because of honesty and modesty. Feride could not see a sign of passion in Sedat's eyes but that made her feel more comfortable with him. Besides Sedat was the only person who understood why after Ferhat's death Feride wanted to be a happy mother

⁷³ Dilek Doltaş, "Çalığışu' nun Feride'si 90'lı Yıllarda Yaşasaydı", Cumhuriyet Kitap, No: 656, s.6 -7, 12 Eylül 2002, p.6

⁷⁴ Erendiz Atasü, *Bir Yaş Dönümü Rüyası*, Can Yayınları, İstanbul, 2002, pp 15-16

⁷⁵ ibid. p 17

and not a crying widow. This new trinity in Feride's life was closer to what she needed, than any of other trinities in her life.⁷⁶

Feride is a literature teacher in an intermediate school. She is a woman with left ideology, public-minded and involved in the communal life. On the other hand women in her close environment never discuss politics in front of men, but instead they just listen.⁷⁷

Feride concentrated all her love and affection to Şirin, especially after she realized that she would never be able to have her own children. This little girl became Feride's priority and the source of happiness. She promised to herself that she would always be next to Şirin and that she would never lied to her. Even in the period that Feride wanted to divorce Ferhat, she did not do it simply because the court would never allow her to get custody of the child, since she was not her biological mother.⁷⁸ The death of Ferhat may have devastated Feride for some time, but gave her a daughter that no one could take away from her. Şirin was then six year's old. There was a cocoon between Feride and Şirin that no one could invade. Erendiz Atasü in an interview she gave to Nalan Barbarosoğlu that she always wanted to break the taboos about women and to show the injustice of these mould approaches, thus through Feride she wanted to show that there are good stepmothers as well.⁷⁹

Feride remembers that in the events of 6th-7th September 1955 she was a student in the primary school, and in the sixties revolution she was a student in the intermediate school. When she looks back in the years of university she sees that she was very unhappy. Feride had two best friends, they loved each other a lot and they were always together. The only thing they were longing for was a man to love them. Later on though, Feride became the third person in this friendship as her two friends started creating alliance between them, leaving her outside. Consequently she felt lonely and sad.⁸⁰ It seems that Feride always had the tendency or the need to be the third person in a relationship, just like she did later when she had an affair with a married man.

⁷⁶ Atasü, p 40, p 43

⁷⁷ ibid. p 18

⁷⁸ ibid. p 19, p 21

⁷⁹ Nalan Barbarosoğlu, "Erendiz Atasü ile Söyleşi", Varlık, No :1142, p.46-49, Kasım 2002

⁸⁰ Atasü, op.cit. pp 23-24

Concerning her sexuality Feride recalls the years when several men or even boys in her age were considering girls as their sexual target in an aggressive and offensive way, consequently for the girls these first flirting and sexually oriented experiences were traumatic and unpleasant the list. Those girls grew up in deep guilt and they believed of sexuality to be something negative and awful. On the other though, naturally their bodies were say something else and this was creating a paradoxical situation for the girls.⁸¹ Later on, in the years of university, Feride would realize that she is unique, that she wants a man to put her in his arms. When at last she had lived this first sexual experience with Ferhat, it was not like she expected it; she did not feel much, and she blamed her prolonged virginity for that. Still she kept hoping that within time Ferhat would conquer her female geography.⁸² With Sedat her second husband, Feride had a less passionate sexual relationship, but still full of love and care. Yet Feride did not manage to live the ecstatic experience she always thought she would experience in a sexual intercourse.⁸³ According to her, sexual passion is an unexplainable experience which results in dissatisfaction even in marriage.⁸⁴

Until her menopause Feride both with her first husband and her second husband she is living a respectful life according to the customs and the traditions of the society. In her forties Feride realized that all the things that used to make her happy, seemed meaningless. She was longing to live new adventures, have new experiences like traveling to new countries. She was seeing though that it was not possible to share all these needs with Sedat, since he seemed tired and contemned with his life. It was then that she remembered her female body and its needs. Needs that could not be satisfied by her husband.⁸⁵ After an injury that was detected in her vagina, Feride had an operation where her uterus was taken out. This event shocked Feride and her femininity pretty much. She was wondering if she is still considered to be a woman.⁸⁶

⁸¹ ibid. p 24

⁸² ibid. p 28

⁸³ ibid. p 71

⁸⁴Argiro Mantoglou, "Kilit Altındaki Kadın Bedenini Yazmak; Türkiye'nin Çağdaş Bir Kadın Yazarından Bir Çılgılık Romanı", *Bibliothiki*, No: 405, s.18-19, 26 Mayıs 2006, Çev:Pınar Karababa, *Varlık*, 112479, s.66-67, Eylül 2007

⁸⁵Atasü, op.cit. p 99

⁸⁶ ibid. p 141

After that event she decides to get a divorce from Sedat. It was then the first time that Feride stayed alone in her life without having anyone to depend on and she was fifty year's old. But on the other hand if she continued staying in the side of Sedat she would be decayed, she would collapse. Now instead of that she was walking daily, she was doing gymnastic, and she felt her skin soft and alive. Furthermore, she started doing things she really liked, like choosing books and participating in literature conversation meetings. With this group of people they were publishing a small literature journal, which made her learn using a computer for typing hers and other's people article, something that helped her gaining money. She was not that interested in what was going on in the country anymore, but instead she was concentrated more in her inner world. She had decided that her future was her daughter Şirin and her friends.⁸⁷

When Feride met Kamuran a young man that was a member in the political party that her daughter belonged, she was very impressed since it was the first time after a very long period that had a literature conversation with a person in the age of Kamuran. In the days to follow the time she spent with the young man made her and her body feel young again.⁸⁸ Within time, Feride began to fall in love with Kamuran and she was feeling her body filling with lust. Within this experience Feride realizes that she does not know her real self but accepts this as a fact, and that the pain of this new imaginary love with this young man at the threshold of her ageing, has the power to burn the curtain between her real self. Feride would be encountered with her suppressed deeper self. Feride couldn't actually take from Kamuran what she had missed which her husbands, her attachment to Kamuran was due to her yearning for youth and also for motherly feelings. In addition Feride was scared of men, she was introvert and because Kamuran was unreachable, she in fact found the imaginary love she was searching for in this unreachable Kamuran.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ *ibid.* p 146, p 148

⁸⁸ *ibid.* p176, p 179

⁸⁹ Nur Oral, "Bir Yaşadönümü Rüyası: Hayatı Keşfetmenin Romanı", *Hürriyet Gösteri*, No: 241 s.5-8, Eylül 2002 p. 8

When Feride found out that Kamuran is homosexual she was greatly disappointed. Şirin then asked her mother whether she herself could be homosexual as well since she never really liked men, and as Feride used to say: “Men never satisfied me, and I was never really interested in their sexual organ”. Şirin also asked her mother whether it was Kamuran’s effeminacy that attracted Feride. Although Feride got very confused, she decided not to take her daughter seriously. However, she was sure that her first and maybe her last orgasm she had experienced it when she had Kamuran in her arms crying, and this meant for her that after all she was not font of authoritarian men but she liked men that are affable.⁹⁰ Generally Feride never behaved warmly toward men and she can easily live without a man in her side. On the other hand thought, her body is in the need of a man.⁹¹ Later on, she felt that she was losing her self since she was so used to build everything according to her female being; she then realized that in reality she was never in love with anyone, but she was sure she loved people around her deeply.⁹² Feride was a tired woman, but never a quitter. She never gave up on love, on her country, on her body. On the contrary she was always in a struggle to understand them, to decipher them no matter the difficulties.⁹³

⁹⁰ Atasü, op.cit. p 260, p 263

⁹¹ Oral, op.cit. p. 8

⁹² ibid p 264, p 266

⁹³ Tülin Er, “ Bir Rüya”, Varlık, No: 1142, s.50, Kasım 2002

Sirin

Şirin lost her mother in the age of two and a half year's old. After that she found a mother in Feride. From all the women in her environment Şirin had chosen Feride. Later on, she lost her father. They had explained her that his love for his country cost him his life. This country was from now on her rival.⁹⁴

Şirin in the beginning of the 1990's is a young student in Ankara University, who keeps herself away from the problems and the traditions of the society, but instead she had internalized completely the liberal approach, including the sexual freedom.⁹⁵ In her twenties she had turned in to a femme fatale. She wanted clear relationships free from masks and caress free from lies.⁹⁶ She had a thin and female body that attracted men and her behavior was honest and friendly. Her femininity and her lively eyes made her very attractive, even dangerous.⁹⁷ Şirin soon realized that what we call a couple is a closed box where freedom is limited, and that is why she was always creating relationships that included many members.⁹⁸ Despite her mother's wishes, Şirin did not want to get married or to have children at that time. Şirin wanted to belong to herself.⁹⁹ She enjoyed flirting with several men, and gaining experiences in this issue. After all Feride had taught her not to be afraid neither of her body nor the man's body.¹⁰⁰ Şirin was so comfortable with her body and her sexuality that she also had sexual experiences with women, but as she confessed later to her mother, she decided that she likes men.¹⁰¹

Şirin growing up she became a sociology teacher in the University of Ankara and had initiated researches on the women committing suicide in Northeastern Turkey. She became very successful in her professional life but not very well known, since she had chosen never to serve any political interests. She was friendly to her colleagues, but she knew that in order to survive as a female scholar she had to be strict and she had

⁹⁴ Atasü, op.cit. p 35

⁹⁵ Dilek Doltaş, op.cit. p 7

⁹⁶ Atasü, ibid. p 80

⁹⁷ ibid. p 123

⁹⁸ ibid. p 126

⁹⁹ ibid. p. 180

¹⁰⁰ ibid. p 228

¹⁰¹ ibid. p 261

to retain an aggressive attitude. Her colleagues were afraid of her and called her the angel witch.¹⁰²

She got married and had a son. Before getting married she had created many relationships that helped her be experienced and realist. She was a woman full of life and enthusiasm. She got married driven by a deep love for her husband and lived happy for years in the shadow of this love, which she thought that would never end. Yet, she and her husband got divorce after he told her that he was in love with a young woman. However she continued being friends with her husband. After the divorce the truth is that she felt relieved and reborn, with the certainty of a young woman. She had a couple affairs, not for love, but for the health of her body and spirit.¹⁰³

¹⁰² *ibid.* p 270-271

¹⁰³ Atasü, *op.cit.* p 275-276

CHAPTER III

Elif Şafak

“The bastard of Istanbul”

Elif Şafak

Elif Şafak was born in Strasbourg, France, in 1971. She is an award-winning novelist and the most widely read woman writer in Turkey. She has published nine books, seven of which are novels. She writes in both Turkish and English. Her books have been translated into more than twenty languages.

Şafak spent her teenage years in Madrid, Spain before returning to her native Turkey. Throughout her life she has lived in numerous cities and states, including Ankara, Turkey, Cologne, Germany; Amman, Jordan; and Boston, Michigan, and Arizona. She has at the same time been deeply attached to the city of Istanbul, which plays an important part in her fiction. As a result, a sense of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism has consistently characterized both her life and her work.

In addition to writing fiction, Şafak is also a political scientist and assistant professor, having graduated from the program in International Relations at Middle East Technical University. She holds a Masters degree in Gender and Women's Studies and a Ph.D. in Political Science. Focusing mainly in contemporary Western political thought, with a supplementary interest in Middle Eastern studies, Şafak's scholarship has been nurtured by an interdisciplinary and gender-conscious re-reading of the literature on the Middle East and West, Islam, and modernity. Her master's thesis on Islam, women, and mysticism received an award from the Social Scientists Institute.

Şafak continues to write for various daily and monthly publications in Turkey. She has also contributed to various papers in Europe, and the United States, including The Guardian, Le Monde, Berliner Zeitung, Dutch Handelsbladt, The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, and Time Magazine, and has recently been featured in the US on National Public Radio.

Şafak has taught at various universities around the world, including İstanbul Bilgi University, the University of Michigan, the University of Arizona, and Istanbul Bahçeşehir University. Her courses have explored the intersections between Turkish history, women's studies, and literature, including classes such as Ottoman History from the Margins, Turkey and Cultural Identities, Women and Writing, Sexualities

and Gender in the Muslim World, Exile, Literature, and Imagination, and The Politics of Memory.¹⁰⁴

The author in an article of hers is explaining that she is a female writer who is attached to Islamic, Jewish and Christian heterodox mysticism and that instead of postponing writing on sexuality until she is old or defeminizing and desexualizing herself to be better respected, she chooses to pull above the ground those buried traditions of eroticism and homoeroticism, in addition to Sufi narratives, and then inject them into the genre of the novel.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ www.elifsafak.us

¹⁰⁵ Şafak, Women Writers, Islam, and the Ghost of Zulaikha, www.wordswithoutborders.org

“The bastard of Istanbul”

“Asya is a nineteen years old woman who loves Johnny Cash and the French existentialists. She lives in an extended household in Istanbul, where she has been raised, with no father in sight, by her mother, the beautiful and irreverent Zeliha Kazanci, and by Zeliha’s three older sisters: Banu, a devout woman who has rediscovered herself as a clairvoyant; Cevriye, a prim, widowed high school teacher; and Feride, a hypochondriac obsessed with impending disaster. An exuberant, dramatic novel that features vigorous, unforgettable female characters, *The Bastard of Istanbul* explores issues of gender and cultural identity as well as addressing contemporary political and religious topics in Turkey. When this novel was published in Turkey, Şafak was accused by nationalistic lawyers of insulting Turkish identity. The charges were later dropped. The characters in *The Bastard of Istanbul* are so alive they leap off the page to sit beside you on the couch. What women! Brave ones, silly ones, intellectuals and dopes”.¹⁰⁶

Susan Isaacs

“This is a book in which women play the central role, both Armenian and Turkish women. I believe women’s relation to the past is quite different than men’s. My country is a country of collective amnesia. Yet, if we still have some memory of the past, we owe it to women. Women pass their heritage from one generation to another, through recipes, songs, lullabies, and stories. These are all ordinary but precious gems of daily life.”¹⁰⁷

Elif Şafak

¹⁰⁶ www.elifsafak.us

¹⁰⁷ www.elifsafak.us

Gülsüm

Gülsüm is the mother of five children, who lost her husband in an early age. She is a strict woman, with a harsh behavior, that in her previous life could have been Ivan the Terrible.¹⁰⁸ When Zeliha her daughter, announced to her family that she is pregnant and she decided to keep this baby, Gülsüm not only showed some understanding to her, but instead she started screaming that her daughter want to bring a bastard in the family, that she is the disgrace of the family and that it is her fault that she is pregnant since with all that provocative dressing of hers and the nose ring she looks like a whore. She stated that if the family's men were with them they would kill her for doing something like that.¹⁰⁹

During the whole book Gülsüm stops being the cold and the austere figure that she usually is and shows affection only in two occasions; when she caresses and talks in a very sweet and gentle way to her flowers, but paradoxically at the same time she calls her little granddaughter a bastard and when her only son who happens to be her favorite child comes to Istanbul after 20 years of absence.¹¹⁰

In their household, like in the rest of Turkey two tendencies dominated; the Kemalism and the Islam. Gülsüm belongs in the first one. When her oldest daughter decides to cover her head, Gülsüm's reaction was very intense. She yelled at her daughter to take off that sorry thing of her head, because it is a nonsense and in addition Turkish women took off the veil ninety years ago, and she will no accept that one of her daughters "betray the rights the great commander-in-chief Atatürk bestowed on the women of this country".¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Elif Şafak, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, Penguin Books, New York, 2007, p 23

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.* p 29

¹¹⁰ *ibid.* p 61, 271

¹¹¹ *ibid.* p 68

Zeliha

Zeliha is a young woman living with her grandmother, her mother and her three older sisters in a traditional house in Istanbul. She is a tall beautiful girl with long curly hair and piercing in her nose. Her whole style is shiny, always wearing “miniskirts of glaring colors, tight-fitting blouses that displayed her ample breasts, satiny nylon stockings and towering high heels”, and it is for this certain appearance that men were harassing her and women were reproaching her. Yet, these behaviors were never enough to force Zeliha dress and look in a different way.¹¹² They were not enough to stop her from smoking a cigarette on the streets, despite the fact that “a woman who smoked on the streets was not highly regarded in Istanbul”. Besides, Zeliha had already waged war against society and her constitutions, like religion. In her family she was the less believer. Already, by giving birth to an illegitimate child made her the black sheep of the family.¹¹³

Zeliha never told anyone in the family who the father of Asya is. She prefer to keep it to herself, as sharing this information with others it would mean that she would have to tell what happened that day. She would have to tell them that when Zeliha was nineteen year’s old her older brother had raped her in her room after a fight they had. It was after that incidence that Zeliha got pregnant, and although she had decided to make an abortion, she regretted it the last minute and thus she gave birth to Asya in the age of twenty. Zeliha told Asya who her father is only after he died.¹¹⁴

In the years to follow Zeliha remained the free spirit she was as a young woman, still insisting on wearing her mini skirts and the towering high heels. She turned in to a woman with an imposing personality and a captivating body.¹¹⁵ “Having no liking for bureaucratic institutions or any chain of command, and possessing too much exasperation inside, she had realized at an early age that she would have to choose a profession where she could be both independent and inventive”. As a result she opened a tattoo parlor, where she had started to develop a collection of original

¹¹² Şafak, op.cit. pp 3-4

¹¹³ ibid. p 8, p 17, p 174

¹¹⁴ ibid p 316, pp 28-29

¹¹⁵ ibid. p 63

designs.¹¹⁶ As her daughter characterizes her, Zeliha is a unique species, the most stubborn and the most iron-willed woman someone could ever meet.¹¹⁷ Zeliha never got married, since she was against this constitution, but she has a long serious relationship with Aram an Armenian of Istanbul, who is Zeliha's "significant other".

¹¹⁶ Şafak, *op.cit.* p 72

¹¹⁷ *ibid.* p 175

Asya

Asya is the daughter of Zeliha, a child born out of wedlock, or a bastard as her grandmother would call her. When Asya was three year's old discovered that she could gain almost anything she wanted by simply go into tantrums, but on her sixth birthday she realized that she had to stop this since although her demands were met, her childhood was prolonged. In the age of eight she learned, more correctly confirmed something that she already sensed but was not sure of, that she was a bastard. Yet, it was at the age of nine that she learned the meaning of the word, when she was call a bastard by a kid at school. When she reached the age of ten she discovered that she was the only girl in her class that had no male role model in her household. Three years later she had begun to comprehend that this certain lack could have a lasting effect on her personality. At the age of fourteenth, she discovered that other families were not like hers and that some families could be *normal*, when she was fifteen she learned that in her ancestry besides the many women and their secrets, there were also many men who disappeared very early in a very strange way. When she became sixteen year's old she understood that she was never going to be a beautiful woman like her mother.¹¹⁸ Yet, in her twenties she had the same skepticism, the same unruliness and the same bitterness as her mother did in her age.¹¹⁹

Asya, as many young Turkish women is forced by her family to attend to activities that she did not enjoy like ballet classes. Furthermore, she had to fight with the women in her house that were trying to convince her to eat several food that contained meat, as if they deliberately ignored the fact that Asya is a vegetarian.¹²⁰ As she would be telling later to her friends, her family is not a usual family; it is a pack of female animals that were forced to live together.¹²¹ On the other hand, meeting her friends in the café Kundera gave her inner peace and freedom, something she never found in her home.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Şafak, op.cit. pp 60-62

¹¹⁹ ibid. p 124

¹²⁰ ibid. p 70, 74

¹²¹ ibid. p 85

¹²² ibid p 87

According to Asya what really saved her are the books; she enjoyed reading philosophy, especially political and existential philosophy.¹²³ Asya found all the theories about magic and ways of loving from a distance or mating without even touching to be nonsense, and she believed that what Plato needed was to get splendidly laid! Asya herself by the age of twenty she had experienced the touch of many men and she was perfectly ok with it. She had many boyfriends and numerous affairs sometimes polygamous. She believed that only when you have sex with a man you can be sure that he is the right one for you and that sex is in fact more sensual than physical.¹²⁴

In her group there was a married guy the Dipsomaniac Cartoonist as he was called, that Asya had an affair with, and was meeting him in his private flat. While the Dipsomaniac Cartoonist was by time falling in love with Asya, she on the other hand was sarcastic and distant towards him as from the beginning and that is why her partner one day told her that she underneath her sweet face lies a dark side and a bottomless potential for demolition . Asya then answered that all she wants is to be free and to be herself, and for others to live her alone.¹²⁵

¹²³ Şafak, op.cit p 177

¹²⁴ ibid. p 199

¹²⁵ ibid. pp 145-146

Conclusion

Three Turkish female writers coming out of the reality of Turkey and nine Turkish women coming out of their books; all of them representing the Turkish woman coming out of the history of the Republic. Duygu, Erendiz, Elif, Nilüfer, Nilgün, Nil, Feride, Şirin, Gülsün, Zeliha, Asya. Women that grew up in the constantly changing Turkish society, each of them represent their generation. Women with needs, with feelings, with secrets, with passions, with fears, with love, with anger, with talents, with intelligence, with femininity and sexuality. Women that had chosen to live in slavery, women who were brave enough to fight for their independence.

It is needless to say that the three writers, who have been chosen for the purposes of this thesis, are independent, strong-minded, brave and besides talented authors, also some of the main actors in Turkish feminism. Duygu Asena published her first book *Kadının Adı Yok (The Woman Has No Name)* in 1987, a book that sharply criticizes the oppression of women and marriage without love. In 1983 Erendiz Atasü's first book *Kadınlar da Vardır (Women Also Exist)* was published, and Elif Şafak published her novel, *Pinhan (The Sufi)* in 1997. The three authors made their literary debut in a period where the Turkish feminist movement is at its peak. A period where the traditional gender roles were questioned and challenged. A period where the women's movement in Turkey can be situated within the universal second wave feminist paradigm, which has a common denominator on the axis of the fight for freedom and equality, incorporating local and national differences.¹²⁶

Erendiz Atasü stated that in Turkey it is not only the women author's efforts that had put forward women's fiction along with all the dilemmatic discussions over the issue. The concrete stages that women's life traversed in the twentieth century, and the difference observed in the social image of womanhood, the new produced myths, the conflict between the reality and the expectations and myths, the way this contradictions affect the relation between the two sexes, none of them could find sufficient respond, especially in the literature produced by men in the second half of

¹²⁶ p.57

the century, and this deficiency is one of the factors that caused the emergence of women's literature.¹²⁷

In addition Fatmagül Berktaş argues that the relation between being a woman and being an author is conflicting and most of the times painful. Whereas traditionally it is claimed that literature and the author has no gender and that the conditions are equal for all artists regardless of their gender. Additionally the most ablaze defenders of this argument are women. Similarly, several women authors often state that their writing has to do with the fact that they are human beings and not their femininity. On the other hand, she mentions, until now no male author felt the need to clarify that he is not a male author but an author, since in the existing society men are the one who represent humanity. According to the same author the concept of the "female author" is not only odd but also ridiculous, but in the same time it reflects an important reality which is the fact that in a world that has been divided according the two genders and where in addition one gender is under the authority of the other, being a woman and being an author are two concepts that are incompatible. The author also says that it is very difficult for a woman to use the word "I" and express herself, since the dominant culture does not recognize her right to be active and autonomous. In this culture, it takes courage for a woman to be the signifier since she is already the sign.¹²⁸

The aforementioned authors, throughout their novels are in constant effort to draw the several images of the Turkish woman, of the past and the present, something that consists the major characteristic of women's literature in the 70's and the 80's and indeed it can be said that the images that they have created are very realistic. The specific books follow the general tendency of what we call woman's literature in Turkey, since they deal with the freedom of women, the conflict between the pro-Western ideology and the values of the traditional family institution and education, the battle of women against any kind of oppression against them, and the participation of women in the political scenery of the country. But what about the female characters that have presented through their literature?

¹²⁷ <http://www.arendizatasu.com/index.php?id=8>

¹²⁸ pp. 7-9

The figure of grandmother who belongs in the period of the new born Republic.

Nilüfer is an unhappy young girl who is living with her family by whom she is forced to get married soon. Nilüfer as a mother is not liberated enough to understand her children and embrace them. Nilüfer as a young girl knows nothing about sexuality, but even as a grown up she never became familiar or comfortable with it despite the needs of her body. When her third husband died, she could not even go shopping by her own. She despairs and cries. Consequently, in the age of fifty seven she closes herself in the house and becomes a sick and weak woman.

Feride's mother a strict woman, with a judgmental approach who failed to understand her daughter. As a mother she was always overprotective, with a constant worry that something bad may happen to her daughter. She is a woman who loves her husband yet she was deeply sad. Apparently she had fallen in love with the same man that her sister did, and for the sake of her sister kept it as a secret. Then she met Feride's father, a man she loved like her own child and not like her man. Consequently she is a woman that had sacrificed her sexuality and that made her unhappy.

Gülsüm is the mother of five children, who lost her husband in an early age and never married or had any other relationship ever since. She is a strict woman, with a harsh behavior. Her favorite child is her only son. She only shows affection to her flowers and to him. In the same time she is hard core Kemalist.

The figure of mother who represents the generation of the sixties.

Nilgün is a teenager of the sixties (more specifically we are in the year of 1964), who is more interested in enjoying life and flirting and she wants to finish school and become someone great and important like a pilot or astronaut. While she is very fond of flirting and being in love, but she never permits a man to use her or treat her badly. As far as her sexuality is concerned, Nilgün learns the first things from her friends and her boyfriends. In the matter of relationships and marriage the grown up Nilgün believes that in order for two people to live together in the same house and share their lives, they should love each other and express it often. She is criticizing the

constitutions and the principles of her time. Nilgün is a very considerate and supportive mother. She is an educated and a working, independent woman.

Feride is a woman that had a relationship with a married man –Ferhat, and when his wife dies, she gets married to him and becomes the new mother of his daughter Şirin, whom she loves like her own child. Feride refused to play the role of the woman who would accept her husband’s leadership role. She was suffocating in the environment that wanted her to accept everything from her husband with kindness and understanding. Feride is a literature teacher in an intermediate school. She is a woman with left ideology, public-minded and involved in the communal life. When Feride had lived this first sexual experience it was not like she expected it; she did not feel much. After she decides to get a divorce from her husband It was the first time that she stayed alone in her life without having anyone to depend on and she was fifty year’s old. Yet she started walking daily, doing gymnastic, and she felt her skind soft and alive. Furthermore, she started doing things she really liked, like choosing books and participating in literature conversation meetings. Later in her life she realized that in reality she was never in love with anyone, but she was sure she loved people around her deeply.¹²⁹

Zeliha is a young woman with a shiny style, always wearing “miniskirts of glaring colors, tight-fitting blouses that displayed her ample breasts, satiny nylon stockings and towering high heels”, and it is for this certain appearance that men were harassing her and women were reproaching her. Yet, these behaviors were never enough to force Zeliha dress and look in a different way. Zeliha had waged war against society and her constitutions, like religion. In the years to follow Zeliha remained the free spirit she was as a young woman, still insisting on wearing her mini skirts and the towering high heels. She turned in to a woman with an imposing personality and a captivating body. She opened a tattoo parlor, where she had started to develop a collection of original designs. Zeliha never got married, since she was against this constitution, but she has a long serious relationship. She is a good and caring mother, which respects the space of her daughter.

¹²⁹ 264, 266

The figure of the daughter who is living in the framework of the modern world.

Nil is a teenager who has problems with her weight and her appearance. She only feels contented when she becomes thin and her clothes look beautiful on her. She is a girl exploring her sexuality, respecting herself in the same time. Nil is a very progressive and open minded young woman, who believes that everything is normal and that everyone is responsible for themselves. She is criticizing her mother's generation of not applying their beliefs such as *Make love not War*, but instead like the former generations kept their virginity for their husband. She is very much bored of the people who are concentrated on money, expensive cars, and they talk about football and shopping. As a grown up Nil decides to make a new beginning in life, to love herself as she is and let herself fall in love.

Şirin in her twenties had turned in to a femme fatale. She wanted clear relationships free from masks and caress free from lies. Şirin soon realized that what we call a couple is a closed box where freedom is limited. Thus she did not want to get married or to have children at an early time time. Şirin wanted to belong to herself. She enjoyed flirting with several men, and gaining experiences in this issue. She was so comfortable with her body and her sexuality that she also had sexual experiences with women, but as she confessed later to her mother, she decided that she likes men. Şirin growing up became a sociology teacher in the University of Ankara and had initiated researches on the women committing suicide in Northeastern Turkey. She got married driven by a deep love for her husband and had a son.

Asya is a child born out of wedlock. She enjoys reading philosophy, especially political and existential philosophy. Asya found all the theories about magic and ways of loving from a distance or mating without even touching to be nonsense. Asya herself by the age of twenty she had many boyfriends and numerous affairs sometimes polygamous. She believed that only when you have sex with a man you can be sure that he is the right one for you and that sex is in fact more sensual than physical.

It seems that older women or the *grandmothers* are more conservative, unhappier and many times they find themselves in a pathetic situation; they are less independent and less familiar with their body and their sexuality than the younger generations. Each character has its own characteristics of course, but the three of them have many things in common and their condition has many similarities. In the books in question the woman who was raised in the society of the new established Turkish Republic, can justify her existence only in the side of a man. On the other hand their daughters are more liberated, more eager to enjoy life, more curious and determined to explore their sexuality and their femininity, and more willing to live within in a happy marriage or a happy relationship. They are economically dependent and successful in what they do. Yet, in some points they have preserved some of the conservatism, the fears, the guiltiness and the insecurities of their mothers, or even the need to always have a man next to them. Now as far as the women of the new generation are concerned, it is more than obvious that they are by far more independent than the other two generations, that they are against marriage, at least in an early age, and every constitution that keeps them slaves of the phallographic society. They are all educated and interested in the new movements and theories, and they have a judgmental mind. They explore their sexuality without feeling guilty about it since for them it is the natural thing to do and they create many sexual relationships.

It seems that indeed the female characters of the three books represent the real Turkish woman of each period. According to a book written by Deniz Kandiyoti in 1997, several books and articles increasingly project the fact that women are becoming more free and more aware of who they are, without depending on their husbands or other men. It also argues that the generation of girls who are university students, it is obvious that comparing to their mothers they were brought up in a different way which provided them with the capabilities to produce new expectations and new demands.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ p. 49

Duygu Asena, Erendiz Atasü and Elif Şafak through their literature not only they have succeeded to give the reader a panorama of the Turkish woman through the years, but also they manage to make it clear that things seem very hopeful and very positive for the new generation of Turkish woman, since she begun to be independent, strong, proud for who she is, comfortable with her body and her sexuality and willing to enjoy life and be creative.

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