

FROM EMPIRE TO REPUBLIC: FEMINIST NARRATIVES AND POSTCOLONIAL SUBJECTIVITIES IN TURKISH FICTION

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Abstract

With an emphasis on how fiction negotiates gendered subjectivities from the late Ottoman Empire to the contemporary Turkish Republic, this article explores the development of feminist narratives within the framework of Turkish postcolonial literature. The study examines how feminist discourses subvert patriarchal norms, reinterpret national identity, and negotiate the challenges of postcolonial modernity through an analysis of contemporary Turkish novels authored by women and gender-conscious male authors. The study, through adopting theoretical qualitative framework, establishes significant perspective that Turkish fiction is a crucial location for reinventing gender and nation outside of rigid nationalist or Eurocentric feminist frameworks by fusing postcolonial feminist theory with close textual study.

Key Words: *Turkish Feminist Fiction; Postcolonial Literature; Gendered Subjectivities; Hybrid feminism; Elif Shafak.*

1. Introduction

When the Ottoman Empire collapsed in the early twentieth century, the newly founded Turkish Republic embarked on an ambitious nation-building project that entangled modernity with patriarchal nationalism. Women's emancipation was symbolically celebrated yet structurally constrained, producing a tension that Turkish fiction continues to grapple with today. As Turkey negotiates its liminal identity between East and West, its literary voices have become powerful sites for feminist critique and postcolonial reflection. Writers like Elif Shafak, Latife Tekin, and Ayfer Tunç, among others, have interrogated the entanglements of gender, power, and cultural memory. Their works contest the nationalist mythologies that often silence women's agency while simultaneously exposing the limits of Western feminist paradigms that overlook local specificities. This research situates Turkish fiction as a dynamic arena for negotiating feminist subjectivities in a post-imperial context; where the personal remains deeply political.

A qualitative textual analysis method is used in this investigation. In order to examine how gender and nation co-constitute each other in fiction, primary texts by modern Turkish authors such as Elif Shafak, Latife Tekin, and Aslı Erdoğan are analyzed through the prism of postcolonial feminist theory (Mohanty, 1988; Spivak, 1999). To place these texts within larger discussions on feminism in the Middle East, scholarly articles, recent dissertations, and pertinent cultural studies are incorporated. In order to shed light on how Turkish fiction reimagines feminist subjectivities from Empire to Republic, this methodology prioritizes narrative techniques, thematic issues, and cultural settings.

2. Feminism

Feminism is an old movement and theory that starts to empower women and her rights. It discusses about the equality, place and value of a woman as men is having in our society. It is divided into different times named as waves of feminism. The feminist and scholars have divided the feminism

into four waves. Each wave has its own importance and is significant in achieving the goals. These waves portray the cultural, economic and political changings for women in society. The term first wave of feminism was coined in March 1968. It was presented in New York Times Magazine and starts in the early 19th and 20th century in the United Kingdom and United States. It took place because of the reason that women were treated and considered, as the second being and male were dominant. It is concerning to the women suffrage, highlighting for gaining equal rights, equal property rights for women. It also focuses on the women owned by her husband and her children and considers her as humans not a property. The first wave of feminism opens up the opportunity for women. It equally focuses on her suffrage too (Rampton, 2015; (Malinowska, 2020). According to Margaret Waters (2005), a house of married women becomes a prison house and everything in it belongs to her husband. She is in fact slave and even Negroes in the West Indies are better than a woman.

2.1 Prominent features of Feminism

According to many females must try to fulfill their own needs and potential, not only equality. There were campaigns, clubs and movements for women to improve their condition. It includes education, opportunities to improve the condition of a woman. it also discusses about the women's presence in the politics because it will improve the public behavior and the political process. The second wave appeared after the World War 2. It starts in 1960s and ends in 1990s, after three decades. It is also called the women liberation movement. It is built on the first wave of feminism. After the first wave of feminism, Martha Lear also coined the term "The second wave of feminism" in 1960s. this wave open up in the context of the civil war and anti -war movements and the development of the self-consciousness of many groups around the world. In addition, it focuses mainly on gaining the equal rights, legal and social equality for women. It advocates on ending discrimination. There are some kinds of the feminism like political feminism, Marxist feminism; liberal, radical, cultural, social and ecological feminism introduced and rise in the society. All these types of feminist's movements worked for reducing the gender discrimination and promoting the idea of the equality. In addition, it focuses on the belief that women and men are equal. These movements brought a visible change among people (Dominelli, 2002).

Simone de Beauvoir is the most significant feminist of the 20th century is the author of the very popular statement, "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." De Beauvoir expresses the difference between the gender and the sex and suggests that, the identity is developed gradually. It is a cultural meaning and general form that body acquires (Judith Butler, 2016). This wave demands equal opportunities in the education, pay. It is little bit different from the first wave that women were discussing about their issues and experiences and what they have in common as women not only the above-mentioned topics were significant, there's another important thing called rape which was the main point of the discussion in the second wave of feminism and even today. After the successful spread of the first two waves, the third wave of feminism emerged which is also called the post feminism begins in 1990s and it is continues up to present. Rebecca Walker coined this term in 1992. Many of the third wave feminists were the daughters of the second wave feminists. It refers to the thoughts and the concepts of the previous waves and it continues to fight for the same beliefs. They were able to think about other aspects too like individuality, identity and rebellion. Many females learned to discuss about the sexuality, dressed and acted. Many ideas swirled around this time and she actually learned how to spend her life. The little difference was that it was less focus on the laws and the political processes (Guardado, 2015). The feminists of first and second wave were the wasters, middle class, white women but the third

wave feminists belongs to the different religions, cultures and different ethnicities and social backgrounds. Since 1990s, women are more appreciated and recognized in the society not only in the United Kingdom, but also in other countries all over the world. In Britain, women have the same equal opportunities in every field of life as men. The most noticeable thing is that their opinions and values are respected (Kurtis, 2016).

The term “Intersectionality” was coined in this wave. Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989 coined this phrase. The term elaborates different kinds of oppression that are based on gender and race intersects with each other. In this time, feminism was expanding due to the internet connection and people were freely addressing and getting education about the feminism. A Black bi-sexual woman coined this term Third wave of feminism in 1992. The feminism movements support them to stand alone and talk about their identity and value. It is not easy to define feminism in today’s world because it is not as visible as it was in the first and second wave. Some women, in today’s world do not want to support the feminism as they considered it the most rigid movement of no use. The fourth wave feminism was started in the 2012. It is based on focused on the technology. Generation from 1990s to 2010s is the feminists of this popular and advanced wave.

Furthermore, it was mixed with other periods too. It was not accepted because of the internet issues. There were the awareness and people were familiar of the fourth wave but there were changings that were caused by the globalization and the media advances. Many people were asking about the equality, empowerment and freedom really means. It greatly seeks for the gender equality, rape, harassment, body shaming and other issues (Guardado, 2015). Media played a vital role to fight against the women rights and the issues like harassment, professional discrimination, sexism, and gender shaming. It tried to make it possible that everybody and gender must be respectable. It includes transgender, men, women etc. The improvement is due to the social media which includes face book, you tube, twitter, messenger etc. The objective and the purpose of this wave is to provide the justice to women (Chamberlain, 2017).

2.2 Kinds of Feminism

Different critics portray feminism and its substantial evolutionary types throughout different ages, objectives, and perspectives. These types are the advocacy of the women rights. It also elaborates the power and patriarchy that different feminists bring to their work. These types and movements are considered important because they aware people of the rights and the equality of women in the society. These movements unveil the ways of oppressing the women and her rights. The goal of these types of feminism is to focus on the specific goals and strategies. These types of waves foster more nuanced understanding of the movements. According to Wiyatni (2012), feminism is not the answer or the movement that explores the issues and problems related to women or it is not a response to correct the mistakes related to females. There are various feminism thoughts, which need attention. It includes the liberal feminism, which focuses on the freedom of rights of women .it talks about the equal opportunities for men and women in the society. Secondly, Marxist/socialist feminism elaborates the low position of women in terms of the power, political, social, economic situations. These elements made her the commodity for everyone in the society. Muslikhati (2004) remarked that the domestic and internal issues, which usually women face, must be considered important. It can be done only when these issues and problems will transform and lifted into social affairs but the social feminism explains that it is hard to explain the oppression of women because of the tension everywhere. Liberal feminism is a western philosophy that emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries. In this time, a great social change was observed in the society. The feudal society was changed into the industrial society. The major social movements were there

like labor, abolitionist, and feminist movements. It focuses on the equal rights of women as men. It mainly focuses on the equality of the sexes through political and legal reform. It works with the mainstream society to integrate women into that structure (Haradhan, 2022). Additionally, it discusses about the equality on the political side as if they are eligible to give vote, other rights like marriage, pay, work, education etc. In short, liberal feminism demands their rights to perform the active role in society as their male counterparts. It is not group based; it gives rights to the every individual and both the genders, men and women (Baumgardner, 2011).

2.2.1 Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism is the oldest version of the feminism. Many liberal feminists are of the opinion that it is still unfulfilled in the world. Many critics argue about the differences of socio-economic status, race and sexual orientation. Adam Smith (1723–90) asserts that societies perform better if the individuals are free and independent. They feel free to cope with the economic system that is not dependent on the societies, competitive markets. It focuses on the value of freedom and emphasizes on the freedom of individuals (Brunell & Burkett, 2021). Warrant (1996) expresses the liberal feminism is the equality of both men and women. It is also the approach of assessing the laws and social practice that liberal feminism sustained. In addition, it talks about the women's ability to participate in the issues like marriage and divorce, laws for owning property. She has a right to access the quality education like men. It also claims that women are equal to men and have same worth so they should be provided by the equal opportunities to prove their worth to public. Therefore, they should be given equal opportunity to discuss the political matters and public policy. Lesbian, Marxist and Radical feminists criticizes the liberal feminism. Marxists feminists were concerned about the capitalism as causing the sexual division of labor in the family. On the other hand, liberal feminism discusses about the equal opportunity for women in the politics and at social level. It tried to change the social norms of females and males in the society. It also argues about increasing the role of the man to look after the family and provide the care. Ponthieux & Meurs (2015) remarked that the 20th century witnessed that there is a differentiating in earnings of a women and men. They are less paid as compared to men. On the other hand, they have to share the unpaid work at home as well.

Ritzer and Stepnisky (2017) remarked that men and women are inequitably positioned in the society. Women have less authority, rarer economic resources than man does. In addition, they have less self-actualization prospects than man does. This gender inequality creates conflict in the society. In this regard, Schwartzman (2006) remarked that liberal feminism is focusing on the system of power by assessing the experience of a woman that belongs to that specific structure. By trying to know about the grounds of the gender oppression and subjugation, many feminists' movements emerged to solve the issue of this oppression and gender inequality. The basic purpose is to eliminate the gender oppression to achieve the gender equality. In all these efforts, liberal feminism is considered the prominent feminist movement. Nehere (2016) is of the view that liberal feminisms bring the revolutionary change. Liberal feminist scholars' focuses on the values like, practicing the capabilities on social level, self-actualization, and guarantee of the legal rules. The view of some feminists about the gender inequality is that it is socially constructed false mechanism to manipulate the rights of a woman. Kameri-Mbote (2016) stated that liberal feminism has dragged women to public spheres because of the inherent political demonstration of women in this liberal feminism. It becomes the focal point to attain the equality for the participation of women in political affairs. so; it seeks for the ways of laws through which it suppresses the obstacles of women's liberty. In this way, they can get better job opportunities,

better education and playing roles in political agendas. Likewise, Enyew and Mihrete (2018) asserted that various feminists' movements emerged in various times to discuss and eliminate the gender oppression. In all the feminist's movements, it is considered as the dominant movement that works on the equal rights of women and the place in society

2.2.2 Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminism portrays the contribution of the capitalist class and patriarchy in the victimization of the women. It discusses about the social oppression. The dominated role of males in the society is causing harassment and exploitation of women. The Marxist feminists unveil the behaviors and ways via women is suppressed by the male dominant society. In addition, it pays attention to the idea that women could be liberated only in case of the elimination of the capitalism. It talks about the social, political, economic and cultural rights of women; and to provide equal opportunities to progress and flourish in the society. According to the Marxist feminist, only males are not responsible to exploit the rights of women. There are many other departments that work together to humiliate women and suppress their rights. Both males and class victimize women. Holmstrom (2002) is of the opinion that Marxists feminists comprehend the suppression of a woman in a sound and methodical way. It also coordinates with the class and sex. It also considers class as the basic part of the women's life. In addition, different Marxists feminists like Nancy Holmstrom, Juliet Mitchell discusses about the different dimensions of the Marxists feminism. There are multiple perspectives and reasons for women mistreatment. A woman is dehumanized in a male dominant society. Under the influence of patriarchy, women are bound and have less chance to enjoy their freedom and rights. They are bound to follow various customs and traditions at every stage of their lives. Marxist Feminists such as Margaret Benton and Peggy Morton mainly focused and relied on the analysis of both the productive and unproductive labor. They analyzed the modes of oppression at the site of production note the effect that housework has on women in a capitalist system. They examine the issues against women's oppression with capitalist class society and the capitalist modes of production. Kazemiyan (2012), in his study reveals that women are deprived of their rights and they are dependent on man for their finances. They also lack the identity, personal space; they are victims of the forced marriages and are tortured by man at every stage of her life. Her choices are oppressed due to her female gender. Still she is dreaming to get equality in the society. Wiyatni (2012) stated that the unpaid reproductive labor is another type of oppression by men. They argued that marriage is a religious foundation that enforced women's subordination to men and to capital. They are forced to take care of the children for whom they paid nothing and the family is the place where she is subordinate to men. All these things create a gender gap in status and the value that is not fair. Women in society must have the basic dignity and the collective ownership in the society. Utaminingsih (2017) is of the opinion that women are treated as slaves and Marxist feminism unveils all the traditional ways to suppress the individuality of a woman. Men treat women as their commodity goods that can be utilized by anyone especially by men. Moreover, Indris (2010) remarked that Marxist feminism concentrates on the element of the participation of women as a whole in eliminating the oppression that occurred for the women and executing the production. This portrays that this movement us for the equality of the women and her rights as men. It is a struggle for the freedom and the position of women in the society as men.

2.2.3 Social Feminism

Socialist feminism starts in the 1960 and 1970s. It mainly focuses on the interconnectivity of the capitalism and the patriarchy. For social feminists; it is quite odd that women are exploited by the

dual system of the society. The patriarchy defines the ways and techniques of the organization of the society. It is based on the domination of a man and the subordination of women. Capitalism organizes the economy and society. On the other hand, patriarchy has the impact on the political, economic, social cultural institutions and the practices of the daily life (Gardiner, 2019). The exploitation of women can be seen everywhere. In the labor market, women are paid less than men. It is questionable thing that more importance is being given to the production as compared to reproduction. Moreover, the domestic and care work is also the responsibility of a woman. Household chores are also completed by women for free. For social feminists, all these things come under the exploitation of women (Baumgardner, 2011). Socialist feminism discusses and advocates for the social rights of women. William L. O'Neill in 1969 introduced the term social feminism to improve the social condition and rights of a woman and children. Sometimes, it also links with the materialist feminism and analyze the social practices of the capitalism or other means of productions. It is because it affects the women and the relations of gender and class. Thus, socialist feminism discusses on how do the gender relations focuses on the class relations (Cobble & Dorothy, 2005) Most social feminists discuss the framework, which clearly questions the productive and reproductive relations of women in the society. The focus is on understanding the relations that constitutes gender and the way in which this procedure articulates the formation of class and the class action. Krupskaya (1899) argues the separation between the work place, private home and family. Socialist feminists in their campaigns demanded the equal wages for women as men. They argued that why women paid less as compared to men. They emphasize on the social reproduction and the economic reproduction. In addition, they developed a view of women's gender oppression as interactive contribution towards women's oppression. There must not be any gender discrimination in the society Simpson (2009) is of the opinion that, the labor and the hard work of women in the society must be considered as the reproductive work. Socialist feminists from Germany, Italy and France stated that the labor power is a commodity produced in the home. A movement started in Italy to demand the payment for the household chores and the labor. However, it was discouraged because of the downfall of the capitalism. Thus, women is the main subject of this discussion of the unpaid labor and they must feel empowered and realize their own strength as the collective force to detach the capitalist system that exploited them. Quite similarly, Muslikhati (2004) argues that feminists realized that there are thousands of reasons of injustice that can be observed in the families and the societies. The way of the analysis of this injustice is different. In addition, Utaminingsih (2017) opines that social feminism examines the division of labor between men and women. it sets men as the ruler of the public sphere whereas women are confined to household chores and labor for 24 hours. She has to bear the entire workload for the whole family.

2.2.4 Radical Feminism

Radical feminism emerged during the second wave of the feminism in 1960s in western countries mainly in the France and Canada under the social movements as student movement, hippie and civil rights movements but women are still considered as second-class activists. It develops in the opposition to Marxists and liberal feminism. It discusses the cause of the patriarchal oppression. Radical feminists' states that, in our global society men are the oppressors of the class of women. In addition, due to the patriarchal society women is considered as other to the males and it is happening systematically (Rampton, 2015). Radical feminism considered women as the collective group and still oppressed by men. It mentions and discusses that patriarchy is a system, which is found in all societies at all times. Radical feminists discuss the root cause of the women oppression.

They try to formulate new ways to think about the relationship of men and women (Haradhan, 2022). Moreover, it talks about the deepest form of suppression of women and the ways via which men control the body of a woman. Male uses females as objects and use her body for their own desires. Radical feminism portrays and tries to find the new ways to free women from the slavery and grasp of a man. In addition, it also discusses about the role of a woman as mother and reproduction. To control the body of a woman means to control the humanity.

According to the radical feminism, women should understand the importance of her body and free themselves to fulfill their needs. Aboudaif (2012) stated that radical feminism empowers women of all races, ethnicity. It celebrates the reproductive system of a woman and the sexuality in multiple joyous ways. It provides new dimensions to celebrate and understand the power of sexuality. Radical feminists discussed that the women have to play the role of wives, mothers and patriarchy think and convinced women that it is the role of the man that they are actually playing the role of a wife and a mother otherwise they would be considered abnormal. According to Marilyn French (1985), radical feminism interprets that all forms of the oppression comes from the patriarchy. She stated that early, human beings were living in the nature and soon they realized that it is no more behaving like a mother. They left it and this alienation produced the enmity. Man became frightened of the females that they can reproduce the nature and this is the reason they tried to dominate them. Aboudaif (2012) emphasizes that to eliminate the oppression in the world it is mandatory to develop the androgynous society in which feminine and masculine values are integrated. Re- evaluation is necessary to create such a society. On the other hand, Mary Daly (2006), a radical feminist rejects the thought of the androgynous culture because she thinks that man creates the feminine values. She states that women should think to free themselves from the traditional gender and the role, which is burdened by the society. She has shown her concern about the capacities of a woman which have been demolished under the patriarchal society. Women must reject the patriarchal society, activities and the values created to suppress her.

According to Adrienne Rich (1976), a radical feminist poet expressed that the reproduction system is not the oppression. It is basically the source of power for women. It is producing the relationship between mother and the child. On the other hand, this relation put both mother and the child under the men's control. She states that this motherhood should not be the burden on her and she should feel free to perform her activities. She must have the choice to accept or rejects these limitations. In addition, Alison Jaggar (1983), radical feminists stated that, it is not only the biology that defines the women's identity. She rejected that biology is the main factor of suppression for women and declines the fact that biology is the determiner in the radical theory. Furthermore, she remarked that if women are given a chance to feel her as a priority, she would not be oppressed and considered her on the position of power and domination. Jean Elshtain (1981 225-286) rejects the idea of considering women as innocent beings and men as superior beings. She is not in the favor that men are superior and thus radical feminists should not attack the patriarchy. She discusses in the favor of patriarchy and for women who wants to play their roles in society and politics. The radical feminists mistake the idea of men over women. Likewise, she remarked that we both possess the qualities of female and male beings. Sometimes, it is difficult for a man to tolerate the qualities of females that is why they try to get rid of them. Similarly, some females do not accept and absorb their masculine qualities. Thus, it is wrong that females are good and moral beings while men are evil and immoral.

2.2.5 Material Feminism

Marxist feminism is the most developed feminist theory, which highlights the relationship between the women's oppression and the capitalism. It explores the ways in which women are exploited like owning the public property. To some extent, it is similar to the social feminism. In addition, it focuses on the role of economic and material factors in shaping the gender in equality. It emphasizes how economic and social structures such as patriarchal, capitalism interconnect to disadvantage women. Material feminism portrays the capitalism and the patriarchy as the focal aspect of the women oppression. They argue that the discussion of economic disparities and unequal distribution of resources is essential to achieve gender equality. This thought and perspective contrasts with other forms of feminism, which may focus more on the cultural or social aspects of gender in equality. Similarly, Material feminism argues and questions the capitalist systems impact on gender inequality. It explores how capitalism exploit women's labor and how its various economic systems reduce gender discrimination. It also describes the women's control over their bodies and reproductive choices. It includes their health, birth control, abortion. It analyzes these structures of discrimination and contributes to the advancements of the women's rights and gender equity. Moreover, it is particularly originated from the work of the Christine Delphi. It focuses on the social change rather than seeking transformation within the capitalist society. It is also closed to the Marxism. Many of the critics criticized her. She remarked that the materialism is the only theory that discusses about the oppression as the basic reality of the society. The marriage is the labor contract, the reason for the oppression of women. Here, the gender is considered as the social construct. They need the materialism to inquire their situation. Moreover, it also shares the concept that how women and men of other societies, races, ethnicities kept under the lower economic status due to the imbalance of power (Rampton, 2015).

The material feminism is highlighted in the work of British and French Feminists Rosemary Hennessy finds out the history of material feminism in it. In their opinion, Marxism has to be changed to be able to explain the sexual division of labor. It is a positive substitute to both feminism and Marxism feminism. It fails to include women of different classes, ethnicities and sexualities (Munro, 2013). According to Aziz et al (2011), material feminism pays attention to the condition of the material. It plays a vital role in the social production of the gender and addresses the issues that how material feminism kept both the genders of different race, ethnicities in a lower condition and status. When it comes to the discussion of the women it argues that Women should be free from all the ideologies and confined to home, she deserves better work, profession and the position in the society. She should be paid for the house chores and motherhood. They must be provided good education, they must have a right to pursue carrier, and they must have access to get wealthy as men. If these things are not present in the society then society is not dealing them because of equality.

3. Representation of Feminism in Postcolonial literature

It is essential to elaborate the central ideas in the postcolonial writings. It has many common themes and motifs like cultural dominance, racism, racial discrimination, inequality, hybridity. Post-colonial writers tried to portray the thematic concepts in their writings, which are connected to both colonizers and colonized people. In South Africa, the racial discrimination was prominent. It is also evident in the 'The Groups Areas Act', 'Immorality Act', 'The Population Registration Act', 'Bantu Authorities Act', and Coordination of Documents Act. All these acts are the proofs that they are restricting and discriminating the colonized from the ruling white (Kirsti & Bohata, 2004). In the same way, language plays a vital role in subjugation of colonized people and most

of the writers have shown this in their writings. Colonizers often impose their language, attitudes on the colonized people. They tried to damage them emotionally, morally and economically too. They struggle to get a prominent place in the society and it becomes the reason of their identity crisis too. They want to save their tradition and adopt the societal norms for their survival. Many prominent figures addressed this issue in many ways. They mixed both local and the imposed language to portray the authoritative attitudes.

There are many reflections of the post- colonial literature. Many theorists examine the literature after the colonialism. Said, Chakravorty Spivak, Fanon, Homi Bhabha and others developed the connection between the post- colonial literature and history, politics, philosophy and literary traditions, and its importance in the present-day society. Moreover, some filmmakers also tried to depict the colonial and post –colonial, scenario, behaviors, challenges and difficulties in their writings. It includes Satyajit Ray, Shyam Benegal, Deepa Mehta are few popular figures who contributed in the post-colonialism. In addition, music also displays the cultural identity and in postcolonial countries, pop music unified with the western sounds the best example of the identity and the values of the post colonialism (Thamarana, 2015).

The migration literature in post-colonialism has its own importance. It is defined as the movement of any being from one place to another (Oxford Advanced Dictionary, 7th ed). It truly reflects the time of migration. Prominent figures like those that Homi Bhabha and Edward said contributed a lot in portraying and shaping the migration literature. The ways the migrant people suffer with their human identities, the efforts they put to cope with the new life and the place, insecurities and the way they suffer from the communication problem are the noticeable themes in the migrant literature. In addition, many migrants left their land and choose another spot to start their life. Lebanese, Arabs and Palestinian poets left their land willingly or forcefully after their occupation by the colonizers. All the migrants struggled to regain their cultural identity. Prominent figures like James Joyce, Milan Kundra, Joseph Conrad produced the migrant literature to discuss the various narratives of the cultural, social, economic and political aspects of the lives of migrants. Jajja (2013) is of the opinion that colonized people were considered as inferior and others. They quest for their own identity and culture. They continue to struggle in order to gain their value and place in the society. They were considered as lower beings in the society. Building on the previous idea, in Shafaks “The Island of missing Trees (2021)” she depicts the biculturalism in the migrants they experience ethnic, colonialism, racial, identity crisis. Therefore, they adopt the current culture, norms to adjust in the society. Displacement, nostalgia, alienation and assimilation are the prominent themes that are pictured in Elif Shafaks writing. Iqbal et al ((2023) remarked that interactions of different cultures are the way to form the multiculturalism. Because of the multiculturalism, the issue for the quest for identity raises. Sutari & Laila (2022) claimed in her research that identity is shaped due to the nationality, culture, language and religion and it is damaged due to the change in all these things. Shafak dealt with all these issues in her work. In addition, Houria (2019) in her work asserts that Shafaks work displays the theme of hybridity and Shafak has chosen her characters to illustrate all these things. Her characters change drastically for their survival. In Shafaks point of view, the identity is flexible and fluid. According to Young (2001), critics are of the view that the language of the post-colonialism change through new forms of social collectivity. It needs explanation for the clarity of the concept. The new forms and ways demand new ways of describing. The word post in post colonialism depicts the two different meanings in one compound word.” Moore (2001) remarked that the concept of the post colonialism

is considered as the utopian and inadequate. Many critics use the term post-colonial without hyphen because they considered it as less suggestive.

4. Post-colonialism Feminism in Turkish Literature

Feminist thought in Turkey cannot be understood in isolation from its postcolonial predicament. The “civilizing mission” under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s reforms positioned women as bearers of modernity, yet often under male-defined conditions (Göle, 2010). Early Republican literature portrayed the “modern Turkish woman” as both liberated and shriveled; a paradox that continues to haunt contemporary narratives. Elif Shafak’s *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006) exemplifies this tension. The novel juxtaposes the stories of Turkish and Armenian women, entangling feminist concerns with postcolonial reckoning. Shafak’s prose unravels silences surrounding gendered violence and national amnesia, inviting readers to question whose emancipation the Republic truly served (Özlem, 2022). Similarly, Latife Tekin’s *Dear Shameless Death* (*Sevgili Arsız Ölüm*, 1983) channels magical realism to depict rural women negotiating modernity and tradition. Tekin’s feminist voice is resolutely local: she displaces Eurocentric feminist norms and foregrounds the lived realities of marginalized Anatolian women (Karaca, 2021).

The postcolonial as stated by Bhabha “in-between” the hybridity of East and West that Homi Bhabha (1994) theorizes; is also reframed in Turkish feminist fiction. This liminality turns into a feminist tool. In *Black Milk* (2007), Elif Shafak challenges Western feminist scripts that universalize women’s experiences by autobiographically grappling with the difficulties of motherhood, work, and cultural belonging. Aslı Erdoğan and other more recent voices extend these narratives into censorship and exile zones, emphasizing how feminist subjectivities oppose both neoliberal global feminism and authoritarian nationalism (Yildiz, 2023). In *The City in Crimson Cloak* (1998), Erdoğan reclaims the fractured self as a subject of postcolonial critique by focusing on female estrangement and bodily vulnerability.

In works like *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006), Shafak uses intergenerational female characters to foreground how personal histories intersect with suppressed national traumas, such as the Armenian genocide, which the Turkish state has long denied. By positioning women as custodians of contested memory, Shafak subverts the patriarchal nationalist myth that women’s primary duty is to embody the idealized, homogenous nation. Instead, her female protagonists become agents of unsettling questions, connecting gender justice to historical reckoning. Through her hybrid narratives, Shafak also challenges Western feminist assumptions that often universalize women’s oppression while neglecting postcolonial complexities. In *Black Milk* (2007), an autobiographical exploration of motherhood, creativity, and depression, she resists the imported liberal feminist ideal that self-fulfillment lies solely in rejecting motherhood or domesticity. Rather than framing women’s choices as binaries like mother or artist, tradition or modernity, Shafak locates Turkish women’s struggles within a cultural context shaped by imperial residues and authoritarian secularism. Her candid reflections expose how feminist subjectivities in Turkey must negotiate multiple, often conflicting, expectations that are simultaneously local and global.

Shafak is also a crucial example for studying the global circulation of Turkish feminist literature because of her multilingual, transnational identity and her propensity for self-translation. Although her writings are well-received in Western literary markets, this response also calls into question how her stories are presented for non-Turkish audiences who are eager for “exotic” Eastern tales presented in cosmopolitan English. Critics have argued about whether Shafak’s international fame runs the danger of domesticating her criticism for a global audience or if her prominence serves to elevate perspectives that Turkish nationalist discourse would rather ignore (Özlem, 2022). Because

of this conflict, Shafak's fiction offers a rich environment for analyzing how postcolonial feminist literature traverses international publishing chains without losing its disruptive power. Shafak's novels also illustrate that feminist dissent in Turkey extends beyond the printed page; they provoke public debate and political backlash. Her prosecution under Article 301 for "insulting Turkishness" through the Armenian themes in *The Bastard of Istanbul* highlights how state nationalism polices the gendered boundaries of acceptable speech. This demonstrates that in the Turkish context, feminist fiction does not merely narrate resistance rather it *enacts* it, turning literature into a contested space where memory, gender, and postcolonial identity are continually renegotiated under surveillance.

The evolution of feminist narratives in Turkish fiction demonstrates that literature is not merely a passive reflection of social change but an active agent in interrogating and reshaping the dominant discourse of nationhood. From the early Republican period to today's politically fraught climate, Turkish women writers and gender-conscious male authors have persistently challenged the patriarchal frameworks that claim to "liberate" women while simultaneously prescribing their place within the nation's symbolic order. By foregrounding the contradictions embedded within Turkey's modernity project, these narratives reveal how the so-called emancipation of women under the Republic often masked new forms of control. The "modern Turkish woman" of Atatürk's vision was constructed as a nationalist ideal, yet her autonomy remained conditional upon her conformity to state-sanctioned norms of secularism, morality, and domesticity. Contemporary feminist fiction exposes this paradox, showing how women continue to negotiate freedom within structures that promise equality but reproduce hierarchy.

After thoughtful critical enquiry into the existing Turkish literature, the revelations further complicate global feminist discourse by revealing the inadequacy of imposing Western feminist templates onto postcolonial contexts. Writers like Elif Shafak and Latife Tekin do not simply echo liberal feminist slogans; they situate questions of gender within the hybrid spaces of post-Ottoman identity, memory, and everyday life. This approach unsettles the binary of East versus West, instead carving out feminist subjectivities that are historically rooted yet open to transnational dialogue. Mohanty (1988) argued, universalizing the category of "woman" risks flattening diverse lived realities, a warning these Turkish authors heed by centering local histories, class divides, and cultural specificities in their works. Importantly, this study argues that the feminist potential of Turkish fiction lies not only in its critique of patriarchy but also in its capacity to imagine alternative futures. By voicing silenced histories, whether through magic realism, intergenerational memory, or hybrid narrative forms, these novels reclaim narrative space for women's self-definition. In doing so, they resist both nationalist erasures and Orientalist misreading, positioning Turkish feminist literature as an indispensable contribution to postcolonial thought. In an era where Turkey's democratic institutions face increasing strain, censorship looms, and gender-based violence persists, the role of literature as a site of dissent and resilience becomes even more urgent. These novels remind us that feminist struggle is not static but dynamic; it is a constant renegotiation of what it means to belong, to remember, and to resist. From Empire to Republic, Turkish fiction testifies that the battle for gender justice is inseparable from the broader struggle to decolonize the mind and reimagine the nation itself.

5. Conclusion

Turkish feminist fiction does not merely echo Western feminist struggles; it reconfigures them in the shadows of empire and nationhood. By writing across silences, Turkish authors construct a literary genealogy that unsettles patriarchal modernity and Western hegemony alike. Turkish

feminist fiction does not simply mirror Western feminist struggles; instead, it reshapes them in the long shadow cast by empire and the complex demands of nationhood. By giving voice to what has often been silenced, Turkish authors have built a powerful literary tradition that disrupts both patriarchal modernity at home and Western assumptions about feminism abroad. This study argues that approaching these works as postcolonial feminist texts reveals just how forceful fiction can be in commenting on, resisting, and reimagining what it means to be a gendered citizen. In Turkey's shifting sociopolitical landscape, where old hierarchies persist and new ones emerge, literature remains a vital space for feminist voices to question the tidy borders drawn between tradition and modernity, East and West, self and nation. Looking ahead, future researchers could productively compare Turkish feminist narratives with those from other post-Ottoman or Middle Eastern contexts to trace both the shared threads and the distinctive ways these literatures negotiate questions of gender and national identity. It would also be valuable to explore how Turkish feminist novels travel across languages and markets: how they are translated, packaged, and received in the West, and whether these global pathways help amplify or water down their critical edge. Finally, scholars might broaden their focus beyond printed fiction to include how feminist ideas are expressed through digital storytelling, social media campaigns, or popular television dramas, capturing how new platforms are shaping feminist discourse in Turkey today.

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