

A GENDER-BASED STUDY OF NİHAL YEĞİNOBALI'S  
PSEUDO-TRANSLATION *GENÇ KIZLAR*

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## Thesis Abstract

### Nil Alt, “A Gender-Based Study of Nihal Yeğınobalı’s Pseudo-translation *Genç Kızlar*”

In the first part of this study, the social and cultural reasons behind Nihal Yeğınobalı’s novel *Genç Kızlar* being published as a pseudo-translation are explored based on the concept of gender. The ideas of the translation studies scholars who conduct research and theorize within the area where Translation Studies and Gender interact are employed and the major concepts on which these theories have been built are reconsidered on the basis of Yeğınobalı’s pseudo-translation case. It is claimed that pseudo-translation is a translation studies concept capable of providing valuable clues concerning the social and cultural conjuncture of its time as well as a methodological tool. In this respect, it is further asserted that Yeğınobalı has gained a reputation through this very case of pseudo-translation in the Turkish literary system and later, with the aid of this reputation, she has been accepted as an author who produces work on gender-related issues.

In the second part of this study, Yeğınobalı’s novels are studied in the light of the repeated motifs she uses in all her works and it is discussed whether or not Yeğınobalı does have a ‘feminist approach’ as perceived by some Turkish literary authorities.

Finally, in the conclusion chapter, the results of this gender-based case study are pointed out and it is emphasized that the concepts produced within the scope of Translation Studies as well as the methodologies developed in this field should not be confined within the limits of binary oppositions. It is concluded that a multi-dimensional approach would have a notable contribution to the international and interdisciplinary credibility of Translation Studies.

## Tez Özeti

Nil Alt, “Nihal Yeğınobalı’nın Sözde-Çevirisi *Genç Kızlar* Üzerine Toplumsal-Cinsiyet Kavramı Çerçevesinde Bir İnceleme”

Bu çalışmanın birinci bölümünde Nihal Yeğınobalı’nın *Genç Kızlar* isimli kitabını sözde-çeviri kisvesi altında yayınlamasının arkasındaki sosyal ve kültürel nedenler toplumsal cinsiyet kavramı çerçevesinde ortaya konulmaktadır. Bu inceleme yapılırken Çeviribilim ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet dallarının kesiştiği alanlarda kuramlar geliştiren Çeviribilimciler’in fikirlerinden yararlanılmış ve bu kuramların temelindeki kavramlar Yeğınobalı’nın sözde çeviri örneği temelinde yeniden gözden geçirilmiştir. Sözde çevirinin sosyal ve kültürel konjonktüre yönelik değerli ipuçları verebilen bir çeviri kavramı olarak değerlendirilmesinin yanı sıra yöntemsel bir araç olarak da kullanılabileceği iddia edilmiştir. Bu noktadan hareketle, Yeğınobalı’nın Türk edebi sisteminde bu sözde-çeviri vakasıyla bilinirlik kazandığı, daha sonra bu bilinirliğin yardımıyla toplumsal cinsiyet üzerine eser üreten bir yazar olarak kabul gördüğü savunulmaktadır.

Çalışmanın ikinci bölümünde ise Yeğınobalı’nın yazdığı romanlar, kendisinin eserlerinde tekrar eden temel kavramların ışığında incelenip Yeğınobalı’nın Türk edebi çevrelerince algılandığı üzere gerçekten ‘feminist’ bir yaklaşıma sahip olup olmadığı tartışılmaktadır.

Sonuç bölümünde ise toplumsal cinsiyet temelli bu vaka incelemesinin sonuçları üzerinden çeviribilim çerçevesinde üretilen kuramların ve geliştirilen yöntemsel araçların ikilik zıtlıklar arasına hapsedilmemeleri gerektiği düşüncesi vurgulanmaktadır. Bu kavramlar ve olayları çok boyutlu bir yaklaşımla incelemenin çeviribilimin uluslar arası ve disiplinler arası kabul edilirliği açısından ciddi bir gelişime katkıda bulunabileceği sonucuna varılmaktadır.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Pseudo-Translation: An Agent of Change

Change is an integral and a permanent component of culture and it is inevitable for cultural systems to go through certain changes in the course of time. Indeed, lack of change in a particular cultural system throughout a remarkably long period of time makes that system decline to a position of marginal importance. If a cultural system cannot keep up with the changing world, after a while it becomes dated and loses its function in that culture. However, ironically, cultural systems are also inclined to *resist* changes, especially changes of a radical kind, due to their attempt to retain the stability they have obtained. So, on the one hand, change is a must for a culture to stay alive. On the other hand, the culture itself is inclined to maintain the status quo.

An argument which has been proposed in order to conciliate these two conflicting tendencies alleges that “new models do manage to make their way into an extant cultural repertoire in spite of the system’s inherent resistance to changes if and when those novelties are introduced under disguise”(Toury 2005: 3).

As Gideon Toury explains, planning has always been a major force in culture and its dynamics and it is often closely related to struggles for domination. It is the disguising techniques that act as a shield against the possibility of losing these struggles (2002: 148-149).

According to Toury, an astounding example of cultural manipulation is pseudo-translations. Pseudo-translations are original texts which take advantage of

features associated with translations and are put forward as genuine products to achieve the introduction of new options into a culture while neutralizing many dissensions that might have emanated if the same innovations had been offered in a forthright, overt vein. (Toury n.d., URL)

In many cases, an effort to disguise novelties as translational importations is observed. I will try to discuss the cultural, social and at times ideological reasons that encourage the use of pseudo-translation as a resistant and subversive means capable of challenging the established concepts and attitudes. Nihal Yeğinoğlu's *Genç Kızlar* provides us with an unusual pseudo-translation case and a thorough study of this case gives us significant clues as to the gender-based social and cultural norms of the time. Furthermore, a theoretical discussion on this case allows us to question notions such as originality, primariness and production in the context of gender with a multi-dimensional approach which enables deep-rooted binary oppositions and established concepts to be reconsidered.

### An Examples of Pseudo-Translation from a Different Culture

As Gideon Toury claims, text-producers are often aware of the positions that the process and product of translation occupy in their culture. Sometimes, they even create their texts as if they were actually translated. According to Toury's definition, it is texts which have been presented as translations with no corresponding source-texts in other languages ever having existed – hence no factual “transfer operations” and translation relationship – that go under the name of pseudo-translations, or fictitious translations (1995: 40). He points to the very interesting paradox that a text can be defined as a pseudo-translation only after its

secret is discovered. Consequently, when the texts can be opened to discussion as pseudo-translations, this indicates that the “position they were intended to have, and once had in the culture which hosts them has already changed” (ibid). So discussions on a pseudo-translation case needs to be conducted with a retrospective awareness, not to mention the significance of proper contextualization if we are willing to arrive at historically valid conclusions.

Taking a look at some of the examples Toury provides us with would reveal that “the most significant aspect of the production and the distribution of texts as if they were translations is the fact that this constitutes a convenient way of introducing novelties into a culture” which are often received with greater tolerance (1995: 41).

### Book of Mormon

One case Toury examines is the *Book of Mormon* (1830): The introduction of this text by Joseph Smith Jr. as a translation to the American culture of the time gave birth to a brand new church. The *Book of Mormon* was claimed to be a genuine translation from an archaic language, so-called “reformed Egyptian”. American culture did not adopt this innovation as a whole. Rather, a relatively small group chose to believe in this book and formed what became known as “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”. As Toury puts it,

The new Church developed not only due to a marked refusal to lift the veil connected with the *Book of Mormon*, but actually due to an ongoing struggle to improve the disguise and fortify it; in other words, make the Book look more and more like a genuine religious book, which - according to



previous traditions in the Anglo-American cultural space - had to be a translation. (2005: 12)

Joseph Smith Jr. who aimed at establishing a third Testament made use of the tradition of Bible translation into English. Toury claims that looking at the way the book was designed, it is seen that the book was modelled on the English translations of the Bible in terms of format. Despite the detailed story about how he received the golden plates and translated them, on the title-page of the first edition of the *Book of Mormon*, he refers to himself as author and proprietor. Only in later editions was the reference changed to translator. In the same vein, references were later added to prophecies mentioned in the Book, which had come true, as so many missionary groups had been doing in their versions of the New Testament (and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has indeed adopted a strong missionary orientation) (ibid: 11-12).

As Toury argues it, “many developed ‘romantic ideas’ towards it, which may serve as a partial explanation for Smith’s selection of his ‘source language’; especially as a substantial part of the truly biblical stories took place in Egypt or in connection with it anyway” (ibid: 16) Although many people were aware of this discovery, most of them knew nothing as to how this stone or the inscriptions on it looked like. Later on, when Smith was asked to show some of the Egyptian characters he had seen on the original golden plates, he produced a piece of paper which was totally meaningless; in other words, what he wrote down was certainly not hieroglyphs. Recalling that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints still exists and has committed proponents today, it can be asserted that the pseudo-translation of the *Book of Mormon* managed to create a long-term impact on American society. Another innovation the *Book of Mormon* introduced to the

culture at that time was that it was considered to be “the first long Yankee narrative that owes nothing to English literary fashions [...] its sources are absolutely American” (Brodie 1963, 67). So here we can clearly see a situation where pseudo-translation implicitly functions as a cultural element this time, reinforcing national settlements.

Toury aptly notes that “the decision to present a text as a translation, let alone compose it with that aim in mind always suggests an implied act of subordination, namely to a culture and language which are considered prestigious, important or dominant in any other way” (1995: 42). So the intention behind presenting an originally produced text as a translation is to benefit from the superiority attributed to the pseudo target-culture and influence its reception in a positive manner. Furthermore, Toury mentions an added value which possibly emerges due to the “status attributed to translation at large, or, more likely, to a certain translational tradition, in the domestic culture” (ibid). He also discusses why there has been less censorship applied to translation when compared to original works, and claims that one reason was that the work which had been produced in a different language and culture seemed less threatening. Secondly, there is no way of reaching the author who holds the actual responsibility for what s/he has written.

He gives an example from Hebrew literature which is very similar to the situation of the Turkish literature in the same era: He indicates that the pseudo-translations, mainly from English, “have a great role in establishing particular sectors of non-canonized Hebrew literature of the 1960s, most notably westerns, novels of espionage, romances and pornographic novels” (ibid). He points out that if these texts were to be presented as original works they would certainly have been considered inappropriate.

## Turkish Examples of Pseudo-Translation

Pseudo-translation was employed as a means of establishing the popular literature system in Turkey. “For example, as a result of the rise in science-fiction publishing in the 1970s and 1980s, there were about 200 books translated into Turkish” (Mollamustafaoğlu1991: 64)<sup>1</sup>. However, most of them were slipshod works done for merely commercial purposes. These novels were originally based on scientific principle or at least reasonable speculation on the world of the future. However, when they were presented to the Turkish audience in translation, some parts were added by the translator. These parts were significantly astonishing in that most of them involved pornographic elements (ibid.).

Beginning from the 1950s and moving on to the1980s, science-fiction books with plenty of carnal and love-related features can be regarded as examples of this implementation. As far as these hybrid texts are concerned, it is not so easy to draw a strict line between an original work and a translation. Some parts of these books are translated directly and the additions are originally produced by the translator (or shall we call her/him the author at this point?). Kemal Tahir’s (an eminent Turkish author) translation of a short science-fiction book written by Murray Leinster is a good example where alternations of diverse types were applied. Actually, as Özdeş puts it, we might contend that this sci-fi novel translated into Turkish as “*Boşluk Korsanları*” could be regarded as Kemal Tahir’s own book” considering the number of pages he added to the original and “Kemal Tahir can, in a sense, be accepted as

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<sup>1</sup> 1970’ler ile 1980’ler arasında Türkçe’ye çevrilen yaklaşık 200 bilim kurgu kitabı var.

the first science-fiction writer in Turkish literature” (1991: 118)<sup>2</sup> But what are the criteria for us to deem a textual production an original work in this case?

Another example capable of carrying the above enumerated questions to an even more complex point is Kemal Tahir’s Mike Hammer translations. Mike Hammer’s creator Mickey Spillane had become renowned with his first book *I, The Jury*. It was published by E. P. Dutton in 1947, introducing Mike Hammer, the character who would dominate many books to come, to the world. Between 1950 and 1996, Mickey wrote and published thirteen Mike Hammer books, each of which sold millions (cf., Milliyet: 2006). However, the number of Mike Hammer books published in Turkey is surprisingly higher than the number of original books written! The reason is that after the translation of the whole series had been completed, Kemal Tahir, Oğuz Alpçin and Afif Yesari continued to write the new adventures of Mike Hammer with pseudonyms (cf., Türkeş 2002). It did not take long before these detective stories, published by the Çağlayan Publishing House with erotic covers, occupied a canonized status within the popular literature genre in Turkey. Kemal Tahir continued the series with a pseudonym: F.M. Following Kemal Tahir, Afif Yesari did not even bother to hide behind an American male author’s persona, instead he wrote many Mike Hammer books with a Turkish pseudonym, Muzaffer Ulukaya.

Considering the sci-fi books which Kemal Tahir partly translated and partly wrote, the question as to where authenticity begins arises. Are we going to regard *Boşluk Korsanları* as a translation or a pseudo-translation? What about the Mike Hammer series? We know that Kemal Tahir added new parts to the sci-fi book, so

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<sup>2</sup> [...] *Boşluk Korsanları* zaten bir bakıma Kemal Tahir’in kendi romanı sayılır. [...] Bir anlamda, dışı gelir uzunlukta bir bilim-kurgu metnini kaleme alan ilk Türk yazarı olma onuru, Kemal Tahir’e aittir.

does the quantity of additions determine whether a work is translated or pseudo-translated? Are there any specific criteria which help us discover how and where exactly the transmission from authentic to pseudo-translation occurs? The notion of pseudo-translation generates many probing questions and a conceptual scepticism which are groundbreaking in nature. It helps translation scholars to re-think notions like translation, original or pseudo-translation whose definitions are mostly not questioned. This approach, undermining the alleged opposition between production and reproduction, paves the way for a healthier consideration of translation studies concepts in the light of cultural, historical and ideological contexts. Furthermore, close examinations of pseudo-translation cases are capable of presenting the researcher with a wide range of sociological, cultural and at times ideological assets of the particular time period. This allows her/him to widen the boundaries of translation studies by conducting work that incorporates other disciplines into translation studies. More importantly, research on pseudo-translation reveals how crucial a role translation can play in the course of some cases, allowing the establishment of healthy propositions on the basis of observations.

With the information provided above, it has been revealed that the use of pseudo-translation in Turkish literature cannot be reduced to the *Genç Kızlar* case. This disguising technique has actually been a pretty common practice in the Turkish literary system between 1950 and 1980 as far as popular genres such as science-fiction are concerned.

Due to the structure of Turkish society in those years when Yeğınobalı wrote *Genç Kızlar*, social norms did not allow talking or writing about sexual issues overtly. Therefore the pseudo-translations into which sexual elements were diffused such as Mike Hammer books “were selling 100,000 per year, whereas Yaşar

Kemal's novels were selling barely 5,000" (Türkeş 2002).<sup>3</sup> As Toury mentions "new models do manage to make their way into an extant cultural repertoire in spite of the system's inherent resistance to changes if and when those novelties are introduced under disguise; that is, as if they still represented an established option within the culture in question" (2005: 3).

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<sup>3</sup> Yaşar Kemal'in zar zor 5 bin sattığı ülkemizde Mayk Hammer'in kitapları 100 bin satıyordu.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *GENÇ KIZLAR: A PSEUDO-TRANSLATION CASE*

#### Pseudo-Translation: A Tool of Resistance

In Yeğınobalı's *Genç Kızlar*, pseudo-translation served as a resistance tool to the gender roles attributed to women in Turkey of the 1950s. *Genç Kızlar* is Yeğınobalı's first novel which was published about fifty years ago. During her years as a student at the Arnavutköy American School for Girls, she started translating English novels into Turkish. Türkiye Publishing House which then published the most popular books, published her book as a translation because Yeğınobalı convinced the publisher that the actual author of the novel was an American gentleman called Vincent Ewing. She even invented a title for the so-called original novel: *The Curtain Sweeps Down*.

The novel tells the story of young girls from wealthy families studying at a theater academy. Three of these girls fall in love with their new oratory-teacher. The book provides the reader with descriptions which concern the physical and psychological aspects attributed to the girls and the established perceptions about the sexual and romantic relationship between opposite sexes while telling the dramatic love story between the two protagonists: Miss Bee and Gabriel Samson.

The copyright regulations of the time allowed the publisher to publish a book without paying any fees if ten years had passed after the first edition of the original novel. This gave Yeğınobalı the opportunity she had been looking for in order to have her book published as a as a translation. The book was published with

the title *Genç Kızlar* (Young Girls) in Turkish. It became a best-seller in 1951 and is still being sold, its latest edition being published in 2005. Yeğınobalı did not declare that it was actually herself who had written the book for about forty years.

#### Previous Studies on *Genç Kızlar*

This interesting case in Turkish history has been explored by two translation studies scholars from different perspectives. Işın Bengi Öner was the first Turkish scholar to take up Yeğınobalı's example with a descriptive approach (1999: 25-33). She points out that translation plays a significant role as far as the interaction between individuals, societies and cultures is concerned. She draws attention to the meta-discourse which proceeds parallel to the translations made, and informs the reader that some issues related with translation (both as a process and as a product) have merely been described, and left outside the mainstream discourse since they have been mostly found *problematic*. (my emphasis) She asserts that pseudo-translations can be explored within this context as well. Bengi-Öner states that she takes up pseudo-translation as an extreme example and approaches the notion of pseudo-translation with a descriptive method thanks to the opportunities granted to translation scholars by the new paradigm.

She underlines a very important point with regards to pseudo-translation cases which has been a major inspiration for this study:

If this text were a genuine translation, a descriptive study on it would doubtlessly reflect the translation norms adopted by the translator and the findings could be investigated within the scope of theory. However, the text in question here is not a real translation, but a pseudo-translation. It might be questioned whether such a study conducted on this text will be beneficial for translation studies. I believe that it will.



Because while producing such a text, the author will take refuge in the translation norms which were effective and canonized during the period when the text was produced, and she will reflect these norms collectively in her text in order to conceal the fact that the text is indeed not a translation. (ibid, 26)

She analyzes the text by employing Toury's norms: preliminary and operational norms. In the first part, she draws attention to the established perspectives about translation, translator and author in Turkey. of the 1950s'. Furthermore, she aptly notes that Yeğinoğlu's primary purpose in employing pseudo-translation was to have her work published, and the secondary purpose was to ensure a canonized position for her work in the relevant genre and hence the target literary system. Therefore she kept herself and her work distant from each other by disguising herself as an American male (ibid, 28).

While examining the novel in light of the operational norms, she underlines Yeğinoğlu's deliberate use of Anglo-American private names and forms of address, syntactic, semantic and lexical features as well as her depiction of the characters (ibid). Finally, Bengi-Öner asserts that "descriptive works conducted on pseudo-translations can be very useful in unveiling the norms and restrictions prevailing during the particular period when the text had been produced" (ibid, 33).<sup>4</sup>

Sündüz Öztürk Kasar and Serap Gün Birdane delivered a presentation on Yeğinoğlu's *Genç Kızlar* at Süleyman Demirel University as a part of the VI. International Language, Literature and Stylistics Symposium conducted on 1-2 June 2006 in Isparta. Their presentation begins with a brief introduction of the concept of pseudo-translation and gives examples from the world. They then discuss the

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<sup>4</sup> [...] Sözdeçeviriler üzerinde yapılan betimleyici çalışmalar, metnin üretildiği dönemde benimsenmiş normlar ve kısıtlamaları gün ışığına çıkarmada çok yararlı olabilir.

conditions under which the novel was created as well as the sociological, historical and cultural context of the time. They state that

pseudo-translation is source-oriented and the reader is taken away from the center formed by her/his own language and culture, and s/he is carried over to the context of the source language and the source culture. In other words, pseudo-translation strives to carry its reader to a foreign atmosphere for persuasion purposes. (Kasar and Birdane 2006)<sup>5</sup>

However, the deliberate effort to mislead the reader prevents the pseudo-translation from sounding fluent in the pseudo-target language and culture. So, pseudo-translation actually requires the pseudo-translator to be well aware of the translation norms and restrictions that pertain to the target language and target culture. This awareness enables her/his work to be recognized by the target system and to exert influence on it. Yet there is also an endeavour on the translator's part to work with the text as if this alleged target-text emanates from an alleged source text.

As I have quoted above from Bengi-Öner, these deliberate efforts reveal the current translation norms and the cannon of the period. Correspondingly, Kasar and Birdane discuss the conditions under which the text has been produced and its social, historical and cultural context in the second part of their presentation where they provide the reader with a description of the Turkish literary system in the 1950s (2006). With the foundation of the Democratic Party which undertook the role of the opposition party in the Turkish Parliament, the multi-party era in the Turkish Republic's history was initiated. Kasar and Birdane claim that in 1950, when the Democratic Party came to power, the multi-party era brought with it a proliferation of alternative political perspectives. They assert that parallels can be

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<sup>5</sup> Sözde-çeviri kaynak odaklıdır: okur kendi dilinin ve ekininin oluşturduğu merkezden alınıp, kaynak dil ve kaynak ekin bağlamına taşınır. Daha açık söylersek, sözde-çeviri, inandırıcı olabilmek amacıyla, okurunu yabancı bir atmosfere taşımaya özen gösterir.

drawn between this political proliferation and the emergence of alternative literary trends during this period. They also point to the close political connections that developed between the governments of the time and the U.S.A. as well as the consequent cultural influence of the U.S.A. on the Turkish Republic.

Finally, they argue that “*Genç Kızlar*, a novel printed with an imaginary American author’s name on it, is one of the examples that reveals the Turkish youth’s admiration towards the American life style”<sup>6</sup> (ibid). They also examine the extra-textual discourse of the pseudo-translation in question. Their study conducts a textual analysis and enumerates the textual preferences Yeğınobalı made in order to persuade the audience that her novel was indeed a translation, and they make claims based on sociological, cultural and historical inferences. They further discuss the semiotic relations between the novel *Genç Kızlar* and the Turkish movie *Genç Kızlar*. Lastly they underline that the novel has been edited several times in its latest editions in order to make its language more fluent.

Finally, Kasar and Birdane emphasize that pseudo-translation is a strong means to avoid the social and political pressure and enable the insertion of an innovative work into the present literary and cultural system which in turn is capable of making an impact on the traditional ways of perception. Moreover, they emphasize that popular literature products like this pseudo-translation example are sociologically and culturally significant with respect to their quantity rather than quality and conducting research on them would enable it to reach at new conclusions concerning culture and society since these products make up half of the material read in Turkey in the 1950’s.

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<sup>6</sup> Hayali bir Amerikalı yazarın adıyla baskıya verilen *Genç Kızlar* adlı bu roman, 1950’lerde, Türk gençlerinin Amerikan yaşantısına duydukları hayranlığı somutlaştıran örneklerden biri olacaktır.

## Yeğinobalı Making Her Way into the Turkish Literary System

In this study, I will try to tackle Yeğinobalı's case by bringing its relation with the gender issues to the foreground. I will further discuss Yeğinobalı's admission to the Turkish literary system as a famous translator and an author by means of pseudo-translation.

As Even-Zohar points out, translated literature, by and large, occupies a peripheral position, but in some cases, it can take on conspicuous roles. There is a constant competition between innovatory and conservative systems which makes the notion of "evolution" possible, and Even-Zohar includes translated literature in this "process of evolution" (2000: 193). According to him, the position of translated literature in the literary polysystem is not fixed. Translated literature and original works of literature cannot be classified as primary or secondary, but should be apprehended as variables which are dependent upon the specific circumstances prevailing within the literary system. If translated literature is primary, "it participates actively in shaping the center of the polysystem" (ibid). At this point we should remember that translation is a strong means of literary import and the products of translation are chief factors in the formation of new models in the target culture, introducing new poetics, patterns and techniques.

As for Yeğinobalı's *Genç Kızlar*, she introduced her novel as a translation to the Turkish literary system, knowing that translations are easily accepted compared to original works. By using pseudo-translation as a means, she inserted a new discourse into Turkish literature which probed sensitive matters such as sex before marriage or homo-sexual love and incorporated detailed descriptions of erotic

feelings and sexual drives experienced by female characters. I will try to discuss this theme with reference to work conducted by Lori Chamberlain's, Françoise Massardier-Kenney's, Carol Maier's and Rosemary Arrojo's approaches. While discussing *Genç Kızlar*'s contribution to the gender-related developments in Turkey, I will examine Yeğınobalı's other books and try to describe the stereo-types she employs in almost all of them since it is these stereo-types that convey her critical opinions to the audience.

As a conclusion, I will state that Yeğınobalı's *Genç Kızlar*, a pseudo-translation, served as a resistance tool to the gender roles attributed to women in Turkey of the 1950s.

In Yeğınobalı's example, she chose to claim that her work was the translation of a non-existing author's, Vincent Ewing's original work *The Curtain Sweeps Down*. She disclaimed originality because she was not in a situation where she could handle the consequences of having been created an original work which was daringly erotic, thus innovatory in a sense. Therefore, she voluntarily hid behind an imaginary American male figure's so-called original work to be able to have her work published without being reproached due to the gender-related themes she explored in her novel. At this point, we can conclude that being American as well as male was attributed a higher status than being Turkish and female.

This discussion reveals that all concepts are significant only when they are contextualized. They are intertwined in a network of cultural, historical and ideological variables which lead us to constant questioning and prevent us from developing stable perceptions.

Apart from the examples provided above, pseudo-translations can of course be utilized to accomplish literary purposes as well. There are significant examples

of such cases. The main motives of employing pseudo-translation in these cases are importing a new genre to the home literary system without facing any aversions, struggling to hinder the dominance of a particular literary trend in order to get away from the confinement it causes without awakening any defiance. However, since I am delimiting my area of interest to the socio-cultural reasons and effects of pseudo-translations, I will not explore any pseudo-translation cases with literary purposes.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PSEUDO-TRANSLATION AND GENDER

#### Metaphorics of Pseudo-Translation

Lori Chamberlain draws parallels between translation and the history of metaphors which generally consider women as sex objects of some kind whose sexuality needs to be controlled. Since translation is generally perceived as displaying the secondary side of text creation - the other side being the creative patriarchal side that must exert control—it is deemed as feminine. Chamberlain traces the metaphors used for the act of translation as well as those used for translators throughout Western history. Translation and translators, she states, are always figured as feminine. Among her many examples ranging from the earl of Roscommon to George Steiner, she notes the common concept of *les belles infidèles*, where translations, like women, are rarely both beautiful and faithful.

As feminist research from a variety of disciplines has shown, the opposition between productive and reproductive work organizes the way a culture values work: this paradigm depicts originality or creativity in terms of paternity and authority, relegating the figure of the female to a variety of secondary roles. (Chamberlain 2000: 314)

She claims that this has led to a devaluing of the work of translation. Thus, in the act of translation, the translator is always trying to claim a masculine authority, “precisely the right of paternity; [the translator] claims a phallus because this is the only way, in a paternal code, to claim legitimacy for the text. To claim that

translating is like writing, then, is to make it a creative—rather than merely re-creative—activity” (ibid, 323).

Chamberlain concludes by considering the work of Terry Eagleton and Jacques Derrida, both of whom question the authority of writing. She quotes from Eagleton that producing a text cannot be “original” in nature because no text is produced out of nothing. All forms of writing, including translation, are built upon previous texts. Similarly, Derrida discusses the interdependence of writing and translating. He “subverts the autonomy and privilege of the original text through biding it to an impossible but necessary contract with the translation and making each the debtor of the other” (ibid, 325). Finally, Chamberlain proposes a utopic feminist theory of translation that values women’s work as creative, authoritative, and legitimate.

Following Chamberlain’s argument, it could be affirmed that the dualistic relationship between original vs. translation is firmly grounded on a patriarchal system of binary oppositions which takes the sexual and social power-relationship of man vs. woman, male vs. female as its basis.

As Ulrika Olroff indicates in the abstract of her paper which she presented in the Postgraduate Conference, Postmoderne Diskurse: Zwischen Sprache & Macht on 20-22 November 1998:

The question of the power-relationship between translations and originals is not as ‘clear-cut’ as it might seem. Historically, translations have often been seen as a means of making a conquest of a foreign language and culture. Under such circumstances the translator has been considered to be powerful, in control and sometimes even violent, a rightful intruder or appropriator, as it were. Thus, the issue of the discourse of translation being feminized is not so simple as to say that metaphors used on describing women and their stereotypical role in society (faithful, obedient wives etc.) are the same as those used when translations are evaluated.



Apparently, it is when translations are considered to be inferior, brought under control by the stable and normative original, that the metaphorical similarities become most obvious. (1998)

Orloff tackles the discussions of text ownership and copyright law, which she associates with the heterosexual need to control ownership of offspring/productions. She claims that copyright law secures the interests of the author just as the marital contract has been seen as the legal solution to a physical “problem”, the uncertainty of fatherhood only matter *semper certa est*. Historically, copyright law and marriage contracts are thus parallel documents—they legitimize the offspring of the father (through marriage) or of the author (through copyright).

The major points Chamberlain highlights in her essay seem to relate directly to Nihal Yeğınobalı’s preference to launch her novel as a pseudo-translation. Chamberlain asserts that the opposition between productive and reproductive work provides us with major gender-based clues about the prevailing cultural value system. Since original or creative is associated with authority or paternity, this leads to the devaluation of the act of translation as well as the translator (ibid, 314). Here the two concepts claimed to be perceived as “secondary” by the culture are translation (vs. original) and feminine (vs. masculine). Nihal Yeğınobalı as a feminine figure was actually the author of *Genç Kızlar*. However, she claimed her work to be a translation in order to earn it a primary role. As a reminder: The primary role has directly been related to the idea of original by Chamberlain. So, as far as Yeğınobalı’s case is concerned, she chose to say that she had translated the book and not written it because the notion of translation was attributed a more primary role in her context. A translation from an Anglo-American male writer was more likely to be accepted than an original by a Turkish woman within the context

of the Turkish literary and cultural system at that time. However, inferring that the roles attributed to translation and original by Chamberlain have indeed been reversed in my example would not be an accurate conclusion because *Genç Kızlar* was disguised as a translation to obtain a primary position as in that period, Anglo-American literature and culture was canonized in the Turkish literary and cultural system. Hence the case needs to be taken up with a multi-layered perspective which embraces the gender assets as well as discussions on production and re-production. Yeğinoğlu did not reveal her authorship because her editors did not agree that she was capable of writing a book whereas she was found to be capable of translating. So, translation was once again attributed a secondary role. Authorship, associated with paternity, was not so easy to acquire for a 20 year-old young Turkish woman in the 1950s. In the metaphoric system examined by Chamberlain, she explains that “what the translator claims for ‘himself’ is precisely the right of paternity; he claims a phallus because this is the only way, in a paternal code, to claim legitimacy for the text” (ibid, 323).

This is exactly what Yeğinoğlu did. She claimed a phallus in order to legitimize both the publishing of her book and (later on) the eroticism it contained. Yeğinoğlu’s own words explain why this “eroticism” turned out to be a handicap after the book was published:

If my novel received applaud, I would come out and admit that I had written it. And I would do this with joy and pride. My novel was very well received. However, the erotic part was brought to the foreground. I guess one of the reasons was that I blended the concept of being ‘a young girl’ with the concept of ‘sexuality’ in the novel. If the theme had been a ‘young woman’, the impact would not have been so drastic. In short, I, as a young girl myself, hesitated to claim to be the writer of this novel. In the course of time, I even liked being *Vincent Ewing*. This trick seemed like a fun game to me. Besides, while the word about the most popular Turkish

novels of those years being actually adapted from French literature was going about, I enjoyed the irony of attributing my novel, which had been liked more than all those novels, to an American. In those years, as a translator I was making more money than the authors did and by being *Vincent Ewing* I was not damaged financially either. By the way, a few years after the book had been published, I got married to an American and went to America. When I returned to Turkey for good in the beginning of the 1960s, the publishing world was already aware of my secret. A few people who knew me closely had ‘spoken’ and a few publishing houses who hoped that Vincent Ewing had other novels had done some research on him. I did not think it wrong to live as *Vincent Ewing*’s translator. I uttered the truth only during interviews with the press. (2003:10)<sup>7</sup>

Yeğinobalı preferred to hide behind *Vincent Ewing*’s authorship and even benefited more from her position as the translator of a best-seller. Since the book was imported from a foreign language and culture, the radical themes it contained were acceptable. Translation, as a means of cultural import, smoothed the process of obtaining allowance into the prevailing literary and cultural system, as I have already discussed in the previous chapter on translation’s role in cultural planning.

### Pseudo-Translation as a Means of Re-Thinking Gender

In her essay “Towards a Redefinition of Feminist Translation Practice”, Françoise Massardier-Kenney conducts a systematic evaluation of contemporary feminist translation theories and practices. She claims that translation is a competent means of leading people to “rethink gender and gender identity by setting aside definitions that seemed ‘natural’ to the translator and by attempting to work with whatever definitions of gender the source text might present” (1997: 55).

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 1

She calls into question the originality of current feminist translation strategies. She asserts that a redefinition of the term feminist is necessary in order to “describe a translation practice that is militant in its focus on the fact that the speaking/writing subject (whether author or translator) is a woman [...]” (ibid, 56). This redefinition positions women as text producers, either as translators or authors. The phrase “text producer” is a multi-layered term which combines the idea of individual agency (i.e. the woman author’s or the female translator’s agency) and the cultural or ideological context that shapes it.

Before categorizing the feminist translation strategies as “author-centred” and “translator-centred”, Massardier-Kenney underlines that “the notion of ‘feminine’ is extremely complex and is a constructed category” and calls for problematization of this notion to have a better understating of gender-based translation approaches (ibid, 58). According to her categorization, author-centered categories include means like collaboration, commentary, and resistance. Translator-centred strategies include recovery, commentary and parallel texts which can be employed to “bring the text closer to us while preserving its difference” (ibid, 58-63). These means give the feminist translator an opportunity to describe what she intends to do and to explain how she realizes her intentions without rebuilding “a textual power structure which genders the translator as the male confessor of the text” (ibid, 63).

She criticizes that some of the feminist translation strategies offered previously were reductionist in that they denied the inseparability of feminism from other socio-cultural elements such as class, race and nation. She also notes that feminists should be aware that they are adapting existing translation strategies rather than inventing new ones (ibid).

At this point, I should emphasize that my intention is not to suggest that pseudo-translation is a feminist translation strategy as far as Nihal Yeğınobalı's *Genç Kızlar* is concerned. I am well aware that it is an existing translation strategy, but I will try to show in my study that this strategy is preferred due to gender-related restrictions in Yeğınobalı's case.

Massardier-Kenney states that the categories "author-centred" and "translator-centred" are appropriate when working on a case related to gender issues because they highlight the importance of women as text-producers, either as authors or translators. She further explains that "before the structuralist dismissal of the notion of 'author', the authors were always gendered as males (and European and white) [...]. But the discourse about women as authors has just begun" (ibid).

In a sense, this explanation accounts for Nihal Yeğınobalı's disguise, a fictitious author: Vincent Ewing. According to the preface of the first edition of *Genç Kızlar* in 1950, the book's alleged original name was *The Curtain Sweeps Down*. It was written by Vincent Ewing, a 1905 born New Yorker whose father was the famous stockbroker Vendig Ewing and whose mother was Olivia Everett-Haldane from a renowned royal family from the UK: Everett-Haldanes. Vincent completed his education at the most prestigious universities in the UK and the USA. First, he was engaged in commerce and finance. Then he bought a farm in Georgia, South United States and began to reside there, busying himself with agriculture and livestock.

As Massardier-Kenney points out before the declaration of the author's death by Roland Barthes, canonized author figures were mostly white, Anglo-American males. This assertion sheds some light on Yeğınobalı's preference: A white, noble American who is well-educated. However, after *Genç Kızlar* was

publicly recognized as a pseudo-translation, Yeğınobalı was brought to the foreground as a text-producer. She was a well-known translator by then and after her disclosure as the author of *Genç Kızlar*, she gradually became known as an author. Therefore, both the author-centred and translator-centred strategies proposed by Massadier-Kenney are extremely useful means to interrogate the gender issues behind the production of *Genç Kızlar*.

Adopting the author-centred strategy in Yeğınobalı's case, we get to reflect on Vincent Ewing. This enables us to question why Yeğınobalı chose to make up such a character. In the interview that I conducted with Yeğınobalı on September 2007, she told me that she chose a male American author in order to disguise herself perfectly. Furthermore, she explained that since it was a trend in Turkey to read all American and British best-sellers by then, she, too, read them all.

In order to adopt a more statistical approach to the matter, I will now try to provide a profile of the other novels along with which *Genç Kızlar* was introduced to the Turkish audience.

Türkiye Publishing added advertisements to the 1951 and 1955 editions of *Genç Kızlar* which were to publicize the upcoming novels as well as those previously published. Among these novels were, Archibald Joseph Cronin's *To Leave Again* (trans. Vahdet Gültekin as *Hayata Dönüş*) published as a part of the Star Novels Series, Samuel Shellabarger's *Nights of Passion* (trans. Saffet Orgun as *Alevli Geceler*), A. J. Cronin's *Hatter's Castle* (trans. Nihal Yeğınobalı as *Kabus Şatosu*), Charles Dicken's *Oliver Twist* (trans. Nuriye Müstakımoğlu), Frank Yerby's *Foxes of Harrow* (trans. M. Minisker and B. İşman as *Dişi Tilki*), Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (trans. Nihal Yeğınobalı as *Beyazlı Kadın*) and Hervey Allen's *Anthony Adverse* (trans. Nihal Yeğınobalı). There were other books

advertised that had been written by Anglo-American female authors, but they were less in number compared to the books written by Anglo-American males.

When Altın Publishing began to publish *Genç Kızlar*, they publicized it along with other translations such as Charles Mergendahl's *The Bramble Bush* (Çalılıkta Aşk), A.J. Cronin's *The Citadel* (Şahika), James Cain's *Seranade* (Aşk Seranadı), Irwin Shaw's *The Young Lions* (Genç Aslanlar), Erich Maria Remarque's *Three Comrades* (Üç Arkadaş) Frank G. Slaughter's *The Healer* (Öteki Kadın) and Howard Fast's *Spartacus* (Spartakus).

These advertisements mostly consisted of books written by white Anglo-American male figures. This explains why Yeğınobalı was inclined to choose a pseudo-author like Vincent Ewing. Furthermore, she had graduated from an American high school and was very familiar with American literature, language and culture.

In the 2003 edition of *Genç Kızlar* published by Can Publishing House, there is an interview conducted with Yeğınobalı by Erdal Öz.<sup>8</sup> Öz asks Yeğınobalı the reason why she chose a male figure as her book's alleged author instead of a female figure. Yeğınobalı relates that when she was a young translator at the age of twenty and already had three or four translated books, she thought she could write a good novel, but her superiors whom she still calls "my elder brothers" told her that she needed to grow up a bit more in order to be the author of a book (2003: 7). This provides us with an explanation as to why she chose to disguise her identity, but her following statement gives us a better idea of the gender-based value judgements and restrictions in Turkey in those years:

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 1

I had gone to Manisa for the summer. My editor told me not to stay for too long since they needed to publish an urgent novel. Although I was a freelancer, we had a mutual trust in each other and I felt that I had to do as he told me, but I was not very eager to return from Manisa so early. Therefore, I decided to kill two birds with one stone: I would have a long holiday as I wished while writing the novel I always wanted to write.

The only theme I knew so closely as to write about was my school life which I had left behind a short while ago. I was sure that an interesting, engrossing and even surprising novel would come out if I wrote from behind the scenes of a boarding school for girls since it was an isolated world of its own. But still, I felt like taking careful steps considering the probable bias that my work would create in my “elders” and decided to use a pseudonym. On the other hand, the novel would inevitably contain some obscenity. Therefore, I thought it would be more appropriate to disguise myself as a male author. Moreover, translations were more popular in those years, so I decided to relate a ‘foreign’ story that would take place at a boarding school for girls in the US.

(2003:7-8)<sup>9</sup>

#### The Death of Roland Barthes’s Author, Nihal Yeğinoğlu and Vincent Ewing

According to Barthes, “the author is a modern figure” created by the society “at the end of the middle ages, with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation” which attributed the individual a high status (1977: 142 ). He claims that the author’s reign still prevails in works of “literary history, in biographies of writers, in magazine interviews, and even in the awareness of literary men” which results in an author-centered literary perception. He suggests that the reader should regard a literary work as an autonomous entity that is separate from its creator in order to liberate it from this interpretive tyranny. He gives Mallarmé as an outstanding example of the literary man who realized the

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 1



necessity of letting the language speak instead of the author. Barthes emphasizes that “to write is to reach, through a pre-existing impersonality” (ibid, 143) He points to the notion of time within scope of the act of writing. He says that the author is generally perceived as the past of the book he wrote, that they have a *before and after* relationship (my emphasis).

Since the author pre-exists the book, works, suffers and lives for it, he is in a similar position with a father who feeds and takes care of his child. However, the modern writer to whom Barthes refers as the “scriptor” is born together with his text; he is no longer complemented with an entity whose existence either gives birth to his or follows him (ibid, 145). Barthes likens the text to “a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture” and thus writing cannot go any further than being a “gesture forever anterior, never original” (ibid).

As I have shown above, Yeğınobalı was very much into the popular literature published in the 1950s’. She read all the American and British best-sellers and translated some of them. Therefore, she actually wove a tissue of citations resulting from at least three different sources of culture: American, British and Turkish. So, *Genç Kızlar* (or any other allegedly original piece of work) was never original, but possessed an infinite anteriority as all other text productions. These assumptions make it seem insignificant to conduct a study on the notion of pseudo-translation since originality is claimed to be an illusion. In other words, since each piece of writing contains multiple layers and meanings, Barthes claims that there is one place where this multiplicity is collected or united and it is the reader because every single person who reads the same text distils a different meaning from it regardless of what the author intended to convey. Hence the question should be “who is reading the text?” instead of “who wrote it?” Consequently, it does not

matter under whose authorship *Genç Kızlar* was produced. Be it Yeğınobalı or Ewing, in Barthes' viewpoint, it is language that speaks, not the author, since the text surpasses its producer with the aid of its readers.

The author's only power is to combine the different kinds of writing, to oppose some by others, so as never to sustain himself by just one of them; if he wants to express himself, at least he should know that the internal "thing" he claims to "translate" is itself only a readymade dictionary whose words can be explained (defined) only by other words, and so on ad infinitum. (Barthes 1967: 146)

However, considering today's publishing world, we see that the author is still alive in the interviews, commentaries or blurbs, or in copyright issues. Furthermore, in Yeğınobalı's case, the notion of authorship opens up a profound insight into the embedded cultural and gender-based inferences that can be made.

According to Massardier-Kenney, a feminist approach in translation can employ author-centered or translator-centered strategies in order to emphasize the feminine factor in the production of the text, but in the end, they all help us to consider the process of translation as a "cultural event to *re-present*" (1997: 65). This recognition will lead to an awareness of how gender is related or unrelated to many cases in translation history. Moreover, Massardier-Kenney claims that the acknowledgement and interrogation of the feminist factor in translation contributes to translation studies in general by "emphasizing the importance of gender categories and the mechanisms through which the 'feminine' is excluded or is valued" and by probing such notions like "authorship, authority and identity" (ibid, 66).

Massardier-Kenney and Maier identify and discuss the established associations between translation and gender by "contemporary translators, creative writers and critics" (1996: 225). Then, they provide examples from the past and

underline some points that can be helpful for future work. They explain their “understanding of gender as the locus where not only femininity but also masculinity enters the conceptualization of difference” (ibid) and indicate which scholars’ works they will employ to bring out the above-mentioned associations. They enumerate *Translation Review*’s special issue titled “Women in Translation” which was published in 1985 and contained a short but keen editorial by Sheryl St. Germain; Lori Chamberlain’s famous article (1988) where the metaphors of translation in the West are analyzed and David Homel and Sherry Simon’s *Translating Women*, a special issue of *Journal Tessera* published in 1989. This last study is referred to as a better formulated feminist theory and practice, situating the work of feminist translators in a more embracing manner. They claim that the work of feminist translators “adds a new dimension to the important cultural role translators have traditionally played in Canada” (1988: 43)

### Woman-Identified Approach in Translation Studies

Maier and Massardier-Kenney state that a “reevaluation of ‘woman’ as translator” combined with the recent independence generally attributed to translators enabled a new “woman-identified” approach in translation studies (1996: 227). The term woman-identified embraces the woman-related works of female and male translators whose definitions for feminism vary.

As Barbara Godard states, after the “death of the author”<sup>10</sup>, the woman-identified translator ascended to a new position which allowed her/him to claim

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<sup>10</sup> The term is borrowed from Barthes’ hypothesis which I have explained briefly in the previous part and to which I will refer in this one.

authority for her/his work and promoted her/him to being a text producer, rather than a re-producer (1988: 50). This remark regards the death of the (male) author implicitly as the birth of the (female) translator, aiming at terminating the asymmetrical power structure between them which has been prevailing for long. However, what is indicated by “the death of the author” in Roland Barthes’ article does not seem identical to “the death of the author” mentioned by Godard, Maier and Massardier-Kenney. While giving examples from woman-identified translators, Maier and Massardier-Kenney mention the translations of Third World texts into First World languages by women translators and they claim that “the woman-identified translator has felt a strong sense of responsibility for a writer she was unwilling to declare ‘dead’ before that writer had enjoyed a chance to live” (1996: 228). This quote makes us think that the translator holds the power to kill the author or give the author a chance to enjoy living, but when we regard translation as an act of rewriting, are we going to consider the translator a new-born author? If we attribute authorship to the translator, are we not falling into our own trap and taking the dead author out of her/his grave?

The act of translation cannot be reduced to a mechanical transference from one language to another and translation studies questions the logocentric tradition with its presupposition of one determined meaning inherent in “the” text and the view on translation as an instance of meaning transfer [...] consequently invokes the notion of fidelity as the central ethical issue that not only regulates the adequacy of such a transfer but also pays the necessary respects to the author of the original. (Arrojo 1990: 75-76)

In the light of the above-given quote, how can we mention the responsibility of women translators of the “First World” towards the women authors of the “Third World”? Are they these translators the only ones who could discover the essence, the meaning that was present in these Third World authors’ texts and who, therefore, felt responsible to convey this message to their readers? But is there a

stable meaning? Should the reader whom Barthes describes be manipulated by the translator (who seems to be the reincarnation of the deceased author) in order to discover this ultimate meaning hidden in the text? No. Barthes' reader

is the very space in which are inscribed, without any being lost, all the citations a writing consists of; the unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination; but this destination can no longer be personal: the reader is a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the paths of which the text is constituted. [...] The birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author. (1977: 146)

Barthes states that words can be "explained only by other words" and the act of writing is like "combining the different kinds of writing chosen from a dictionary or a pool where everything readymade is gathered" (1977: 145). So there is no single meaning, the reader derives whatever s/he does from a piece of writing. Everything is open to interpretation. Therefore, no author who claims to own a text he has written and champions its originality can survive, because nothing can be original. This equalizes all kinds of text production, effacing the secondary position of translation and notions like fidelity or good/bad translation.

Maier and Massardier-Kenney's woman-identified translator contradicts her purpose of bringing the feminine into the text and acts in accordance with the patriarchal discourse, claiming the position of a meaning conveyor or a new author. Barthes meant the ultimate effacement of the traits attributed to the author, whereas "the death of the author" implied by Maier and Massardier-Kenney corresponds to the translator's power of killing the author and taking his/her place.

## *Genç Kızlar* and The Death of the Author

By the time *Genç Kızlar* was published for the first time in 1951, the reign of the white, male author still seemed to prevail. Therefore, Yeğınobalı could not dare to claim her independence as a woman author. Instead, she acted in a more pragmatic way and disguised herself as a masculine figure in order to have her novel published. Until Doğan Publishing took the copyright of the book in 2005—the alleged author had been dead for 38 years by then— the book was not published with only Yeğınobalı’s name on it.

On the 2003 edition published by Can Yayınları, we still see Vincent Ewing’s name in parentheses underneath Yeğınobalı’s name, although she told me that she had clearly declared her authorship in late the 80s to Tarık Ersoy during an interview conducted to be published in Cumhuriyet’s culture section.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Yeğınobalı’s secret was already disclosed within the Istanbul publishing community in the early 60s when she moved back to Turkey, ending her marriage in the USA (Yeğınobalı 2003: 10)<sup>12</sup>.

In Yeğınobalı’s case, the literal death or effacement of the author does not seem to have been acknowledged by the Turkish translation authorities, i.e. publishers and critics, until 2005. Recalling that this is a pseudo-translation case and there is actually no source text or author, it is even more astonishing to see how difficult and unusual it still was for the genuine author to claim her authorship. The following statements of Yeğınobalı provide us with a better panorama of the author and translator’s status in her case:

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix B

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix A

After *Genç Kızlar* was published, I got married and went to the USA, but I visited Turkey very often. During one of my stays in Turkey, I wrote *Eflatun Kız*. It was published in *Vatan* Newspaper as a serial. It was very much liked as well. I even continued writing from the US and sent the last few parts from there. It was 1959. *Eflatun Kız* was published as a literary serial with my name on it. A lot of publishers offered me to publish it as a novel, but before I could make up my mind and respond to the offers, I left for the US once again and two or three years later, I returned to Turkey for good with my second child, a baby boy. I was divorced and in need of money in order to survive with two kids. Therefore, I visited some of the publishers whom I knew had been interested in *Eflatun Kız*, but I realized that they had already forgotten about the book in two-three years. Finally, Altın Publishing made a proposal to me: The publishing house was just being founded and they were strong financially. They told me that they wanted *Genç Kızlar*. We sat down and discussed if we should publish it with my name on it since news had already been heard while I was abroad. I did not accept it. I said I was happy with Vincent Ewing. I told them I wanted *Eflatun Kız* to get published. Eventually Turan Bey (the owner of the publishing house) told me that he was a tradesman who was just starting a publishing house. He said he needed books that would sell and did not want me as an author, but wanted to keep me as a translator [...]. Among the shareholders, there was a man who had feelings for me. He wanted to publish *Eflatun Kız*, but told me that nobody knew me as an author, whereas I was well-known as a translator. 'Let *Eflatun Kız* be written by this American man again and you be the translator' he told me. I was paying rent and taking care of my two children. Life was not easy on me.<sup>13</sup>

*Eflatun Kız* was published in 1964 by Altın Publishing. The author appeared once again as Vincent Ewing and Yeğınobalı's name was mentioned as the translator.

There are two major points I would like to point out: 1) It was Yeğınobalı who did not want to give her name as the author as far as *Genç Kızlar* was concerned. 2) The publishers did not want to publish either *Genç Kızlar* or *Eflatun Kız* with her authorship, but again with Vincent Ewing's due to alleged financial purposes.

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix 2

Why did Yeğınobalı not want her name to be put on *Genç Kızlar*'s cover although she was well aware that her authorship had already been discovered by the Istanbul publishing community? She had financial concerns. She had to earn money in order to take care of her family, so she abided by the publishers' rules. She was still not deemed adequate for authorship by the relevant authorities. *Genç Kızlar* had become a best-seller with Vincent Ewing's name. His profile as an Anglo-American male author was compatible with the current trend in the Turkish literary system which was dominated by translations of Anglo-American male authors as I have mentioned earlier. So why take a risk by presenting Yeğınobalı as the author when the novel sold very well as it was? The situation was actually satisfying for both sides. Furthermore, Yeğınobalı was overwhelmed by the reactions she had received when her novel was first launched. The following lines will be very revealing considering the first of the two major points I have indicated above:

The printing house was in the basement floor of the publishing house. I handed in all the parts of my novel and within two or three days, I went to the publishing house, my heart beating very fast. Everyone seemed a bit quiet. Was it my imagination? Then, the door opened and the young boys working downstairs brought the printed sheets. I thought they looked at me, snickering. Eventually, I learnt that they all liked the novel a lot. The first wave of excitement came from the publishing house personnel. They claimed that they had not read such a book before! Later, I heard that the editorial staff whom I regarded as my elder brothers had taken on a bet. They had wondered if I made the translation with a comprehension of its content or not. Some of them had asserted that I must have understood what I was translating because I was a smart girl who read a lot and who had graduated from an American high school. The others claimed that I did not understand the content of the book, but since I was a competent translator I could make it without full comprehension. [...] There was only one sentence which had an implication of oral sex in it. Was all this fuss about that sentence? Yes, I learnt that it was one of the reasons. I could have guessed though, because life had never been easy for me in Istanbul. I grew up comfortably amongst men at the



American School for Girls, and within my family in Manisa. When I started visiting the publishing house in Cağaloğlu, I realized that almost everyone involved in the publishing sector was older than I was; they were all adults, but they were 'hungry' as far as sexual matters were concerned. All they thought about was... I realized this and was startled. However, when I witnessed this 'hunger' directly, I could not help myself but was surprised again. There was a younger boy working at the publishing house who was in love with me. I remember, once we, as the editorial staff, went out to dinner all together. He asked me for a dance and while we were dancing, he said: 'You must have experienced a night like the one mentioned in the book, the night with the red moon...' Otherwise how could I translate such an erotic scene! [...] I have even received a marriage proposal once [...]. So I was no longer able to utter that I was *Genç Kızlar*'s translator because everybody, especially men, were very much eager to talk about the eroticism in the novel.<sup>14</sup>

In 1987 Cem Publishing published *Eflatun Kız* with a new name and a new author:

*Mazi Kalbimde Bir Yaradır* by Nihal Yeğinoğlu. This was a major milestone in Yeğinoğlu's career as an author since it was the first time she had one of her two books published under her own name. Barbara Godard's claim that the death of the author helped the woman-identified translator to claim authority for her/his work and promoted her/him to being a text producer, rather than a re-producer, does not seem to be valid for Yeğinoğlu since she had to hide behind Vincent Ewing's non-existent shadow for years (1988:50). The blurb on Can Publishing's 2003 edition<sup>15</sup> relates only Yeğinoğlu's pseudo-translation story. The reader is neither provided with a brief summary of the book nor with comments from any critics concerning some literary or cultural aspect of the book. As far as *Genç Kızlar* is concerned, it does not seem likely that Yeğinoğlu will ever be referred to solely as the author of the novel since her 56 year old story still attracts reader attention, hence is employed as a marketing strategy. However, having her pseudo-translator persona

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix 2

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix 3

emphasized every time her name is cited publicly has positive aspects concerning woman-identified approaches to translation in that this indeed is the door opening to another realm where Yeğınobalı is the author of four other books which explore the burdens of being a woman and the crookedness of the social values that judge and position women in society.

A major number of her works consist of translations. Some of them were from classical authors like Jane Austen, John Steinbeck, Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde, Manuel Puig and D.H. Lawrence, and the earlier ones were mostly considered to be a part of the popular literature genre. In addition to her translations, she is the author of six books. So she first came to be known with her translations, then her star shined with *Genç Kızlar* that became a best-seller and by the end of the 1980s, with her mysterious pseudo-translation story being publicized, she came to be known as the woman who was brave enough to invent a fake author in order to be able to have her novel published. The eroticism of the book and the youth of its actual author were pointed out as the reasons of Yeğınobalı's reluctance to claim authorship for her novel. The death of the author did not enable Yeğınobalı, as the pseudo-translator, to claim a role as a text-producer although she actually wrote the novel herself. Instead, she preferred to stay undercover for about 25 years and when she disclosed the truth, she still could not bury Vincent Ewing's dead body. In the blurb of the 2003 Can Publishing edition, there is a significant sentence she utters:

In this new edition published by Can Publishing, my novel *Genç Kızlar* has been introduced to the reader with my real name on it along with my pseudonym for the first time: *Nihal Yeğınobalı or Vincent Ewing*. Both *Nihal Yeğınobalı* and *Vincent Ewing*. (Yeğınobalı: 2003) <sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix C

She became Vincent Ewing and Vincent Ewing became her. The allegedly clear distinction between author and translator was indeed clouded with Yeğınobalı's above-indicated statement, and of course, with her courageous enterprise.

As Maier and Massardier-Kenney aptly note "the universality of gender has been challenged and its rules shown to be embedded, to a great extent, in specific practice" (1996: 230). They claim that translation is no longer a question of explaining difference with misleading assumptions, and hence is no longer a tool for presenting some established, perfect identity. Instead, the translator is expected to go beyond the difference. When the translator-protagonist of Barbara Wilson's novels, Cassandra Reilly, is asked "Woman or man?" she answers "Neither . . . I'm a translator" (ibid, 31). This is a horizon-widening emphasis in that it suggests translation is capable of overcoming the ossified structure of "the idea of woman as a secure base" (ibid).

The adoption of a woman-identified approach when examining both the process and the product of translation would be beneficial in that it would help scholars who reflect upon translation to go beyond the limits of gender-related associations regarding the notion of *difference* and would once again underline that conducting a study on any aspect of translation requires a wider perspective which requires the deconstruction of concepts defined hitherto. (my emphasis) This step is vital, firstly, for the discipline of translation studies to overcome the deadlock it has been experiencing for many years. In other words, the discussions based on binary oppositions such as good and bad translation or one-sided approaches that exclude their alleged counters, ending up reproducing a similar power asymmetry do not help translation studies to come up with horizon-widening explanations for its

problematics or to problematize issues which hold the potential to carry the present discussions to a further level, and even to a different dimension. As for the improvement of the discussions concerning gender and translation, a woman-identified approach would contribute to the analyses of the ways translation has been employed to reproduce gender-related biases and would render it possible to adopt a wider perspective that would pave the way for a more effective discussion.

In this respect, Yeğınobalı's identification with Vincent Ewing due to pragmatic reasons and the very context in which she produced her text, erases the difference between man and woman, and this reflects directly on the difference between translator and author. She is Vincent or Nihal, translator or author. She is both Vincent and Nihal, translator and author.

As I have mentioned above, Yeğınobalı's decision to remain as Vincent Ewing for the first two of her novels was a pragmatic decision. According to Maier and Massardier-Kenney,

Patronage facilitates another—usually male—discourse; translation appears to be the transmission of the discourse of another; religious writing is the transmission of the word of God. Thus translation is often perceived as a transparent, secondary form of discourse that sidestepped the issue of authority and was used by women as a way to enter, on tiptoe so to speak, the sphere of public discourse without seeming to do so. (1996: 233-34)

As I have emphasized above, Yeğınobalı had to deceive the patronage, the publishers in our case, to be able to publish her work because patronage really did facilitate the male discourse when the work to be published was an “original” work. Tudor women, as Maier and Massardier-Kenney mention, were also very cautious while tiptoeing into the prevalent public discourse. Tudor women made very few translations, but they often added prefaces and dedications to their translations,

explaining why they chose these particular texts and the strategies they employed while translating. Recent study conducted on the issue revealed that alterations were made on the source texts by their translators. Mary Sidney's translation sets a good example for these alterations. The text she created is "more precise and metaphorical than the French text"; her authorial touch is discernable through "the specific personal aesthetic and moral characteristics" she infused into the text (Maier and Massardier-Kenney 1996: 234). As Maier and Massardier-Kenney propose, a study exploring which authors' work these women translators selected would also be revealing, "not so much in terms of whether the author translated was a man or a woman, but rather whether the author offered a challenge to the patriarchal foundation of discourse" (ibid, 234-35). Either as Vincent Ewing or as herself, or either as a woman or a man, Nihal Yeğinoğlu wrote a book which "offered a challenge to the patriarchal foundation of discourse" in Turkish literature and culture (ibid).

This study aims to examine Yeğinoğlu's pseudo-translation case from two different but complementary standpoints, where gender is grounded as a major factor. The first one tackles the pseudo-identity Yeğinoğlu claimed for herself in order to have her novel published (male, Anglo-Saxon) and the second one regards the novel as a deliberate act to challenge the established notion of woman. The reason behind the first aspect has been tackled until now and the means to the second one will be interrogated within the framework of Yeğinoğlu's other works in the second part of this study.

Maier and Massardier-Kenney enumerate various examples of the Western women translators who translated and wrote commentaries or prefaces with the awareness that translation was a potent means to intervene in the prevailing

discourse and to question the secondary role of both women and translation. They further explain how translation, authorship and gender came to be viewed differently in eighteenth century England and France. Then, they state that the French sentimental novel was popular in England and British Gothic novels were as popular in France. Accordingly, the number of translations made between these two languages was extremely high. "Between 1700 and 1805, 520 English novels were translated to French" (Mastrodonato in Maier and Massardier-Kenney 1996: 236). "This extraordinary popularity of translations coincides with the popularity of women authors of whom the great majority also translated" (Maier and Massardier-Kenney 1996: 236).

As Josephine Grieder claims, since there was a strong demand for translations at that time, the translators applied a mixture of creative writing and translating while working on these texts which ran faster than trying to translate *mot à mot*. Grieder points out that as a result of this "a number of professional authors especially women alternately produced translations and their work (1975: 25). As Grieder indicated above, this explanation is valid mostly for women authors and at this point Maier and Massardier-Kenney asks: "Why is it that gender is a factor?" (ibid, 236). We see that gender has largely become a factor in the re-shaping of French and English literary systems via *women* translators [italics mine]. Maier and Massardier-Kenney approach this situation in a psychoanalytical way and assert that women authors "were able to produce a mixture of creative and translated works because they were less susceptible to the 'masculine' anxiety of origin, of hybridization, the obsession with purity" due to the social and cultural obstacles they had been fighting against in order to have access to authorship (ibid, 237).

Maier and Massardier-Kenney tie this exceptional assertion to pseudo-translations with their following statement:

This woman-identified hybridized production and the shift in values that it implies is also demonstrated by the fact that a number of so-called translations published at the time were original works actually written, not translated, by the translator. In fact, the first novel of the prominent French writer, Madame Riccoboni *Lettres de mistress Fanni Butlerd* pretended to be a translation. Metaphorically, the original work as translation was the most obvious example of the female refusal to see origin/authority and translation/mediation separate. The practice of these women translators/authors prefigures current discussions of origin and textualization, but because they occur within the context of translation they have not been noticed, much less studied. (ibid)

The concept of pseudo-translation is a useful tool when theorizing about the boundaries between *original* and *translation* or *production* and *reproduction*. It demonstrates that traditional oppositions between these notions and the boundaries drawn based on these oppositions are not as clear as they had been considered to be. Pseudo-translations actually point out that it is not so easy to determine where production ends and reproduction begins and vice versa.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### NOVELS BY YEĞİNOBALI: A STUDY OF RECURRENT THEMES IN YEĞİNOBALI'S WORKS

In this chapter, I will discuss the novels written by Yeğİnobalı in a more detailed manner, trying to point out to her endeavor to tackle gender-related problematics under certain headings. So far, I have tried to explain my view on pseudo-translation as an agent of social, cultural or political change. I have provided examples of pseudo-translation from different cultures, and eventually focused on the practices in Turkish translation history. Then, I have presented Nihal Yeğİnobalı's pseudo-translation case and interpreted it in the light of gender-related translation theories. These theories combined with Yeğİnobalı's *Genç Kızlar* and its social repercussions brought up new discussions around established concepts such as originality and translation, primariness and secondariness, production and reproduction. Concerning the reconsideration of these concepts, pseudo-translation proved to be a useful methodological tool by providing us with the very context in which this case took place. Furthermore, it was the means Yeğİnobalı used to enter the literary system and acquire the opportunity to produce her own novels which are seemingly concerned with gender issues. Henceforth, I will discuss the content of Yeğİnobalı's books and try to reveal if Yeğİnobalı intends to produce *feminist* works and if her books achieve to undermine the established gender biases in Turkish society and culture. (my emphasis)

Yeğİnobalı claims that she has translated over three hundred books and wrote six novels including *Genç Kızlar* (Çeviririm 2005, URL). The first novel



published with her name on it was *Mazi Kalbimde bir Yaradır* . It was published by Cem Publishing in 1988. So, she was a very young and talented translator in late the 40s and early 50s. Then, she wrote *Genç Kızlar* which was published in 1951. Within the following 10 years, her authorship was disclosed to the publishing world. In the 1960s, all the publishers knew about Yeğinoğlu's secret. With the publication of *Mazi Kalbimde Bir Yaradır* in 1988, Yeğinoğlu was publicized as an author for the first time. Then in 1997, she wrote *Sitem*, and *Cumhuriyet Çocuğu*, an autobiography, followed in 1999. In 2003, *Genç Kızlar* was published with Yeğinoğlu's name as the author for the first time, yet as I have indicated in the previous part, *Vincent Ewing's* name (although in parentheses) also took place on the cover of the book right beneath Yeğinoğlu's. In 2005, Doğan Publishing published her next novel: *Belki Defne*. Last but not least, *Gazel* was published in 2007 by Can Publishing. Her books have always been published by the most reputable publishing houses in Turkey and they have all ran into more than one edition.

Yeğinoğlu tackles certain gender-related issues in almost all of her novels. She stresses issues of virginity, premarital sex and pregnancy followed by a traumatic miscarriage or abortion, family pressure, the masculine codes shared by other female figures and women's suppressed sexuality and sexual ignorance. She tells stories of common people, particularly women and draws attention to the fact that women have sexual drives just like men, regardless of their social status or class. She tries to draw attention to the fact that the current sexual position of women in society is not natural, but rather a result of the deeply constructed gender bias and patriarchal prevalence. She tries to display that woman naturally has sexual drives, fantasies and needs and tries to develop a natural association between

femininity and sexuality via detailed descriptions of her female protagonists' fantasies or sexual experiences.

Since I believe that the above mentioned gender related issues are taken up in a more mature way in Yeğınobalı's final novel *Gazel* and are pinpointed more evidently than they have been in *Mazi Kalbimde Bir Yaradır* and *Sitem*. I will begin with a close reading of *Gazel* and continue with Yeğınobalı's other works in their order of publication.

### *Gazel*

*Gazel* takes place in a small village, Mirganköy, on the Bosphorus in the summer of 1948. The villagers are, by and large, among the elites of Istanbul. Our protagonist is Serap Andelip who considers herself a "virgin-seer". (my emphasis) She thinks that she has a special gift which allows her to keep in constant contact with the powers of life and nature. Her senses and her perception are both extremely keen and she, without any doubt, believes that she owes this ability of hers to her virginity. She is about to turn twenty and is proud to have stayed a virgin. Here, Yeğınobalı refers to virginity as being "untouched" and possessing an "undamaged integrity" (2007: 9).<sup>17</sup>

Serap has an elder sister, Zerrin. She is one of the few young women who are enrolled at a university in the neighborhood. One of the main pillars upon which the story is built is Zerrin's losing her virginity to her boyfriend Esat and her premarital pregnancy. Serap's closest friend is Yasemin. Yasemin and Serap are

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<sup>17</sup> Buna karşın, gene de, şu anda bile, yirminci yaşının eşiğine kadar, bedensel ve ruhsal yönden böylesi el değmemiş ve bütünlüğü zedelenmemiş, "bakire" olarak kaldığı için yarı utangaç bir gurur duymaktan kendini alamıyordu.

about to celebrate their graduation from a most prominent private high school in Istanbul, and Yasemin, just like most of the girls who graduate from this high school, plans to get married as soon as high school is over. She is already engaged to Babür, the son of a wealthy family. Yasemin's ebbs and flows concerning her impending marriage sheds light on the position of women in marriages. Yasemin confesses that she does not have strong feelings for Babür such as love and every time she breaks up with her fiancé, she decides to go back to him "for the sake of her family, to save them from the misery which awaits them" (2007: 73)<sup>18</sup>. She, in a way, sells her body to Babür who is depicted as a prototype male character: He is so rich and enchanted by Yasemin's beauty that he buys this beautiful doll. He spoils his wife-to-be with expensive gifts and is always eager to put up with her whims. However, he is not as eager to have sex with his long-time fiancé before marriage and has been paying for years to enter the bridal chamber with Yasemin.

We also read about Yasemin's aunt Fazıla who went insane after a boat accident on the Bosphorus which caused the death of Yasemin's father and Gazel. Gazel was a little boy when Yasemin's father adopted him during the Turkish War of Independence. When he grew up, he began to work as the mansion's gardener. On the day of the accident, he lost his life along with Yasemin's father and their bodies could never be found. After the accident, Gazel turned into a legend among the Mirganköy residents. It was believed that he continued to live underwater and would return one day. Rather than being a character depicted for purposes of making overt gender-based criticism or for pinpointing malformed approaches to the idea of woman and sexuality, Gazel is the center of tension and darkness in the

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<sup>18</sup> Evdekilerin hatırı için, diyordum. Onları ileride bekleyen sefaletten korumak için, diyordum.

novel, which might be considered to represent the fear implanted in the individuals through superstitious and false beliefs.

Another side story in the novel is about a gay artist who is the son of a most eminent family in Mirganköy. Although it is unusual to characterize a gay artist in the 1940s, we cannot claim that Yeğınobalı discusses issues related to the social dimensions of gayness in her work. Yet, by describing the sexual ignorance on the young girls' side, she displays how peculiar and incomprehensible gayness is conceived to be.

Last but not least, we read about Serap's sexual awakening and her relationship with an older man who wants her to be his wife: Kamran Mirgani.

In the following section, I will try to point to the parts in *Gazel* where women's sexuality and gender is put into question and a critical approach is adopted.

#### Contradictions of Women, Sexual Encounters as Damnation

Zerrin is pregnant and therefore feels compelled to marry Esat. However, she has a miscarriage. Her pregnancy affects her relationship with her mother very negatively. She cannot make up her mind as to whether she really wants to get married to Esat or not, and she can never fully trust him. 'Mistrust of men' is one of the repetitive patterns in Yeğınobalı's works which will be discussed in the next section of this study along with other repetitive notions she often underlines in her novels. Zerrin's doubts prove correct in the end: after learning that she does not carry his baby anymore, Esat decides to leave her, claiming he cannot trust Zerrin anymore because she lied to him about the miscarriage. I will try to emphasize

some related parts in the novel where Yeğinobalı displays the dilemmas that Turkish women are compelled to go through due to the socially constructed gender codes.

### Virginity

In the scene where Zerrin and Esat are introduced to the reader for the first time, Yeğinobalı points to how innocence is associated with virginity even in the mind of a well-educated, young Turkish woman.

Yeğinobalı displays the hypocrisy behind the prevalent sense of morality as far as women's virginity is concerned. Zerrin yearns for the days before their sexual intercourse when they were again involved in sexual activities, but "did not go the whole hog" (ibid, 17)<sup>19</sup>. So, as long as a woman protects her virginity, meaning the preservation of her hymen, her own conscience as well as the social ethics allows her to get involved in other "safe" sexual acts.

When Esat tells her that he was as innocent as she was, and that Zerrin was his "first woman", Zerrin scolds him: "Don't call me woman! [...] I don't want to be a woman. I want to be a girl again, just like I once was, an innocent girl..." (ibid).<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, while contemplating on her lost virginity, Zerrin tells herself that the problem was neither the pain she felt nor the blood that was shed. [...] Zerrin recalls that Esat was talking about uniting or becoming one while Zerrin, on the contrary, felt a strong loneliness. On the night of her defloration, "their warm and familiar relationship was demolished; Esat seemed to have gone somewhere

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<sup>19</sup> Henüz "sonuna kadar gitmemiş" oldukları o mutlu günlere dönmenin keşke bir yolu olsaydı!

<sup>20</sup> Kadın deme bana! [...] Kadın olmak istemiyorum ben. Genç kız olmak istiyorum...Gene eskisi gibi, masum...

else all by himself and Zerrin was left all alone amid the cold remnants, naked, shattered, all by herself” (ibid, 24)<sup>21</sup>. While listening to the noises coming from this stranger once known to her, she wished that “this eerie and revolting weight on her would lift up immediately” and would never suffocate her again (ibid)<sup>22</sup>. She also felt depressed because she would have to do this *thing* over and over again with Esat when they got married. (my emphasis)

### Gazel and Taboo of Virginity

Interestingly enough, the structuring of the plot and the recurrently emphasized concepts in *Gazel* almost call for a Freudian interpretation. Based on Yeğınobalı’s previous translations<sup>23</sup>, we can assert that she is knowledgeable about the fundamentals of Freud’s theories and the points where feminist theory intersects with it. In order to point out to the obvious parallelism between *Gazel*’s plot and Freud’s opinions on the notion of virginity, I will try to give a brief summary of Freud’s article “Taboo of Virginity” while referring to the specific incidents in the novel.

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<sup>21</sup> Sevgilisiyle paylaşmaya alışık olduđu o bildik ve sıcak beraberlik yıkılmış, Esat başını alıp bir yerlere gitmiş, Zerrin ıssız ve soğuk yıkıntıların arasında, çıplak, paramparça, öksüz, tek başına kalmıştı.

<sup>22</sup> Ölçemediğı uzamların ardında bir yerden, tanımadığı bir erkeğin çıkardığı gerçekdışı hırıltıları dinlerken tek isteğı, üstündeki bu ürkütücü ve tiksindirici ağırlığın kalkıp hemen o anda yok olması, bir daha da sonsuza değin geri gelmemesi idi.

<sup>23</sup> Among Yeğınobalı’s translations are, Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Mandarins* (Mandarinler 1966) and *From the Perspective of Woman*(Kadınca 1972), David Herbert Lawrence’s *Women in Love* (Aşık Kadınlar 1970) *Sha Kokken’s Sexual Technique* (published with only Yeğınobalı’s name as *Cinsel Teknik* 1977), Betty Smith’s *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (Bir Genç Kız Yetiştiriyor 1980), D.W. Baruch’s *Sex in Marriage* (Evlilikte Cinsellik 1986), Doris May Lessing’s *The Fifth Child* (Beşinci Çocuk 1990), Fay Weldon’s *The Hearts and Lives of Men* (Erkeklerin Kalpleri ve Hayatları 1992), Iris Murdoch’s *The Time of the Angels* (Melekler Zamanı 1992) and *Under the Net* (Ağ 1993) Erica Jong’s *Fear of Fifty* (Elli Yaş Korkusu 1995), Donald Michael Thomas’ *The White Hotel* (Beyaz Otel 1995) and Patricia Highsmith’s *Little Tales of Misogyny* (Bir Kadın Düşmanından Öykücükler 1996). In the blurb of the Turkish translation of *The White Hotel*, we read that Dr. Freud is one of the protagonists of the novel and that he contributed to the novel with a chapter.

While studying the taboo of virginity, Freud enumerates three factors that he claims can be adduced to explain its origins. The first one of these factors is associated with the fear of blood among the primitive races who regard blood as the source of life. This first factor is parallel to Zerrin's emphasis on the blood that was shed while remembering her traumatic experience with Esat. Furthermore, whenever Serap fantasizes about having sexual intercourse with the workman, she mentions seeing the blood that was shed as a proof of her virginity. Freud argues that these reactions take their roots from the prohibition of murder and act as a precautionary measure against the "primal thirst for blood, primeval man's lust for killing" (1977: 269). He claims that according to this view, there is a connection between the taboo of virginity and the taboo of menstruation, the latter being maintained almost universally. He recounts that in the primeval era, menstruation was "interpreted as the bite of some spirit-animal, perhaps as a sign of sexual intercourse with this spirit" and this spirit was thought to belong to an ancestor. Therefore, he implies that the menstruating girl was a taboo since she belonged to this ancestral spirit. However, Freud cautions the reader that the fear of blood should not be over-estimated as a primarily influential factor on the taboo of virginity since it has not been strong enough to stop the circumcision of boys and even girls in the same races or to put an end to other rituals where blood is shed in other ways.

The second factor Freud argues to be influential on the taboo of virginity is the "fear of first occurrences" (ibid, 270). The first act of intercourse in marriage can be related to the taboo of virginity through this deep-rooted fear.

Before moving on to the third factor which is incorporated with Freud's complicated readings of the psychoanalytical relationship between the two sexes, I will try to relate his opinions on frigidity.

Freud states that the first sexual intercourse is very often a big disappointment for the woman, who remains cold and unsatisfied, just like Zerrin who felt a deep loneliness during her first experience with Esat (ibid, 275). He further argues that this reaction might lead to frigidity in women. He gives examples from certain pathological cases he studied where the woman displays hostile and abusive behavior towards the man after the first and the pursuing intercourses. This repeatedly happens although the woman loves the man, wants to have intercourse herself, and obtains full satisfaction as a result of the sexual act.

Zerrin, who could not resist her instincts and willingly had sexual intercourse with Esat now feels disgusted with herself and aggression develops in her against the one man who caused her disappointment. She is disgusted with what Esat did to her and goes as far as to accuse her once beloved Esat of "raping" her.

Why do women in both Freud's theories and Yeğınobalı's *Gazel* react in such an antagonistic way to sexual involvement? In Freud's view this hostility as a result of the "narcissistic injury which proceeds from the destruction of an organ and which is even represented in a rationalized form in the knowledge that loss of virginity brings a diminution of sexual value" (ibid). Freud states that the female libido is directed towards the father or a brother who takes his place starting from infancy. However, these infantile sexual wishes are not mostly associated with other things than intercourse, or the idea of intercourse is included in these wishes only as a "dimly perceived goal" (ibid, 277). Under these conditions, he positions the



husband as a mere substitute of the father who has the first claim to the woman's love.

Furthermore, Freud draws parallels between frigidity and the envy for the penis. He argues that there is a masculine phase that every girl goes through when she envies the boys for their penis. He argues that "if we understand 'masculine' as including the idea of wishing to be masculine, then the designation 'masculine protest' fits" women's hostile behavior which might be regarded as frigidity according to its intensity (ibid, 278). He ties "the hostile bitterness of the woman against the man, which never completely disappears in the relations between the sexes" to this envy for penis (ibid, 279).

The third factor Freud argues to be influential on the taboo of virginity is the male fear of women. According to his research, he relates that savage men refrained from having sexual intercourse with their wives before they went on an expedition or a hunt, believing that women would weaken them and bring them bad luck. The distinction between the sexes was so strong that one sex was not allowed to call members of the other sex by their names and women developed a new language with special vocabulary. Freud explains this distinction between the two sexes with the fear women induces in men via their psychical difference. Freud says that, from the male viewpoint, the female is mysterious, peculiar and apparently hostile. Freud further maintains that

The man is afraid of being weakened by the woman, infected with her femininity and of then showing himself incapable. The effect which coitus has of discharging tensions and causing flaccidity may be the prototype of what the man fears; and realization of the influence which the woman gains over him through sexual intercourse, the consideration she thereby forces from him, may justify the extension of this fear. (1977: 271)

In *Gazel*, when Serap fantasized about the conversation she and the workman have after having sex, the workman asks Serap if she is angry with him. According to Freudian literature, what the man subconsciously fears is the possible hostility that might emerge in the virgin after the sacrificing of her long-preserved virginity. In addition to its parallelism to this psychoanalytical analysis which Yeğınobalı seems to imply deliberately, Serap's fantasy also highlights the workman's concerns as to the social class difference between him and Serap. Since he has just taken away the virginity of a young woman from a higher social class, he declares that he fears Serap's family's possible reactions and her suitor, Kamran Mirgani's rage. Then he says that "a virgin is sweeter than honey, yet it is also a damnation" (2007: 198)<sup>24</sup>.

The workman's concerns also seem to have a direct relation to Freud's discussion on the taboo of virginity where he claims that

The demand that a girl shall not bring to her marriage with a particular man any memory of sexual relations with another is, indeed, nothing other than a logical continuation of the right to exclusive possession of a woman, which forms the essence of monogamy, the extension of this monopoly to cover the past. (1977: 265)

Freud ties the taboo of virginity to the sexual bondage<sup>25</sup> of women. He notes that the first man a virgin has sexual intercourse with and "who in doing so overcomes the resistances which have been built up in her through the influences of her milieu and education" will be the man she will accept as a lasting partner and most probably will not have any other partners. As a result "this experience creates a state of bondage in the woman" which assures that she will belong to the same man and allows her to resist external stimuli (ibid). Though traces of Freud's

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<sup>24</sup> Bakire baldan tatlıdır ama beladır , derler.

<sup>25</sup> The expression "sexual bondage" is borrowed from von Krafft-Elbing (1982) to describe the phenomenon of a person's acquiring an unusually high degree of dependence and lack of self-reliance in relation to another person with whom he has a sexual relationship. (Freud 1977: 265)

“Taboo of Virginity” which he presented to the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society back in 1917 can be found in Yeğınobalı’s *Gazel*, we cannot disregard the feminist critique that centers on phallocentrism and neglect of female sexuality in his theory. According to Bennington, Derrida asserts that psychoanalysis “sets up a transcendental signifier (the phallus) which communicates straight forwardly with the most traditional phallocentrism” (1993: 136).

Phallocentrism is described as the privileging of the masculine (the phallus) as the central focus and source of power and authority. Derrida argues that Western thought is predicated on the notion of phallocentrism, which grants the authority to masculinity, based on the assumption that the phallus is the primary signifier and the original (cf., Derrida 1974).

#### Advocates of Virginity in *Gazel*

The practitioners of the masculine dominance whom Yeğınobalı criticizes are not necessarily and merely men. There are also women who treat other women on the basis of gender-based discrimination. Therefore, her narrative, at times, presents us the difficulties Esat, as a young man, experiences due to the rigid codes of gender imposed not only on women, but also on men.

Esat admits to having considered running away from his responsibility, but the narrator recounts that his “manly pride overcomes” this idea and he decides to get married to Zerrin as soon as possible (2007: 22).<sup>26</sup> We are shown that Esat perceives marriage as a responsibility to be assumed. As the man in this

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<sup>26</sup> Ama Esat başlangıçta sorumluluğundan kaçmayı (ne yalan söylemeli) aklından ve gönlünden geçirdiyse bile sonradan erkeklik gururu galip gelmiştir. En kısa zamanda Zerrin’le evlenecek!

relationship, he holds the power to save the woman he has sullied and the social pressure empowers and forces him to take responsibility for what he has done. So he, although a male figure, has to put up with the consequences of his actions as well.

Esat's future plans (or maybe I should say dreams) can go only as far as hiring a room from a fairly old Greek lady in Kuzguncuk and making love to Zerrin in that room instead of on the cold, wooden floor of the boathouse or the cold, wet soil. Then, he tries to picture himself living in a house as a husband and a father, but he cannot... All he can imagine is a red night lamp in the rented room and the smiling face of the old Greek lady who will happily provide him and Zerrin a room without asking any questions (ibid).<sup>27</sup>

As I have tried to show in this part, Yeğinobalı problematizes virginity within the framework of social pressure which is not only described as the asymmetrical power relations between women and men, but also as the pressure applied on women by other women who act in accordance with the masculine codes. She does not consider this asymmetry a bipolar phenomenon, but a multi-dimensional issue that should be opened to discussion. She portrays characters who try to dominate over others due to their alleged social superiority regardless of their sex. For instance, Zerrin and Serap's mother, Nerime Andelip, does not approve of Zerrin's relationship with Esat because his father is a member of the middle class and runs a hardware store. Yeğinobalı points to the asymmetric relations between different social classes and reveals how gender-related issues are similar to them in nature.

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<sup>27</sup> Kendi de farkında olmadan hafif bir göğüs geçirerek, kendini, bir koca ve baba sıfatıyla yaşayacağı bir evde hayal etmek istiyorsa da beceremiyor... Yanlıca bir gece lambası, kırmızı abajurlu... Esat Kuzguncuk'taki o güler yüzlü, hizmet-ehli Rum madamı öyle özlüyor ki!

In *Gazel*, Nerime Andelip is the prototype of women who adopt the dominant social codes and who cannot consider resisting them even if it is their daughter in question.

Upon learning that her elder daughter had premarital sex and was impregnated by Esat, Nerime Andelip makes the following statement:

Regardless of whatever she has done, Zerrin is still my daughter. I, of course, would not say anything bad to her nor would I allow anyone else to call her a bad name. However, only you can understand how hurt I am, how my life darkened. Serap, you have always been wise and kind compared to your sister; you are not as selfish as she is and you are more understanding. (2007: 114)<sup>28</sup>

This opposition between Zerrin and Serap is emphasized many times throughout the novel. Zerrin is beautiful and has a boy friend with whom she has slept with, whereas Serap is obsessed with her virginity and is regarded by others as an innocent and decent young lady. The opposition between the two sisters becomes completely evident when Nerime Andelip makes the below-quoted remark following the above-given statement:

You are not going to turn my life into a nightmare, my precious; when the time comes, I will make you a decorous wedding and you will be a bride beautifully dressed up [...] You are not going to insist on avoiding your ruined mother's one innocent wish, are you? (ibid, 115)<sup>29</sup>

The first quote displays that Nerime, as a woman and a mother, does not sympathize with Zerrin because she did something inappropriate according to the codes of social ethics. Nerime calls Zerrin selfish because she, as a young, well-educated woman in her early twenties, had premarital sex and got pregnant. She is

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<sup>28</sup> Ne yapmış olursa olsun, Zerrin benim kızımdır, ona elbette kötü söz söylemem. Söyletmem de. Ama ne kadar yaralandığımı, hayatımın nasıl karardığını sen anlayabilirsin, Serap, çünkü sen her zaman ablandan daha akli başında, daha iyi yüreklişindir, onun kadar bencil değil, daha anlayışlı...

<sup>29</sup> Sen benim dünyamı zindan etmeyeceksin, kıymetlim benim; sırası gelince sana elfazı yerinde düşün yapacağım; sen, telli duvaklı gelin olacaksın [...] Şu sırada da yıkılmış annenin masum bir isteğine sırt çevirmekte direnmeyeceksin.

selfish in that she puts her mother in such a situation where Nerime will have to consider what everybody will say and what explanation she will make for this embarrassing situation. At this point, Zerrin's body no longer belongs to her, but it belongs to her mother and to the rest of the Mirganköy residents who are granted the authority to judge her due to her sexual acts by the implicit social agreement. Even though this implicit agreement threatens to darken Nerime's life, she abides by its rules at any cost. Furthermore, we see that Nerime associates women's will to stay virgins with wisdom and calls Serap wise.

Since Serap is still a virgin and thereby precious, she deserves to be given to a man of high social status unlike Esat. Therefore, her mother Nerime wants her to meet with Kamran Mirgani, a middle-aged, accomplished diplomat who wants to marry Serap. Nerime's "innocent" wish is that she wants Serap to spend some time with him so that she can get to know him better.

We also read about a conversation between Zeynep Mirgani (Kamran Mirgani's deceased mother) and the housekeeper Gülizar which Serap recalls overhearing when she was six years old. She hears Zeynep Mirgani say, "Once the dick is erect, no rule can stop it" (ibid, 257)<sup>30</sup> when Zeynep and Gülizar discuss an incident which occurred on Galata Bridge. A woman who was claimed to have no underpants asked a Gypsy shoe-shiner to shine her shoes and seeing she was naked, the Gypsy man lost control and raped her in the middle of the city, on Galata Bridge. Zeynep was harshly critical of the woman, accusing her of "itching for it" (ibid, 258)<sup>31</sup>. She argued that the man was left no choice after realizing that she was

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<sup>30</sup> Kalkmış çükün imanı yoktur.

<sup>31</sup> Aranmış resmen!

naked. “His dick was up and he could not stop himself”<sup>32</sup>. Zeynep speaks of the incident as if it is natural for the Gypsy man to rape the woman. Furthermore, Gülizar relates that the people passing by saw what was going on between the Gypsy shoe-shiner and the woman-with-no-underpants right there on the sidewalk and they covered them with newspapers. Serap, struggling against her sexual instincts and trying to understand the roots of her obsession with virginity, remembers this story and is startled. She identifies herself with the woman in the story, remembering her own fictive surrender to the workman and fears being blamed like her.

While trying to interpret Serap’s complicated reactions towards the socially constructed notion of virginity and her mother’s wish, I will also provide some more examples from the novel which might help us to envision the milieu in which Serap was raised up.

Waking up in the middle of the night, Serap recalls her mother’s words: “a bride beautifully dressed up”. This phrase reminds Serap of the lamb to be sacrificed. She remembers the story one of her classmates from Kilis (Southern Turkey) told her: The tradition was that the groom’s family sent lamb, sheep and rams dressed up like a bride to the bride’s family as a wedding present. Serap thinks that a wedding is no different than a feast of sacrifice. The white wedding dress symbolizing purity and virginity, the tiara, the veil, the jewelry, the henna<sup>33</sup> ... All for “a bloody ceremony where the virgins are sacrificed to the masculine lust and

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<sup>32</sup> Çükü kalkmış işte, tutamamış kendini!

<sup>33</sup> In Turkey, it is a tradition to apply henna on the palms of the bride’s hands before the wedding. The lambs to be sacrificed are also applied henna before they are sacrificed.

masculine customs. What's more, it is a sacrificial feast which the victim attends happily with feelings of pride as well" (ibid, 116)<sup>34</sup>.

Serap remembers her mother calling her "my curly lamb" and asks herself: "Isn't my own mother one of the most eager people who wish me to become a lamb with henna and who send me to slaughter?"(ibid)<sup>35</sup>. Then, she promises herself that she will never ever become a bride. Right after this promise, she says that she knows she is going to get married one day for sure, but stresses that she will never be "beautifully dressed" as a bride. At first sight, this sounds contradictory since the girl, who can pinpoint the ritualistic similarity between the "beautifully dressed" virgin brides and the lambs to be sacrificed, is so sure that she will comply with the social expectations and get married.

On the one hand, Serap depicts a strong character who frequently criticizes the established perspective on virginity, who takes pride in taking off her underpants herself when she and the handsome workman are on the verge of intercourse in her fantasies, or who claims that her virginity is none of her family's business, but concerns only herself. On the other hand, she overrates virginity, claiming her death and the end of her happy days after her first sexual fantasy. She accepts to get married to Kamran right after her high school graduation and instead of continuing her education, she gets pregnant within the first year of her married life.

Serap's complicated, sometimes even contradictory remarks and acts about virginity require close attention. We know that she is about twenty and did not have

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<sup>34</sup> Bakirelerin erkek şehvetine ve erkek törelerine kurban edildikleri kanlı bir tören. Dahası, kurbanlığın, kendi kurban edilişine güle oynaya, gururla, övünçle gittiği bir kurban bayramı.

<sup>35</sup> Onu kınalı kuzu yapan ve kesime götürmeye teşne olanların başında kendi anası vardı, demek! Kendi öz anası!



any boyfriends before getting married to Kamran Mirgani. In the first chapter of the book, we witness Serap's hesitations about virginity. She definitely has a critical approach to the current perception of virginity as a social value. After reading the Greek tragedy about Iphigenia, the virgin sacrificed to the Gods by her father to win a war, Serap thinks: "Yes, the Gods had a passion for virgins just like the mortal males did!" She also tells herself: "Now we are halfway through the twentieth-century and the difference between a girl and a woman is still strongly emphasized, attributing the girl a magical privilege" (2007: 12)<sup>36</sup>. She rethinks the constructed value system and protests it by preferring to stay out of it. However, at times, her statements and opinions disaccord with her acts and this causes the reader to question whether she actually believes in the superiority of being a virgin. For example, right after criticizing the social perception of virginity, the narrator asks the reader: "Wasn't it natural that she was not willing to abandon this privileged and mysterious honor?" (ibid)<sup>37</sup>. At times, we witness Serap indulging in her virginity and pampering her ambition to stay pure. However, this contradiction seems to be built up deliberately by Yeğinoğlu to serve a specific purpose: Yeğinoğlu presents Serap as a victim of the social pressure applied on women in the prevalent value judgment system and tries to unveil the dilemmas she experiences. One part of her rebels at this pressure and at the hypocrisy of the masculine dominance and prefers to stay out of any thought or act which is reminiscent of sexuality; another part of her does not really know how to react when exposed to sexual stimuli, panics and feels guilty.

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<sup>36</sup> Yirminci yüzyılın yarısına varıldığı şu anda hala "kız"la "kadın" arasında bunca ayırım yapılıyorsa ve "kız" olmak hala böylesine tılsımlı bir ayrıcalığa sahipse (...)

<sup>37</sup> Bu ayrıcalıklı, gizli ve gizemli payeden kolay kolay vazgeçmek istemeyişi de doğal değil miydi?

After her sexual fantasy with the workman, she begins to contemplate on her situation and tries to shed some light on her insistence on maintaining her virginity. She confesses that “she delayed her awakening deliberately, but it was not because she did not want to wake up. She did want to wake up, very much indeed, but abstained from accepting and admitting her desire” (2007: 256-7)<sup>38</sup>. Then, she says that she wanted someone else to wake her up and that she wanted to be forced into sex and raped. “She wanted to leave the responsibility of losing her virginity to someone else; she wanted to be a victimized virgin” (ibid, 257)<sup>39</sup>. Yeğinobalı shows that Serap actually is not a passionate advocate of virginity, but a young woman who developed such violent thoughts due to the gender-based discrimination and suppression she had been exposed to all her life.

### Sexual Ignorance

Before enumerating some examples from the novel, I would like to clarify what I mean by the term “sexual ignorance”. Sexual ignorance points to the young female characters’ lack of knowledge on practical issues concerning sex as well as lack of intellectual inquiry into the fundamentals of the prevailing social system, the codes which determine what is *right* and what is *wrong* or *moral* and *immoral*. (my emphasis) These characters do not resist the dominant discourse, let alone trying to understand and deconstruct it.

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<sup>38</sup> Uyanmayı aslında istemişti, hem de çok istemişti istemesine de, istediğini Kabul ve itiraf etmekten kaçmıştı...

<sup>39</sup> “Kızlığını” yitirmenin sorumluluğunu bir başkasına yüklemek, bir bakire kurban olmak istemişti, kısacası.

Some behaviors of the young female characters in the novel explicitly imply ignorance at times. This ignorance breeds fear and shame which are the main obstacles on the way to the sexual and intellectual improvement of the literate (female) youth of the time. Serap, who is about to turn twenty, has no sexual experience and solid knowledge on heterosexual sexual intercourse, let alone the homosexual one. Her confusion concerning the homosexual relationship between two male characters of the novel gives us a hint of her unenlightened perception of sex.

Serap is attracted to a handsome workman who seems to be the recent partner of Vango Haldun, the homosexual artist of Mirganköy. When Serap tries to imagine the workman naked and to visualize sex between these two men, she cannot because she does not have enough knowledge either on the male anatomy or on the heterosexual way of making love. Therefore the idea of two men having sex is totally foreign to her.

Upon finding herself fantasizing about the workman, she faces the fact that she, too, has sexual drives even though she rejects them. When she realizes that she cannot suppress her sexuality anymore, she panics with feelings of guilt and shame. Upon waking from her fantasy, she thinks that her life is over and she will never ever be happy again. Yeğınobalı explores the cultural assumptions that underlie the often ambiguous relationship established with the notion of sexuality and points out how young women of the young Turkish republic are trapped by their ignorance and the consequent compliance to the prevalent social order. Zerrin, who was an adult enrolled at university, got impregnated during her first sexual intercourse. There is no clue in the novel that makes us think that Zerrin and Esat had protected sex. Due to their ignorance as far as practical sexual issues were concerned, Zerrin

did not take any steps although her period was three months late and had to deal with a miscarriage. As for Esat, he was compelled to assume responsibilities for which he was not mature enough, promising that he would get married to Zerrin.

When Serap's best friend Yasemin decides to run away with Naim and leave her fiancé Babür behind, she, too, acts in a confused, naïve and childish manner. She tells Serap that she is in love with Naim and will immediately grant him her virginity which she protected from Babür for years. When Serap asks her why she is in such a haste to have sex with Naim, Yasemin responds:

Don't you understand Serap, I have to do it as a guarantee for myself and for him. [...] I am afraid of myself, Serap! I am afraid of becoming the same Yasemin again at the last minute! It is not so easy for me to forsake the luxurious way of life when I am so close... That's why I have to give a guarantee to Naim, but indeed to myself. An irreversible guarantee... (2007: 75-76)<sup>40</sup>

Although giving her virginity to Naim does not work out as a guarantee, as I will explain further on in this section, we see that Yasemin views virginity like a turning point in life that is even more potent than her own will. In order to prevent herself from changing her mind about Babür again, she decides to have sex with Naim because she considers the consequences of her act irreversible. She supposes that once she loses her virginity, once her hymen is broken, she will not be the same person anymore. She will be a woman, someone's woman and she will have to get married...

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<sup>40</sup> Anlamıyor musun, Serap, bunu yapmam gerek, hem kendime hem de ona bir güvence olarak. [...] Kendimden korkuyorum, Serap! Son dakikada gene eski Yasemin olmaktan korkuyorum. Saltanatın eşliğinden dönmek kolay değil benim için... İşte bu yüzden şimdi Naim'e... ama asıl kendi kendime güvence vermem gerek. Geriye dönüşü olmayan bir güvence.

### Children Lost through Miscarriage or Impermissible Relationships

Zerrin's pregnancy ends with a miscarriage. When she realizes that she is bleeding and going through the very first stages of a miscarriage, she cannot venture to go to a doctor. Then, she decides to inform Esat about the situation, but changes her mind, remembering her mother's rebuke: "You should not tell men *everything!*" (ibid, 80). She lies to Esat that she feels tired and gets home with great difficulty. Since she cannot take the risk of running into her mother, she goes directly to the laundry room and stays there until she has the miscarriage. Then, she takes her fetus and with deep feelings of regret and despair, she throws it into the sea. If she were better informed about the results of sexual acts, she would have avoided pregnancy. Secondly, she would be able ask for her mother's or Esat's help when she realized that she might have a miscarriage, but it seems likely that she felt such strong embarrassment and guilt that she subconsciously *did* want to get rid of the baby and took no precautions to prevent the miscarriage. Just like Esat, Zerrin might have felt cornered by the idea of marriage and just like him, she might have had trouble imagining herself either as a wife or as a mother. As a result of her socially-constructed guilt, shame and womanly obedience, she lived through a trauma which will surely have long-lasting effects on her psyche.

We have another woman character in *Gazel* who lost her baby as well: It is Fazıla, Yasemin's alleged aunt. Near the end of the book, we learn that Yasemin's real mother is Fazıla. She was molested by her elder sister's husband, Süha, and could not reveal the truth due to her fear of him, so she decided to kill him. The boat accident which resulted with the death of Süha and Gazel occurred because Fazıla overturned the boat, well aware that Süha did not know how to swim.

However, she was not aware that Gazel, who joined them at the very last minute, did not know how to swim, either. At the end Süha was dead and Fazıla was pregnant. She could not handle the guilt of killing Gazel and lost her sanity. Since it was the family honor in question, Yasemin's mother Nigar decided to leave for Europe with her sister, telling everyone that she (Nigar) was pregnant and needed special medical treatment during her pregnancy due to her advanced age. Fazıla's days in Europe were mostly spent in psychiatry clinics because she could never forgive herself for causing the death of Gazel. Another deep-rooted feeling of guilt Fazıla had was due to her being molested by her sister's husband, and she could not talk about it to anyone due to the deep-rooted guilt of "being a woman". Most probably, she did not dare to reveal the truth because she was afraid of being accused of "itching for" what had happened to her. Someone could come out and say "Once the dick is erect, no rule can stop it".

### Homosexuality

Last but not the least, the subject of homosexuality can also be enumerated among the recurrent issues taken up in Nihal Yeğınobalı's novels. Vango Haldun is the son of a prominent and wealthy family in Mİrganköy. He does not conceal his gayness or display any embarrassment related to it. On the contrary, he dresses up in a feminine way and dates men openly.

Considering the level of conservativeness even in such an elite district of Istanbul in the 1950s, it is surprising that the residents tolerate his situation easily and visit his place frequently to see his recent artworks. As I have mentioned above, the young women characters are extremely ignorant about a man-to-man

relationship. They call Haldun's boyfriends his "husbands". We witness Serap's curiosity as to how (male) gay couples view, treat and address each other. "Does the workman who was thought to be Haldun's current "husband" call him You?"<sup>41</sup> But since the workman was the 'husband' was Vango addressing him You?" (ibid, 156).

Serap's established perception of the asymmetrical relationship between husband and wife is perplexed when she tries to apply the same pattern to the gay couple and she genuinely wonders who the "husband" is. She recounts how hard it has been for her to solve this riddle of homosexuality and then confesses that she still does not have a solid idea of how homosexual relations are carried out. She indicates that she could never ever ask any questions about this subject either to her elder sister Zerrin or to her mother. This reveals that homosexuality, though openly practiced and tolerated among the upper class of Istanbul, was still a taboo for the well-mannered young girls of the time. Yeğinobalı seems to incorporate the homosexuality component into some of her works with the purpose of providing the Turkish reader with a wider and more flexible perspective on gender-related taboos.

### *Mazi Kalbimde Bir Yaradır*

*Mazi Kalbimde Bir Yaradır (MKBY)* is the story of Lamia who grows up in a small town in the Aegean Region with her aunt and her children. Her mother is dead and her father left the town for Istanbul before the death of his wife, leaving Lamia in

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<sup>41</sup> The plural 'you' in Turkish is also used when addressing someone in a higher social status or someone older or respected. I will try to distinguish this 'you' from the others in English by writing it with a capital Y. It might as well be interpreted as an indicator of power asymmetry in social relations. For example, a student addresses her/his teacher as 'You'. In some families the children address their parents as 'You' individually. In this example, we see that Serap is taught that the wife addresses her husband 'You' and wonders who addresses who as 'You' in Haldun's relationship with the workman.

Yeşilce to her aunt Lütfiye. Lütfiye is the only living member of a long-established family with large land holdings and is responsible for the management of the land she inherited. Therefore, she is the head of the family and an extraordinary woman who does not pay much attention to superstitious beliefs like the rest of the residents of the town. She drinks raki every evening at dinner, talks like a man and has no religious affiliations. She is, from many aspects, radical, and the society tolerates her exceptional behaviors due to her high social status in the almost feudal system of Yeşilce.

Lamia grows up with Lütfiye's daughter Süsi and her son Korkut. Korkut is like a real, affectionate elder brother to her, whereas Süsi is depicted like one of Cindrella's wicked step-sisters.

This is a pattern Yeğınobalı uses in all of her books: The female protagonist always has a best-friend who is praised for her extreme beauty and who holds evil intentions against our naïve and childish protagonist who is unexceptionally an orphan. This closest friend is also the one of the two who is more into the sexual issues, be her knowledge accurate or not, and her perception of sex has developed more either due to her superior age or her vigorous curiosity. Yeğınobalı seems to depict such female characters to emphasize that it is not only men who tyrannize women, but also women who look down upon womanhood. Furthermore, Yeğınobalı's male characters are conspicuously unreliable and irresponsible.

Back to *MKBY*, Lamia has sex with her first teenage love, Turan, because she loves him and cannot see any reason why she should say no to him. However, Laima is about to leave for Istanbul to attend a private high school and Turan has to stay in Yeşilce to finish high school. Therefore, the two of them promise each other that they will get married as soon as Lamia is back. However, right before Lamia



departs, Süsi, the evil cousin, gets jealous and tells her mother that Lamia and Turan have been planning to get married. The aunt gets frustrated and tells Lamia that she is not her daughter anymore and that she should never come back to her house again. Since Lamia meets Turan after receiving the news about her father's death, her aunt Lütfiye also accuses Lamia of giving out marriage promises and intriguing behind her back on the very day of her father's death.

Lamia leaves Yeşilce with deep sadness, hoping that her aunt will forgive her and that she will start a brand new life in Istanbul. However, shortly after she arrives in Istanbul, she realizes that she is pregnant and manages to find a doctor who performs an illegal abortion. At the same time, she meets with Ali who is an acquaintance on her father's side. She knows Ali from her childhood when Ali came to visit her in Yeşilce as her father's representative. Ali was a young man then and he jokingly proposed to Lamia, telling her that he would wait for her to grow up. The story comes true when they meet in Istanbul. They fall in love and get married. However, they cannot live happily ever after because Lamia, desperate to have children, cannot get pregnant due to a condition caused by her former abortion.

This is also one of the common motifs in Yeğınobalı's novels (see Gazel). Lamia tries every medical way to get pregnant, but in the end learns that there is no possibility. This impels her to reveal the truth which she has been keeping as a secret for seven years to her husband Ali. After Ali's negative reaction, she decides to leave Istanbul and visit Yeşilce for the first time in years. During Lamia's years in Istanbul, Turan got married to Lamia's cousin Süsi. When Lamia comes back to Yeşilce, she learns that Turan and Süsi are divorced and their baby son, Yavuz, stays with his mother. She meets Turan and their love rekindles. This causes Lamia

to confront a vital dilemma: Should she reunite with Turan and live in a family of three in Yeşilce: Turan, his and Süsi's two year old son Yavuz and Lamia... Or should she get back to her husband?

### Sexual Ignorance

Upon paying close attention to how Esma, a former servant of the family, craves for certain foods due to her pregnancy and seeing how caringly everybody treats her, young Lamia tells her cousin Süsi who is on the verge of puberty that she wants to be pregnant all the time when she grows up and gets married. Süsi asks her if she knows how women get pregnant and receiving a "no" as an answer, she explains how men and women have babies. Lamia's first reaction is denial and confusion. She repeats to herself that this cannot be true and is convinced that Süsi is making it all up since it is beyond her comprehension. Lamia simply denies believing that such respected couples like her aunt and her deceased husband do such unacceptable things to have children.

Süsi remarks that she has decided that she will never get married or have children since "the way life works in this world is [...] abhorrent", so she declares that she will dedicate herself to her God (2005: 58) and asks Lamia: "Isn't it disgusting to be a woman? [...] I was told that there were some women who would love to do that thing and ask for it every single night" (ibid, 59).

It is not very surprising that children aged ten or twelve do not have healthy sexual knowledge, but it is significant for this study that they utter such powerful expressions at such an early age. These are the first bricks of the wall that will rise in time and prevent these future women from seeing that sex is something natural,

that they have every right to perform it as much as men do. Furthermore, imbuing these very young women with such strict value judgments on gender distinctions from their very early years will bereave them from approaching the already established gender system in their culture with a questioning attitude, causing them to miss the chance of developing revolutionary opinions to change the prevalent perception of women and their secondary status in society.

Moreover, just like Zerrin in *Gazel*, Lamia gets impregnated right after her first sexual intercourse, which is a sign of how ignorant both Lamia and Turan are of the physical consequences of their act.

### Virginity

Doubtlessly, virginity continues to be the leading issue in *MKBY* as well. In this novel, Yeğınobalı frequently emphasizes the long-established obsession of men to be the first to deflower their wives.

When Turan and Lamia kiss for the first time, Turan asks her if anybody else has kissed her before him. When he learns that he is the first man to kiss Lamia, he tells her that no one else will kiss her from then on. As I have mentioned in the previous section on *Gazel*, Freud notes that the first man a virgin has sexual intercourse with is considered to be the one to break the resistance which has been formed as a result of the social, cultural and ideological environment she grew up in. She is predicted, most probably, to accept him as a life-long partner, without ever considering building up relationships of the same nature with any other men. Consequently, “this experience creates a state of bondage in the woman” which

assures that she will belong to the same man and allows her to resist external stimuli (1977:265).

However, Turan's wish to be Lamia's only possessor will not come true since Yeğınobalı depicts Lamia as a woman with nonconformist tendencies who does not understand or accept social impositions easily. However, it would be overrating Lamia's nonconformist attitude if we claimed that she was objecting to the prevailing social system with certain awareness and a set strategy. Her reactions are rather instinctive, sometimes childish and naïve. Just like Serap in *Gazel*, Lamia is not a determined and powerful female figure. At the end of *Gazel*, Serap gets married to a rich and prestigious man right after her high school graduation and gets pregnant immediately. In *MKBY*, Lamia is divided between two men and two lives, and she cannot make up her mind until the very end of the novel when finally Turan declares that he cannot assume any responsibilities either as a father or as a husband. So, once again the decision maker is a man, leaving the woman in a passive and compliant role.

Yeğınobalı underscores the notion of virginity once more when Lamia confesses to Ali that she had sex with Turan. Ali, who had treated her with love and passion until then, suddenly stops touching her as if she is not the same woman he was desperately in love with one moment ago. "It would be me. It should have been me", he says, talking to himself in shock, and blames Lamia for not being able to see that she should have reserved herself for him (2005: 187). He claims eternal possession of Lamia, asking her deliriously: "How can someone else love you? How can someone else kiss these lips? How can someone else touch your body? How can someone else look at your naked body?" (ibid).

What is more, Ali, unable to accept that Lamia is not a virgin, invents a way of granting Lamia back her virginity and then claims to have taken it from her himself. He performs oral sex on Lamia and afterwards asks her obsessively: “He did not make you whimper like this, did he? Nobody else did this to you, did they?” (2005: 190). Upon receiving affirmation, he says: “It is now that you have become a real woman [...] It is me who made you a woman, Lamia” (ibid, 191).

### Abortion

Right before starting her new high school in Istanbul, Lamia realizes that she is pregnant. Since she has no one to ask for help, she decides to find a doctor who can perform an abortion on her. At first sight, the doctor seems to be a sensitive and understanding person who tries to comfort Lamia with comments such as “we are both women, I can understand what you are going through” or “this could have easily happened to anyone”. However, as soon as she realizes that Lamia is not one of those young women living under reduced circumstances and that she really does not have any family members in Istanbul, the doctor decides to benefit from Lamia’s desperation, asking for high amounts of money for her services. Since the first injections the doctor prescribes do not work out, Lamia has to visit the doctor’s depressing office once again when the actual act of abortion is carried out. Most significantly, we witness how cautious the doctor is since abortion was illegal until 1983. According to the new law concerning planned parenthood which was put into effect in 1983, “until the tenth week of pregnancy is completed, abortion is performed upon request if there is no medical obstacle as far as the mother’s health is concerned” (URL: 1983). Upon noticing her unawareness and ignorance, the

doctor scolds Lamia: “You have had contact with a man, but you are totally unaware of the consequences. Don’t you know that abortion is illegal? There is a law about it” (2005: 195).

This abortion experience Lamia goes through when she is seventeen affects the path of all her life. First, she gets pregnant due to her ignorance. Then, she hides this due to the social restrictions on women. She finds a female doctor who defrauds her and finally, as a result of her abortion, she cannot ever have babies again. Her obsession with becoming a mother and her insistence on hiding her abortion from her husband turn their marriage upside down. Yeğınobalı emphasizes the effects of social pressure on women and the illegality of abortion via Lamia’s painful life story and her rightful dilemmas as a woman.

#### Yeğınobalı’s Criticism of the Established Gender Roles in MKBY

In addition to the major issues discussed above, Yeğınobalı criticizes other gender-based distinctions and discriminations by pointing out the expressions sprinkled over daily discourse which are uttered without giving the gender-based remarks a second thought.

When Lamia sneaks out of her aunt’s house and meets Turan, she does not hide her eagerness to meet him. When Turan cautions her against expressing her genuine emotions so openly, Lamia asks him “Don’t you express yourself openly to me as well?” and Turan responds “Yes, I do, but you are a girl and people could misunderstand your openness” (ibid, 113). The same night, when Lamia and Turan talk about their parents, Lamia confesses that she feels somehow content that her father died since he had made her mother suffer a lot. Turan, who is also in constant

conflict with her father, tells Lamia that he sympathizes with her and that he, too, sides with his mother. He further explains his remark: “Our fathers are so strong that they do not need anyone to support them, whereas our mothers’ fate hangs on our fathers’ lips. First their own fathers, then our fathers...” (ibid, 133). Just like Yeğinoğlu did in *Gazel* by depicting a character such as Esat, in *MKB* she points to the fact that the established gender roles do not only impose constraints on women, but also on men through the character of Turan. Turan tells Lamia that when boys grow up and start a life of their own, they are compelled to behave like their fathers, but he does not wish to be like his father. This is what causes him to hesitate about starting a life of his own (ibid).

Last but not the least; near the end of the novel when Lamia cannot decide between Ali and Turan, she makes the following remark, opening a brand new door in the reader’s mind: “What if I do not go with either one of them. I would stay all by myself. Totally free, just like birds and I would raise my kid on my own” (2005: 318).

Yeğinoğlu presents us the story of a woman who graduates from a very prestigious high school in Istanbul, but does not attend university; who does not stop herself when her desires flare up and has sex with her first love under the shade of a tree, but who, afterwards, has to deal with an unexpected pregnancy due to her (and her partner’s) sexual ignorance. She is strong and confident enough to imagine a life without a man, but she acts as if she has to choose either Ali or Turan in order to move on and most probably gets back to her husband. Yeğinoğlu depicts female protagonists who generally act naively and rarely wisely so long as they confront the gender-based challenges of life. Except for one he protagonists are all teenage girls whose inner most sexual conflicts are deeply scrutinized.

## *Sitem*

*Sitem* is the story of two young girls, Cenan and Sitem, who together unveil the sexual secrets and intrigues in their little Aegean town, Yeşilce and who simultaneously discover their own sexual stimuli. In this novel, Yeğınobalı criticizes the taboo of virginity as well as providing the reader with a panorama of female town-dwellers who adopt the gender-based social impositions and who daringly penetrate the deeply established roles attributed to women by the prevailing social order.

Cenan, a fragile young girl, makes friends with the adopted household servant Sitem. Adoption is actually taking a child into one's family through legal means and raising her/him as one's own child, whereas Sitem was literally bought from her father, a poor villager who was unable to take care of his family. She is not bought to be raised on equal conditions with Cenan, but rather to help the chief servant with housekeeping and to keep Cenan company, as her is dead. We see a typical Yeğınobalı pattern being reproduced with the descriptions of the characters in *Sitem*: Cenan is an orphan just like all the female protagonists in Yeğınobalı's other novels. She is extremely fragile, naïve and introverted just like Lamia in *MKBY*. She is led into sexual discoveries by Sitem who is a few years older and far more comfortable with expressing her sexual knowledge or her sexual drives. Cenan's closest friend, Dalya, is very similar to Süsi of *MKBY* in nature. She is extremely wicked towards Cenan in that she is well aware of Cenan's weak spots and upsets her with deliberately hurtful remarks and lies.

Yeğınobalı depicts Sitem as a very beautiful and blossoming girl who attracts everybody's attention. Eşber, Dalya's elder brother, is also struck by her



beauty and begins to act flirtatiously as soon as he meets her. However, it should be underlined that Yeğınobalı discloses the discrimination based on social classes very clearly. She not only discusses the asymmetrical power relations established between the two sexes, but also tries to provide the reader an apt view on the distribution of social roles and obligations in the Turkish society of the 1930's. There are the notables of Yeşilce and the servants. The notables are well-educated and they hold professions, whereas the servants are ignorant people who believe in vulgar superstitions and are more into religion. Their only entertainment is gossiping about their patrons' private lives, love affairs, etc.

Sitem has a love affair with Eşber which later on proves to be merely sexual on Eşber's side. With the presentation of such a relationship, Yeğınobalı not only draws attention to gender-based discrimination or sexist social and cultural values, but also to the class-based social asymmetry of the period. For example we read Sitem saying: "Notable gentlemen would never take me. Only a guard, a coachman, a quilt-maker or maybe a merchant would marry me!" (ibid, 228).

Eşber's mother, Mihri, is also an exceptional woman and is totally unconcerned about the social reactions that she might receive in return for her daring acts. It is well-known by everyone in Yeşilce that she is having a passionate love affair with a younger man and she is not condemned due to her self-indulgently carefree attitude. She has sex with her lover in an open-top car on an abandoned street where Cenani and Sitem see her. Without any reservations, she openly accepts her lover in her house when her husband is away and does not conceal this either from her husband or the neighbors. Yeğınobalı constantly refers to Mihri's impunity and stresses the addiction the people of Yeşilce have developed for her. Mihri's high social status is most likely the primary and evident factor that

prevents social criticism towards her. Furthermore, being addicted to something that is regarded as a taboo is a strong implication of social inconsistency and hypocrisy.

Mihri gets pregnant with her lover's baby and has to give birth to it. Her husband accepts the baby as his own son and lies to the kith and kin that he was the father. However, the family does not embrace this illegitimate child very eagerly and they gladly allow Sitem to take care of him. Sitem, as Eşber's secret mistress, gives all her love and compassion to this baby, treating Aydın baby as her own. However, Eşber, who seems to have accepted his little brother's presence insidiously, nourishes hate against the child whom he regards as the felon fruit of his mother's immoral and dishonest acts. He somehow manages to steal the baby from Sitem and kills him. Then Sitem, who suspects that the murderer is Eşber, disappears mysteriously. Cenân, narrating the last part of the novel, admits that she saw Eşber burying the baby and speculates that it was Eşber who killed Sitem as well because Sitem suspected him.

There are virginity related implications, once again a traumatic abortion scene and emphasis on the curious, but sexually ignorant world of young girls.

### Sexual Encounters, Guilt and Fear

Throughout the novel, Cenân gets dumbstruck whenever she witnesses a sexual situation and feels repelled from the parties involved. She first witnesses Sitem performing oral sex on Eşber. While she is watching them secretly in pure shock, a dog barks and regaining her awareness, she panics. Feelings of guilt are readily apparent in her following statement "I felt as if I was about to get caught in the act. [...] I could have died if Eşber and Sitem knew that I was there and saw what was

happening” (2005:120). Then, she narrates how she ran away and threw up under a tree. Her intimate relationship with Sitem can never be cured after this incident. Another sexual trauma Cenana experiences is when Dalya tells her that Mehmet Mustafa, an elder and respected young man for whom Cenana has feelings, forced her to touch his penis and provided her with detailed information on his sexual experiences. Cenana’s attitude towards Mehmet Mustafa changes involuntarily.

Similarly, when Cenana and Sitem see Cenana’s father sneaking into the household servant Haççe’s room, Cenana immediately denies what she has just seen and bursts into tears. In the following years, when Cenana leaves Yeşilce and settles in Istanbul to live her own life, just like Lamia of *Mazi Kalbimde Bir Yaradır* did, her father and Haççe get married. She sees her father rarely in Istanbul and refuses to get into contact with Haççe whom she cannot forgive as an extension of the teenage trauma she faced when she saw Haççe taking her father to her bed. Near the end of the novel, Cenana, now an adult, admits that she needs to blame someone for all her losses and traumas and she chose Haççe for that. The narrator tells us:

Cenana was not aware of how much help and guidance she needed. And how could she be? Seemingly, there was nothing troublesome in her life! Everything, everyone seemed to be as they always had been. Yet, nothing and nobody were the same as before. Sitem was not the good old Sitem. [...] And Cenana wanted her Sitem back. She wanted her Aunt Haççe back, but all her thoughts and yearnings were taking her to the edge of a void: who was the good old Haççe? And who was the new Haççe? (ibid, 250).

Cenana, fragile, vulnerable and introverted, one of Yeğinoğlu’s typical female characters, runs away from Yeşilce where she has experienced her first sexual encounters, traumas and the consequent prejudices. In her later years in Istanbul, she reflects on her past decisions and through Cenana’s self-analyses,

Yeğınobalı presents the reader a wider picture of women dealing with social value judgments and questioning the established patriarchal social and cultural system.

### Virginity

After taking a step out of her own naïve and childish world and realizing the hidden sexual agenda of her hometown, Cenân isolates herself from her family and friends whom she secretly and unconsciously deems dirty. Ironically, she denies the sexuality she finds in the world of adults, yet falls for Eşber, the main male character in the novel who selfishly benefits from his privileged social position and takes it as far as murdering his illegitimate baby brother for the sake of his family's, particularly his mother's honor.

Cenân, no longer able to suppress her feelings and desire for Eşber, confesses to him that she has feelings for him and that she wants to become his woman. Since Cenân follows her love Eşber very closely, she finds out that Eşber is hiding in the town after telling everyone that he is leaving for İzmir for business purposes. Cenân goes and faces him in his hiding place. Eşber, afraid that Cenân might reveal his secret, tells her that he, too, is eager to make her his woman, but makes her promise that she will not tell anyone that Eşber is actually in town, not in İzmir. In the following days, Cenân witnesses him burying the dead body of his baby brother and reveals her presence to Eşber upon the crime scene. Upon realizing that Cenân saw him burying the baby, Eşber tries to persuade her that what he has just buried was a baby doll from their early childhood and makes promises to her that they will become lovers and get married on the condition that Cenân keeps quiet about what she has witnessed. He makes her believe that he has feelings for her as well. Cenân

gets drunk with happiness upon hearing Eşber's promises and impatient to give herself to the love of her life, tells him that she will never ever tell anything to anyone. Then, Eşber asks Cenân abruptly if she is willing to have sex with him and tells her that if she agrees he is going to "marry" her right there at that moment. Upon Cenân's silent agreement, he begins to touch her body. While Cenân is puzzled, trying to understand why Eşber is so aloof during such an intimate act, her body suddenly shakes with strong pain. Eşber sticks his finger in Cenân's vagina to take her virginity from her and to use it as a trump card against her in case she ever decides to tell anyone what she has just witnessed. He immediately stands up and tells her: "Now we got married! [...] You are my wife forever. You have to stay loyal to me" (2005: 307). While Cenân is telling the incident to Dalya in a letter she is writing years later, she emphasizes three times within two paragraphs how her blood "gushed out" and "flowed" following Eşber's sudden act. She further indicates that she considers that day as the day of her death in Yeşilce. This reveals how traumatic the incident has been for Cenân. We again encounter the deep-rooted belief that if a woman loses her virginity to a man, she becomes his and if she loses her virginity in a premarital relationship, we see that her partner can even hold this as a threat against her.

Furthermore, we are shown that a man holds the right to turn a "girl" into a "woman" (and if he wants he can make her "his woman") just with a finger. He does not need to have any feelings towards her, nor does she have to have sexual intercourse with her. This incident where Eşber destroys the rest of Cenân's life with a finger reveals that the established social and cultural rules which value virginity highly do not care about the process that leads to the loss of the virginity,

but just consider the result. Yeğınobalı points to the fact that women are classified simply on the basis of virginity.

### Yeğınobalı, A Feminist?

As I have studied in the second chapter of this thesis, Yeğınobalı wrote a book in her early twenties and chose to claim that her work was a translation of a non-existing author's, Vincent Ewing's, original work *The Curtain Sweeps Down*. She disclaimed originality because she was not in a situation where she could handle the consequences of having created an original work which was daringly erotic. She voluntarily created a persona for herself, a white American male figure, and managed to have her work published without being reproached due to the extraordinary gender-related roles and traits she attributed to the characters of her novel.

We can say that Yeğınobalı used pseudo-translation as a tool to open the doors of the Turkish literary system of her time at the cost of forsaking her authorial rights due to her literary aspirations and her resistant nature that leads her to act against the stream. After gaining renown as the (pseudo) translator of *Genç Kızlar*, Yeğınobalı had acquired a certain reputation in the literary arena of Turkey. When the reality about *Genç Kızlar* was publicly revealed, Yeğınobalı was already a famous, reputable and prolific translator who had almost always been remembered for her pseudo-translation. In addition to *Genç Kızlar*, she has written five books, all of which share an intention to criticize the established conceptions, traditions and laws concerning women.

Before discussing whether it could be claimed that Yeğınobalı's works are of a feminist nature or not, I would like to make a few remarks on the way she reads and uses the dominant discourse on femininity.

Disguise as a white American male provided Yeğınobalı the empowerment she had been seeking for. Her choice of such a persona indicates that she was conscious enough to read Turkey's social and cultural conjuncture correctly and that she could use the discourse of the prevailing system skillfully enough to have *Genç Kızlar* accepted. Her skillful use of the dominant discourse could be taken up in two ways. First at a macro level, as in the pseudo-translation case of *Genç Kızlar* and secondly at a micro level, as in the discourse she adopts when narrating her novels and portraying her characters.

As I have tried to point out in the previous part, all of Yeğınobalı's female protagonists act in a confused, naïve and childish manner when confronted with a sexual experience. On some occasions, they assume subversive roles, however when their overall attitude is considered, they, in a sense, reproduce the same patriarchal discourse. Serap in *Gazel*, Lamia in *Mazi Kalbimde bir Yaradır* and Cenân in *Sitem* do display unconventional and subversive behavior which leads the reader to question some established concepts concerning gender based relations. However, they all end up as passive, unhappy and undecided adults who could not overcome their teenage traumas and who mostly let their lives flow in the direction determined by external factors, i.e. their lovers and husbands or social judgements. Serap, who seems to question the social impositions about virginity, becomes its fervent advocate at times. At the beginning, Lamia is portrayed as a brave young woman who can leave her husband behind due to his obsessive attitude about being her first man. However, later on, she starts to act as a passive female figure whose

only motivation in life is becoming a mother. Similarly, Cenan, who loses her virginity to Eşber, declares this event as her death. Furthermore, she hides the secret of this man who has committed murder to clean his mother's and his family's honor for long years, though she is the only person who knows for sure that he was the murderer of baby Aydın and Sitem.

From this perspective, I have doubts about claiming that Yeğınobalı presented the Turkish readers with novels that offered them new conceptions on gender related issues. The reviews published on Yeğınobalı's works which I have encountered during my research mostly view Yeğınobalı as a revolutionary and subversive figure who opens new perspectives on gender-related issues in the Turkish society. In the introduction of her interview with Yeğınobalı, Öğüt argues that "in Yeğınobalı's latest novel *Gazel*, the notion of virginity [...] is being problematized"<sup>42</sup> (Öğüt 2007, URL). Moreover, Öğüt claims that "Yeğınobalı gives an account of the suppressed sexuality in Turkish society with a mysterious eroticism in her novels *Belki Defne*, *Mazi Kalbimde Bir Yaradır*, *Cumhuriyet Çocuğu*, *Sitem* and finally *Gazel*"<sup>43</sup> (ibid). In her first question to Yeğınobalı, Öğüt claims that "the women's love and desire have been described based on the patriarchal parameters in Western and Turkish literatures until the early twentieth century, whereas Yeğınobalı's novels do not fit in this pattern supported by the patriarchal standpoint"<sup>44</sup>. However, as I have tried to reveal above with my close readings of the protagonists Yeğınobalı creates, her novels actually do fit in and reproduce the patriarchal discourse mentioned by Öğüt. Furthermore, in this interview Yeğınobalı specifies the genre of her novel *Gazel* as psychological thriller

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<sup>42</sup> See Appendix 4.

<sup>43</sup> See Appendix D.

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix D.



and states that she does not regard herself as a feminist. Similarly, in the interview Erdoğan conducted with Yeğınobalı for *Tempo* magazine in 2003, we read her declaring that she is not a feminist (Erdoğan 2003, URL)<sup>45</sup>.

Yeğınobalı does not lend herself to such straight forward classification. She states that she has been referred to as a feminist pioneer in some reviews although she only writes on eroticism with the intention of liberating what has been sexually suppressed on women's side. She delimits her area of authorship as the human condition (cf., Yeğınobalı 2007).<sup>46</sup>

In the light of these examples, we can infer that critics attributing Yeğınobalı a revolutionary role were mistaken to an extent since a close reading of her novels allows us to remark that she actually reproduces the elements that make up the dominant patriarchal discourse although she depicts protagonists with certain subversive and resistant tendencies.

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<sup>45</sup> See Appendix E.

<sup>46</sup> See Appendix B.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore Nihal Yeğınobalı's *Genç Kızlar* case within the framework of the gender-based reactions of Turkish society and culture towards a subversive and resistant act of pseudo-translation, pseudo translation being regarded as an agent of change. From a systemic point of view, the notion of change is described in this study as a perennial and inescapable component of cultural systems. It is further explained that systems which remain unchanged for long periods of time periods become marginalized and are forced to leave their places to new systems in that culture. Ironically, cultural systems willing to continue their reign over other systems resist change and are mostly inclined to maintain the status quo. If changes are introduced to cultural systems under disguise, their chance of being accepted is higher (cf. 2005). In this respect, the study provides the reader with several examples of pseudo-translation where original works are disguised as translations for cultural manipulation purposes. Since translation is largely considered secondary compared to the original work, its effects are not attributed as much importance as an original work's. In other words, when an author claims that s/he is the translator of the work s/he has actually produced, the responsibility and, at times, burden of the work created are not put on her/his shoulders since s/he is considered as a re-writer or just a messenger.

Pseudo-translations are also good indicators of the prevalent translation norms of the culture. When an author produces a written work which is against the

mainstream and wants to have it published without confronting any opposition, s/he may choose to disclaim her/his authorship and instead, may claim that s/he has actually translated this text. In this case, s/he is obliged to make the related parties believe that there is indeed an original text from which the translation was made. Since there is no original text, the pseudo-translator produces a text which seems like a translation textually and extra-textually, simultaneously providing us with the current norms and expectations associated with the product of translation. Furthermore, a close reading of such a text provides valuable clues as to wider social, cultural and ideological reasons and repercussions of the act of pseudo-translation.

As the concept of pseudo-translation is reconsidered, it is realized that determining a concrete definition for it is not so easy. Needless to say, it is essential to reconsider the concepts of original and translation as well for a horizon-widening problematization of pseudo-translation. As the discussions on the particular gender factor in the example of *Genç Kızlar* arise, the parallelism between them and translation theories which challenge the established concepts of production and reproduction, original and translation, or primariness and secondariness become apparent.

In the course of this study, Kemal Tahir's translations were the first examples to pave the way for questioning the boundaries of pseudo-translation. His science-fiction translation *Boşluk Korsanları* was discovered to be far more of an original piece of writing than a translation due to the additions he made to the original book. This fact stimulates questions as to where the boundaries between original and translation are to be set, and consequently what the criteria for pseudo-translation are. In addition to the theoretical expansions pseudo-translation offers, it

is can also serve as a useful methodological tool, allowing the translation scholar to discuss her/his case within the relevant context. This is very important for translation studies in that contextualization brings a much wider and multi-layered perspective to the discipline and it encourages interdisciplinary studies which reveal how central translation actually is and how it is capable of shedding light on major issues from a various range of disciplines.

Since my intention is to focus on the relation between gender and translation within the scope of this study, I have tried to explore the parallelism between gender-based translation theories and Nihal Yeğınobalı's pseudo-translation case. Such a reading enabled me to conclude that a multi-layered and contextualized perspective is definitely required for each specific case.

Most of the theories I have reviewed basically associated femininity with translation/translator and masculinity with originality. The deeply rooted binary oppositions between production and reproduction constituted the basis of this conception. However, rethinking the gender roles within the context of this pseudo-translation case brings us to a point where we see that a translation made by a white American male writer is more likely to make a smooth and welcomed entrance into the Turkish the literary system of the 1950s than an original work produced by a Turkish woman. In addition, regarding pseudo-translation as an agent of change opens up new perspectives for translation scholars theoretically, raising such questions like: What kind of traditions did Yeğınobalı want to challenge? What was it that these traditions tried to maintain? Can the answers to these questions be related to the culture's general conception of translation? Can a translator hold the power to stimulate social and cultural change? Reconsideration of these questions sheds light on the misconception that translation is merely a linguistic act of

transference detached from other disciplines. On the contrary, as we go deeper into the reasons for the use of pseudo-translation and try to adopt a theoretical framework which is open to the deconstruction of the concepts that has been taken for granted for a long time, we see that translation studies should actually be viewed as a prolific interdisciplinary field, allowing us to discover the untouched lands located in the interface of translation and its context.

Yeğınobalı's preference concerning the pseudo-author of her pseudo-translation provides significant gender-based implications. Yeğınobalı could not reveal her authorship due to her being a Turkish female and with the purpose of winning social approval, she profiled Vincent Ewing almost as her opposite: an Anglo-American male. This characterization implies that in those years, it was generally acceptable for a man to write about eroticism whereas if a woman produced such work, she would be approached with reproach and meet with resistance.

The reviews as well as the blurbs of her future novels imply that Yeğınobalı's extraordinary solution was indeed a subversive feminist act within the context of a patriarchal literary and social system. *Genç Kızlar* first made Yeğınobalı known as the talented young translator of a bestseller. When she declared her authorship almost forty years later, the pseudo-translation case became available for critics to explore and write reviews on. As the case has gained more popularity, Yeğınobalı's identification as a subversive female character has also been reinforced. Furthermore, the novels she wrote after her sensational declaration were also built around topics like virginity and sexual pressure on women. This contributed to her feminist image as well.

At the beginning of this study, I set off with the assumption that Yeğınobalı's pseudo-translation allowed her to acquire visibility in the Turkish literary system in the short run and granted her the authority to write novels on women and eroticism which criticize the gender-based asymmetry in Turkish society in the long run. In order to validate this assumption, I have conducted a close reading of her books and discussed three of them within the scope of this study from a gender-based viewpoint. My investigations showed me that although Yeğınobalı does create subversive characters that display some extraordinary behavior and at times resist the sexual status quo in society, her novels do not offer the audience a separate reality as far as the gender issues in today's Turkey are concerned. What is more, I have brought it to the reader's attention that she herself refuses the label *feminist* as well because as she indicates she does not have any thing against men, whereas she believes most feminists do<sup>47</sup>. (my emphasis)

This conclusion I have arrived at reveals once again how crucial it is to adopt a multi-layered approach when exploring any case related to translation studies. Without a multi-dimensional perspective, it is impossible to challenge fundamental concepts and come up with new approaches appropriate for subverting ossified conceptions that hold back the evolution of translation studies as a totally independent discipline. Only then, will translation studies be able to earn the reputation it actually deserves. Furthermore, this approach is capable of displaying that when exploring the social, cultural, ideological or historical repercussions of translation cases, translation theories do not necessarily have to occupy a secondary role when interacting with more established/long-standing disciplines. On the contrary, it is just as satisfactory and helpful as other social sciences in providing

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<sup>47</sup> See Appendix E

researchers with effective methodologies and tools to analyze and deconstruct perspectives that have long been taken for granted. Consequently, this will ensure that translation studies can open up new horizons and offer new paradigms to be taken up by scholars working on other independent fields of research.

## APPENDIX A

### ERDAL ÖZ'S INTERVIEW WITH YEĞİNOBALI <sup>7</sup>



## SÖYLEŞİ

*Genç Kızlar*, kendine aşkı yasaklamış bir erkekle onu seven üç genç kızın romanı. Yazarı *Vincent Ewing* ise sanal bir yazar. Sözde Amerikalı. Ama Amerika'da öyle bir romancı yok. Romanın gerçek yazarı *Nihal Yeğınobalı*. Genç yaşta yazdığı bu güzel romanı, neden takma bir adla yayınladığını bunca yıl sonra, aşağıda okuyacağınız söyleşimizde bütün boyutlarıyla açıklıyor *Nihal Yeğınobalı*.

İşte sorularımız, işte yazarın yanıtları:

Genç Kızlar'ı yazdığınızda *Arnavutköy Kız Koleji'nde öğrenciydiniz. Kaç yaşında yazdınız bu romanı?*

*Genç Kızlar* romanımı yazdığım sırada Arnavutköy Amerikan Kız Koleji'ni bitirmiştım. Daha diplomamı almadan İngilizce'den Türkçe'ye üç-dört roman çevirmiştım. Yirmi bir yaşındaydım.

*Yayınevine niçin çeviri bir roman olarak verdiniz?*

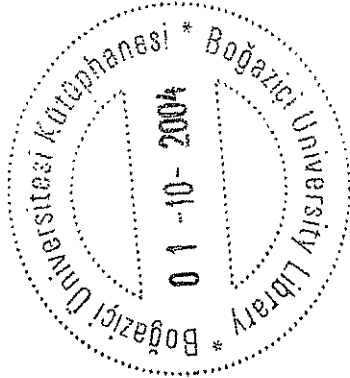
Ben de güzel bir roman yazabilirim, diye düşünüyordum, ama çalıştığım yayınevindeki editör ağabeylerim, "Hele biraz büyü, o zaman yazarsın," diyorlardı.

*Kitabınıza yabancı bir yazar olarak neden 'Vincent Ewing' gibi bir erkek adı seçtiniz? Bir kadın adı da seçebilirsiniz.*

O yaz başında tatil için Manisa'ya gitmiştim. Editörüm,

NIHAL YEĞİNOBALI'NIN  
CAN YAYINLARI'NDAKİ  
KITAPLARI

CUMHURİYET ÇOCUĞU / *anı*  
MAZİ KALBİMDE YARADIR / *roman*  
SİTEM / *roman*  
GENÇ KIZLAR / *roman*



525  
P  
22.2  
441  
546  
2000



*Nihal Yeğİnobalı*, Manisa'da doğdu. İstanbul'a geldiğinde 8 yaşındaydı. Orta ve lise öğrenimini Arnavutköy Amerikan Kız Koleji'nde tamamladı. Daha sonra Amerika'ya gitti. New York Eyalet Üniversitesi'nde edebiyat öğrenimi gördü. Usta bir çevirmen olarak sayısız klasik ve çağdaş edebiyatçıyı, romanları ve öyküleriyle dilimize kazandırdı. *Vincent Ewing* adını koyduğu sözde Amerikalı bir yazarın imzasıyla yazdığı ilk romanını *Genç Kızlar* adıyla yayımlattı. Bu kitap, çeviri bir kitap kandırmacısıyla yıllarca yeni basımlar yaptı. Hâlâ da basılıp satılmakta. Daha sonra *Mazî Kalbimde Bir Yaradır* adlı ikinci romanı yayımlandı (1988). *Sitem*, yazarın üçüncü romanıdır. *Cumhuriyet Çocuğu* adlı bir anı kitabı da kaleme almıştır.



“Çok kalma, çünkü acele roman ihtiyacımız var,” dedi. Gerçi bağımsız çalışıyordum ama yayıneviyle biririmize güveniyorduk, bu yüzden söz dinlemek zorundaydım. Ama Manisa’dan erken dönmek de istemiyordum. Bunun üzerine bir taşla iki kuş vurmaya karar verdim: Hem tatilimi istediğimce uzatacak, hem de yazmak istediğim romanı yazacaktım.

Romanını yazacak kadar yakından bildiğim tek konu, birkaç yıl önce geride bıraktığım okul yaşantılarımdı. Kapağı bir dünya olan yatılı kız okullarının perde arkasından, ilginç, sürükleyici, hatta çoğunluk için şaşırtıcı bir roman çıkacağını biliyordum. Gene de, yayınevindeki ‘büyük’lerin önyargısına önlem olarak takma ad kullanmaya niyetliydim. Beri yandan roman, ister istemez, oldukça açık-saçık sahneler içerecekti, bu yüzden yazarının bir erkek olmasını uygun gördüm. O yıllarda çeviri romanlar daha çok tutulduğu için de, romanımın Amerika’daki bir kız okulunda geçen ‘yabancı’ bir hikâye olmasına karar verdim.

*Dönemine göre oldukça da erotik bir roman. O yaşta bu erotik ayrıntıları nasıl canlandırdınız?*

Çok kitap okuyordum, ağırlıklı olarak da roman ve şiir. Sonra, genç kızların kendi aralarında en çok konuştukları konu da aşk-meşk, cinsellik, evlilik, doğal olarak. Hele Galatasaray gibi, Erkek Koleji vb. yatılı erkek okullarında ağabeyleri olanlar, kızların bilgi dağarcığına çok katkıda bulunurlardı. Gergi duyduklarımızın çoğunu doğru dürüst anlamazdık ya, o başka! Örnekte, son sınıfta oral seks denen şeyi (St. Joseph Lisesi bir ağabey yoluyla) öğrenmiştik de, şair Nedim’in ünlü ‘Kız mısın, oğlan mısın kafir!’ dizesiyle seslendiği sevgilisini, ‘erkek Fatma’ denilen türden, ele avuca sığmaz bir genç hatun sanıyorduk.

Ayrıca, romandaki erotizm incelendiğinde çok da aşırı olmadığı görülecektir. Bu romanda ve öbür romanlarımda benim yazdığım aşk sahnelerini etkili kılan şey, duygu ve çağrışım yüklü olmalarıdır. Yani bu sahneler salt erotik edim ve duygularla kısıtlı değildir; başka insancıl duygularla, yaşamın başka yönleriyle, başka ten ve beden hazla-

rıyla bağlantılı oldukları için yoğun ve etkindirler.

Genç Kızlar’daki ünlü ‘vahşi kırmızı ay’lı sahne gibi.

*Bunca yıl neden sustunuz, gerçeği neden açıklamadınız?*

Romanım beğenilirse, “Ben yazdım!” diye itiraf edecektim. Hem de sevinerek, gururla. Romanım çok, hem de pek çok beğenildi. Gel gör ki erotik yönü fazla öne çıkıyordu. Sanırım bunun bir nedeni de romanda ‘genç kızlık’ kavramıyla ‘cinsellik’ kavramının harman edilmiş olmasıydı. Könu, ‘genç kadınlar’ olsa etkisi bu denli sarsıcı olmazdı, diye düşünüyorum. Kısacası, ben bir genç kız olarak bu romana sahip çıkmaktan çekindim. Zamanla da *Vincent Ewing* olmaksızın bana. Sonra, o yıllarda ellerde dolaşan birçok Türk romanlarının, adlarına kadar, Fransızca’dan kotarılmış olduğu dillerde gezerken, benim, hepsinden daha çok beğenilen romanımı bir Amerikalı’ya mal etmemdeki ironi de hoşuma gidiyordu. O yıllarda çevirmen olarak ben, özgün yazarlardan daha yüksek ücret aldığım için *Vincent Ewing* olmakla parasal yönden de zarara uğruyor degildim. Bu arada, kita-



*Kitabın ilk basımına sanal yazar Vincent Ewing’in bir resmi bastırılmış. Bu resim, Nihal Yeğinobalı’nın açıklamasına göre eski bir Vogue dergisinden alınmış bir Fransız aristokratının Kont de Paris’in resmiymiş.*

bın yayımlanmasından birkaç yıl sonra bir Amerikalı'yla evlenip Amerika'ya gittim. 60'lı yılların başında yurda kesin dönüş yaptığımda *Vincent Ewing*'le ilgili bu aldatmacam, yayın dünyasında öğrenilmiş bulunuyordu. Hem yakın çevremdeki üç-beş sırdaşım 'konuşmuştu', hem de *Vincent Ewing*'in başka kitapları da olabileceğini uman birkaç yayınevi araştırmalar yaptırmıştı. Ben de *Vincent Ewing*'in çevirmeni olarak yaşamımı sürdürmekte bir sakınca görmedim. Yalnızca basın-yayın söyleşilerinde gerçeği dile getirdim.

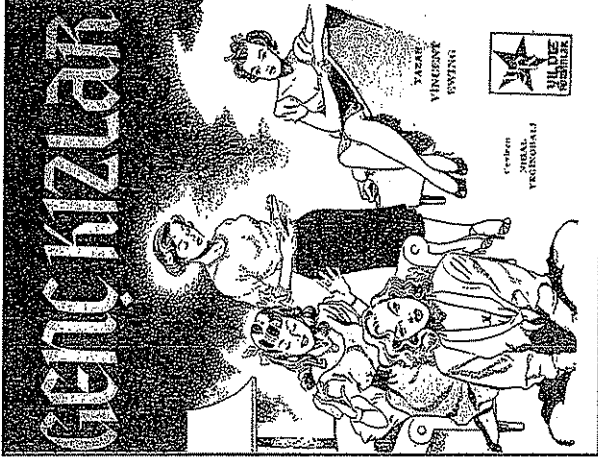
*Bir dergide bir zamanlar tefrika edilmiş, sözde Amerikalı bir yazarın romanını Türkçe'ye çevirme önerisiyle gidiyorsunuz yayınevine. Niye kitap değil de tefrika?*

O yıllarda, yayımlanışının üzerinden on yıl geçmiş yazıtlara telif ücreti (copyright) ödenmezdi. Bir çevirmen olarak yayınevine götüreceğim öneride bu noktayı da dikkate almak durumundaydım. Bu yüzden bu romanın çok eskiden yazılmış olduğunu söyledim. Tefrika edilmiş olması da benim kendi yalanımı korumam yönünden zorunluydu. Yayınevinin benden, kitabın aslını istemesini böylece önlemiş oluyordum.

*Kitabın yazılışını, yayınevine gönderilişini, yayınevinin bu çeviriyi karşılayışını biraz anlatır mısınız?*

Romanı yazmaya bir haziran ayında başladım, ünlü Manisa sıcağında. Ramazandı. Çevirmen olarak çalışmaya başladıktan sonra aldığım üç-beş kiloyu vermek için oruç tutuyordum, ama sahura kalkmadan. Sıcak öylesineydi ki acıkıyor, müthiş susuyordum. Sabahleyin yazının başına oturuyordum. Terlerin alnımdan kâğıdın üstüne damlaması hâlâ gözlerimin önündedir. Öğle saatinde mahalleden dondurmacı geçiyordu. Her gün o saatte oruç tövbemi bozmama razı kalıyordum, ama sıkı duruyordum. Uzun yaz gününün sonunda iftar topu patladığında, rahmetli yengemin ısrarıyla bir lokma bir şey yiyor, en az on bardak su içiyordum.

O gün yazdığım bölümü akşam üzeri saat 3-4 gibi iz-



*Genç Kızlar romanının ilk basımının kapağı. Yıl 1950. Türkiye Yayınevi'nin Yıldız Romanlar dizisi*

mir'den gelen İstanbul Expressi'nin posta vagonuna, elimle teslim ediyordum. Yazdıklarımın bir kopyasını çıkarıp almamak aklımın ucundan bile geçmiyordu. Yalnızca yazdığım son sayfayı saklıyor, ertesi gün ezberden devam ediyordum. Mektupların sık sık kaybolduğu, geciktiği o yıllarda bu romanın bir tek bölümünün bile postada kaybolmaması, gecikmemesi bir tür mucize sayılmaz mı?

Açlığın, bir süre sonra kişiyi, alköl ya da uyuşturucu gibi 'uçurduğu' bilinir. Ben de o günlerde böyle bir 'euphoria' içindeydim herhalde. Gençlik de cabası, tabii! Neyse, on günde altı kilo verdikten sonra orucu bıraktım.

Yaptığım işin vahimliği ancak Manisa'dan İstanbul'a dönerken Bandırma vapurunda kafama dank etti: Ben ne yapmışım? Koskoca bir yayınevine düzmece bir roman yutturmaya kalkışmışım! Ya roman, düşündüğüm gibi güzel ve kıvrak değil de kötü ve saçmasapanısa?

Birkaç gün sonra korka Çağaloğlu yokuşunu tırmanıp yayınevine gittim, üst kattaki odaya çıktım. Havada bir gerginlik mi vardı, yoksa bana mı öyle geliyordu? Derken aşağıdaki basımevinden bir dizgici çocuk, elinde dizilmiş bir formayla geldi. Benden yana merakla bakıyormuş gibime geldi. Nitekim biraz sonra bir dizgici çocuk daha gelip kapıdan bana baktı. Benim artık iyice içim çürümüştü. Derken baş mürettip Halis Abi de geldi; o zaman durum açıklığa kavuştu: İlk deprem dizgi sırasında olmuş. Kitabı dizenler, "Biz böyle güzel roman okumadık da, dizmedik de, şimdiye kadar!" diyorlarmış. Sonra bu hayranlar kitlesine üst kattakiler de katılmış!

Evet, romanım beni bile şaşırtacak ölçüde beğenilmişti. Gel gör ki yayınevinin büyükleri şimdi de, "Kız sen bu sahneleri nasıl çevirebildin böyle!" diye inanmazlıklar içindeydiler. Gel de, "Çevirmedim, yazdım!" de.

Böylece itirafım neredeyse kırk yıl ertelenmiş oldu.

*Kitaba ilginin büyük olduğunu biliyoruz. Ne gibi yankılar uyandırdı?*

*Genç Kızlar*'ı herkes okudu. Roman okumamakla 'öven' kimi erkek kişilerin bile, "Okuduğum tek roman!" diye kitabımı 'onurlandırdıklarını' duyuyordum! Genç kızların çoğu, annelerinin aldığı romanı annelerinden gizli okuyorlardı. Okullarda, derslerde gizlice okurken basılıyorlardı. Bütün bunlar şimdiki promosyon, afiş, radyo, televizyon, basın söyleşileri gibi tanıtım yollarının bilinmediği, tek reklamın yayınevinin yayınladığı öbür kitapların arka sayfalarında ve dergilerinde yapıldığı bir dönemde, yalnızca okuyanların okumayanlara söyledikleriyle gerçekleşiyordu.

Ertesi yaz gene Manisa'ya, tatile gittiğimde gördüm ki *Genç Kızlar*, "Nihal'in hani geçen yaz, burada Türkçe'ye çevirdiği roman" orada da fırtına gibi esmişti. O akşam, yazıtım olan akraba ve arkadaş kızlarıyla Şehir Kütübü'ne gittik. O günde kızların kendi aralarında "Genç Kızlık" oynadıklarını fark ettim. Kitaptaki kızları aralarında paylaştılar!

"Gabriel geliyor!" diye fısıldaştılar.

Hükümet Hastanesi'ndeki bir doktoru da Gabriel rolüne yakıştırmışlardı, çünkü adamın karısıyla 'mutlu' olmadığımı biliyorlardı.

Ankara, İzmir ve İstanbul'da karşılaştığım birçok kızlar da kitabı yaşamaktaydılar. İçlerinden biri, "Ben o kızları çok kışkırdım!" dedi bana. Çoğunluk *'Miss Bee'* ve *'Hindley Bell'* tiplerini özümseyordu. Bu duygularını, yıllar geçse de yitirmediklerini, şimdi ileri yaşlarındaki *Miss Bee*'ler ve *Hindley Bell*'lerle karşılaşp konuştuğuca anlıyorum.

Bunun tersi de geçerliydi: Kitabı okuyan erkekler kendilerini *Gabriel Samson*'la özdeşleştiriyor, karşılarındaki kıza da kitaptakilerden biri olarak görme eğilimine giriyorlardı.

Beni çok beğendiğini bildiğim bir gencin bir akşam yemeğinde iki kadeh şarap içtikten sonra bana, "Sen mutlaka öyle bir erkek tanıydın, mutlaka öyle bir kırmızı ayılı gece yaşamışsındır," diye takaza etmesi gibi.

Ondan ayrıldıktan sonra içimden, "Tanısam ne olur ya ni, yaşasam ne olur yani!" diye, çevremdeki Türk erkeklerinin cinsellik konusundaki ikiyüzlülüğüne isyan ettiğimi anımsıyorum.

Beri yandan iki yıl sonra İstanbul-Ankara arasındaki bir tren yolculuğunda rastladığım bir genç erkek, *Genç Kızlar*'ın çevirmeni olduğumu öğrenince bana felsefe dolu birkaç mektup yazmış, sonunda evlenme önerisinde bulunmuştu.

*Gabriel Samson*'luğa kendini fazlaca kaptıran bir genç erkeğin, koklaşmakta ileri gitmesine izin vermeyen kız arkadaşına, "Miss Bee olsa yapardı ama!" dediğini, kızın da onu, "Asla! Zaten *Gabriel Samson* ondan böyle bir şey istemezdi!" diye yanıtladığını bana kızın kendisi anlatmıştı.

Bu olayları sizi gülümsetecek birer hoşluk olarak aktardım. Yoksa romanın okur üzerindeki sihri ve kalıcı etkisine ilişkin, hâlâ, her gün yorumlar duymaktayım. Bu roman bir yerde, bir damar yakalamış, sanıyorum. Bilsen, hemen gidip yeniden, dört elle sarılacağım o damara! Ne var ki büyünün, *Genç Kızlar*'ı, bir genç kızın yazmış olmasından kaynaklandığını düşünüyör, meydanı ilkbaharlarını yaşıyan genç kızlara bırakıyorum.

*Romanınız, Amerika'da bir kolejde geçiyor: Ludlow Akademisi'nde. Peki, anlattığınız o okul, okuduğunuz Arnavutköy Kız Koleji miydi? Yani, o okulu anlatırken, kendi okulunuzu mu çizmiştiniz romanınıza?*

Evet, okuduğum okulu olduğu gibi bu romanımda kullanmışım. Sınıflar, koridorlar, merdivenler, bahçe, Arnavutköy Kız Koleji'nin ta kendisiydi.

*Peki, Arnavutköy Kız Koleji'nde okuyanlar, ya da okumuş olanlar, kendi okullarını tanımadılar mı?*

Tanımadılar. Romanı, çeviri bir roman diye okudukları için olsa gerek, kendi okullarıyla, anlatılan okul arasında bir benzerlik kuramadılar. Yalnız bir tek kişi, sınıf arkadaşlarından biri, bir benzerliği yakalar gibi oldu: Romandaki müzik öğretmenin adı *Charles Lake*'ti, Arnavutköy Koleji'ndeki müzik öğretmenin adı da *Charles Lake*'ti. Arkadaşım, bu benzerliği yakalamıştı, ama "İkisi de müzik öğretmeni, ikisinin de adı *Charles Lake*. Ne tesadüf," demişti.

*Kitabın ilk yayımlanışının üzerinden elli yılı aşkın bir zaman geçti. Bunca yıl sonra, bu kez kendi adınızla yayınlarken, kitabınızın Türkçe'si üzerinde yeniden çalıştığınızı biliyorum. Türkçe'nizin ne kadar arındığını, ne kadar kendine geldiğini belirtir misiniz?*

İlk çeviriye başladığım M. Ö. yıllarında 'Osmanlıca'yı çok iyi biliyor ve sırasında kullanıyordum. Öyle ki ilk başladığımda çevirileri evde annemin ya da başka bir büyüğün yapıp beni konu mankeni olarak kullandıklarını sananlar olmuştu. Ama gönlüm her zaman duru Türkçe'deydi. O zaman ki kolejde benden başka bilenine rastlamadığım. *Yunus Emre*'nin şüirlerine, türkülerine düşkündüm. Ama Babali'de hâlâ, 'İstanbul Türkçesi' diye bir direktme vardı. Oysa ben, örneğin Manisa'da bizim kullandığımız birçok güzelim sözcüğün 'İstanbul Türkçesi'nde karşılığını bulamıyor, bunları da kullanmak istiyordum. İnanmayacaksınız ama, 'bunun' sözcüğünü bir çevirimde kullanmak için savaşım ver-

dim 1950 öncesi yıllarda.

Türkçe'nin zaman zaman içinde arınıp zenginleşmesini (zaman zaman bu yönde aşırıya kaçılabilir) hep sevinçle karşıladım; önemli çevirilerimi beş-altı yılda bir gözden geçirip durulaştırmaya çalıştım. Şu sırada dilimizin çok berrak, zengin ve rahat olduğunu düşünüyör, bu kez de İngilizce ve Amerikanca sözcüklerin istilasına boyun eğmenin ötesinde el veren kalem erbabına öfkeleniyörüm.

*Bu kez romanınızı kendi adınızla yayınlıyorsunuz? Ne gibi tepkiler umuyorsunuz?*

Heyecanlı ve umutluyum. Eski okullarımın bu duruma rahatlayacaklarını biliyörüm. *Genç Kızlar*'ı okuyup sevmiş olmakla birlikte benim yazdığımı duymamış olan çok okur var. Onlar şaşıracaklardır. Yeni okuyacak olanları da bu kitabın ilginç ve şaşırtmacalı serüvenine ortak edebilmek için bu söyleşiyi yapmaya karar verdik.

Şunu söylemeden geçmeyeyim: çok sevilen bu romanın, bir yerli yazarın ürünü olduğunu öğrenince olumsuz tepki veren hemen hiçbir okura rastlamadım. Karşılaştığım en yaygın tepkiler, sevecen bir şaşkınlık ve büyük bir merak olmuştu. Ben okuru hep yanımda hissetmişimdir. Bundan sonra da böyle olacağından hiç kuşkuym yok.

Erdal Öz

## APPENDIX B

### MY INTERVIEW WITH YEĞİNOBALI <sup>11</sup>

Geçmişimde tuhaf şeyler var. Gözüm çok yukardaydı. Yüzyılın şaheserini yazabileceğime inanıyordum. Ben böyle bir kitap yazdım demeye lüzum görmedim. Ben elbet günün birinde yüzyılın başeserini zaten yazacaktım. Böyle bir his vardı içimde.

Kolejdeki (1938–45 arası) dönemin sonunda Orhan Veliler çıkmıştı. Vezinli kafiye yazmak bugün Atatürkçü olmak gibi eski moda sayılıyordu. Ben de şiir yazıyordum. Çok güzel şiirler yazıyordum. Ama saçma sapan insanlar sırf satırları kırık yazdıkları için, yani ipe sapa gelmez şeyleri böyle böyle yazdıkları için onlara birincilik veriliyordu. Benimki pek görülüyordu. Uçuk bir takım şeyler yazıp takma adla okul dergisine verdim (İzlerimiz). Bunu kendini bildirmek istemeyen bir arkadaş yazıyor deyip yayınlansın diye verdim. Çok beğenildi. Melih (dergiyi çıkartan) sordu bana kim yazıyor bunları diye. Şişman bir kız vardı komik şeyler yazıp dergiye veren. Onu işaret edip “bu arkadaş yazıyor” dedim. Sonra Melih kızı kenara çekip “devam edin, iyi yazıyorsunuz” dedi. Kız bayıldı. Bunu ben sahneledim ve yaşadım. Şimdi ben de anlamıyorum bunu neden yaptığımı. Biraz da hınzırlık herhalde.

Burada da onun izleri de var. Sonra hakikaten beğenilirse itiraf edecektim. Ne diye saklayayım? Ama bütün vurgu cinsellik, erotizm üzerinde oldu? O zaman da “Bunu ben yazdım ağabeyler” diyemedim. Bu kadar dikkat çekeceğini bilmiyordum.

O dönemde aşk ihtiras konulu pek çok İngiliz, Amerikan bestseller’lar vardı: Ben okur, beğendiğimi çevirirdim. İsimlerini ben koyar, reklâmlarını ben yapardım.

Editör bendim aslında. O sayede bu mümkün oldu.

Türk romanında, okuduğumuz romanlarda ayrıntılı bir cinsellik yoktu. Bu gene de onlardan ne şekilde daha etkili oldu bilmiyorum. Ama diğer kitaplar bu kadar sansasyon yaratmadı. Kitabın genç kızlar arasında geçmesi çok ilgi çekti. Hala o erkek milletine çok ilginç geliyor.

Yani bestseller karşı olduğum bir müessese. Okuru çok yönlendiriyor. Şeyden başladı. Matbaamız yayınevinin içinde alt kattaydı. Manisa’da yazdım ben bunu. Bir karbon kopya bile çekmedim. Bir önceki bölümü nasıl hatırladım bilemiyorum. Herkes de beni Manisa’da çeviri yapıyorum zannediyor. Bandırma vapuruna bindim İstanbul’a dönmek için, o zaman birden kafama dank etti. Ben ne yaptım? Koskoca insanlar, koskoca bir yayınevi ben ne yaptım? Ya beğenilmezse? Bir iki gün sonra kalbim çarparak gittim. Biraz sessizler gibi geliyorlar ama kuruntu mu yapıyorum acaba diyorum. Kapı açılıyor aşağıdan çırak çocuklar basılmış formaları getiriyorlar. Sanki bana kıs kıs gülüyorlarmış gibi geldi. Meğer çok beğenmişler. “Biz ömrümüzde böyle kitap okumadık” diye ilk kıyamet orada koptu. Yazı kadrosu, benim ağabeylerim, bahse tutuşmuşlar: Anlayarak mı çevirdi? Anlamayarak mı çevirdi diye. Bir taraf diyormuş ki “Elbette anlamıştır. Akıllı kız, çok da kitap okuyor, hem de kolej mezunu”. Diğer taraf da demiş ki:”Yok, çok iyi çevirmen. Anlamadan yapmıştır.”

Evet yani bir tek cümle var: Oral seks. O kadar tantana mı koparır? O zaman için öyleymiş. Gerçi biliyordum, benim için kolay olmadı. Kolej, aile yapımız, Manisa’da hep erkekler arasında serbest büyüdük. Fakat Cağaloğlu’na gidiyorsun. Yetişkin insanlar ama hepsi “aç”. Akılları fikirleri... Bunu görmüş ve irkilmiştim; ama böyle yaşayınca gene şaşmaktan kendimi alamadım. İşte içlerinde bir delikanlı vardı. Ben onun ilk aşkıydım. Benden küçüktü. Orada hep birlikte bir yemeğe gidip rakı şarap içmiştik. Dans ederken bana “Sen mutlaka o kırmızı aylı gece gibi bir gece



yaşamışsındır”. Yoksa nasıl çevirebilirsin? Ben tutup Amerikalıyla evlenmemi biraz da buna bağlarım. Eve gidip düşününce kendi kendime demiştim ki: “Yaşamışsam yaşamışım. Siz yaşayacaksınız da ben neden yaşamayacağım?” Ondan sonra bir keresinde Ankara’ya giderken bir evlilik teklifi dahi aldım. Birçok yerlerde *Genç Kızlar*’ın çevirmeniyim diyememeye başladım. Çünkü herkes onu konuşmak istiyor. Erkekler çok okudu biliyorum. Yeni baskı yapıldı. Geçenlerde apartman kapısında bir komşu gelip “Siz Nihal Yeğınobalı mısınız?” Sizin kitaplarınızdan *Defne*’yi okudum. Şunu aldım, şunu okuyacağım filan dedi. Sonra baktı “Nihal Hanım siz neden ünlü değilsiniz?” dedi. “Hayatım geldin beni buldun mu? Buldun, bana bu kadarı yeter” dedim. Ama ben medyatik değilim. Ama ta o zaman medyanın olmadığı zamanda ben medyaktım. Onun için bunlara karnım tok. İsterim tabii ki, paylaşmak için yazıyorum yazdıklarımı. Mesela bir *Sitem*’in değeri bilinsin isterim ama karnım tok.

Vincent Ewing neden erkek ve Amerikalı biliyor musun?. İyice maskelenmek için herhalde. Ben o yıllarda bir sürü bestseller okuyordum. Kadın yazarların kitaplarını o kadar çok sevmiyordum. İlk romancılarımız gibi biraz baygın buluyordum onları. Erkek olması bence çok doğal. Niçin Amerikalı? Bir kere Güneyli. O dönem okuduğum kitaplardan anladığım kadarıyla Amerika’da tekdüze bir sosyal yaşam vardı. Gittiğimde de onu buldum. Tekdüze. Tek ilginç Güney kültürü. Daha çok mücadele var, değişiklik, karışıklık var. Daha romantik. Amerika’nın diğer şehirlerinin biri diğerinden farklı değil. Ha birisi olmuş, ha öbürü. Onun için adamı Güneyli yaptım.

Ben bu işi yaptığımda copyright sınırı 10 seneydi. Dergilerde buldum bunu dedim. Oturup kitap da yazmadı, hep dergilerde kaldı. On seneyi de aştı. Oh her şey temize çıktı.

Kitaba basılan Vincent Ewing'in portresi'nin öyküsü de şöyle:

Benim bir ev sahibim vardı. Caddebostan'da. Biz o zaman koleji yeni bitirdik. Kimimiz evleniyor, kimimiz üniversiteye gidiyor. Benim evde toplanırdık. Faruk da çok severdi beraber olmayı. Bizim 20'li yaşlarımız, o 40'lı yaşlarında ama bir çocuksu tarafı vardı. Çok severdi, bize oyunlar öğretir falan. Bir takım telefon arkadaşları vardı. Mesela gecenin bir saatinde bizi bırakır benim şeytan arayacak diye giderdi. Tanımadığı bir kızla telefonda uzun uzun konuşurmuş. Hatta annesi teyzesi filan şikayet ederlerdi bize. Tanımadığı kızla konuşacağına evlense ya diye. Böyle bir adam. Tüm telefon arkadaşlarına bir tane *Genç Kızlar*'ı gönderiyormuş. Ben yazdım diye.

Benim başka bir yerden tanıdığım bir kadın vardı iki çocuklu. Anladığım kadarıyla kocasından memnun değil, böyle seks konuşsun severdi. Telefon arkadaşları oluyormuş filan. Diğer arkadaşlarla düşündük, bu kadınla Faruk'un telefonlarını biz niye birbirlerine vermiyoruz dedik. Hakikaten verdik ve tuttu. Bunlar başladılar telefon arkadaşlığına. Kadın aynı zamanda Türkiye Yayınevi'nin sahibinin çok yakın bir akrabası. Kadına da Faruk kitap veriyor, bak ben yazdım diye. Kadın diyor ki "olur mu benim dayım, Türkiye Yayınevi'nin sahibi. Böyle böyle." Faruk da beni çok yakından tanıdığı için biliyor, söylüyor. Böyle deşifre oluyor.

Ben o arada evlendim Amerika'ya gittim. Fakat editörüm bana biraz gücendi. Pek de affetmedi. Enayi yerine koymuş olduğumu düşündü kendisini, hâlbuki yok öyle bir kötü niyet. Ama tabii duyuldu ondan sonra bu olay. Türkiye Yayınevi oturup Vincent Ewing'i bütün ansiklopedilerde filan arıyorlar, bakıyorlar yok öyle bir adam. Benim yaptığımın gençliğin gözü karalığından başka hiçbir şeyden değil.

Neden bu genre diye sorarsan, sekiz sene kızlarla beraber okudum, en iyi bildiğim ortam buydu. O nedenle kızları yazma ihtiyacı duydum. Kadın konusuyla ilgili bir bilinç uyandırmak diye bir şey aklımdan geçmiyordu. Ama yani biz çok bilinçliydik. Annem inanılmaz bir kadındı. Okuyacaksınız, meslek sahibi olacaksınız ve kendinizi erkeğe ezdirmeyeceksiniz diyerek büyüttü. Yörük kızıyım bir de ben, yapım bağımsız. Ama öğretmek tarafım yoktur. Ahkâm kesemem.

Bir dahaki yaz Manisa'ya gittiğimde bir baktım. Kuzenlerim var kızlar evlenmemiş. Bir de baktım ki bunlar “Genç Kızcılık” oynuyor. Biri Hindley Bell olmuş, biri Miss. Bee olmuş. Marianna gelmiş. “Gabriel geliyor” dediler. Belediye hastanesinde röntgen mütehassısıymış. Mutsuz bir evliliği varmış, alkole vurmuş kendisini. Mutsuzluğu nedeniyle Gabriel'e benzetmişler kendisini.

Birkaç tane şey mahsus yaptım çeviriymiş gibi göstermek için ama bunlar (Sündüz Kasar ve Serap Birdane'nin işaret ettikleri) benim her zaman kullandığım şeyler. Bunları ben bugün bile kullanıyorum.

Füsun Ant Afa Yayınevi'nden Frankfurt Fuarı'nda gidip Vincent Ewing'in Almancası'nı arıyor. O döneme ait kadınların hepsi birer Miss. Bee olarak huzurunuzdaydı.

Tabii bir de *Eflatun Kız* var. Bütün bu hay hüy arasında, ben evlenip Amerika'ya gittim. Çok sık gider gelirdim. Bir gelişimde *Eflatun Kız*'ı yazdım. O zamanki Vatan Gazetesi. O da çok beğenildi; çok tutuldu. Son iki üç tefrikasını Amerika'dan yazıp gönderdim. 59 yılı filan. Edebi tefrika *Eflatun Kız*, yazar Nihal Yeğınobalı diye çıktı. Çok beğenildi. Birçok yayıncı Nihal Hanım bunun kitabını biz basalım dediler. Bakalım dedim, sonra ben pat diye döndüm yine Amerika'ya. 2-3 sene sonra bir oğlan çocuğu ile geri döndüm. Geri dönünce para lazımdı tabii. Ben o

zaman “Ahmet Bey, Mehmet Bey benim şu *Eflatun Kız*’ı bir bassak” filan dedim. Onlar da “Hangi *Eflatun Kız*?” diye sordular. Tabii unutulmuş 2-3 senede. Sonra da Altın Kitaplar’dan bir teklif geldi. Yeni kuruluyorlardı ve paraları vardı. *Genç Kızlar*’ı istiyoruz dediler. Oturduk konuştuk Nihal Yeğınobalı ismiyle mi basalım diye. Ben yokken haber yayılmış, artık kitabı aslen benim yazdığını herkes biliyor. Ben razı olmadım. Ben Vincent Ewing’le mutluyum dedim. Siz benim *Eflatun Kız*’ı basın dedim. Sonunda Turan Bey dedi ki: “Nihal ben esnafım. Yeni kuruyorum yayınevimi. Bana satacak kitap lazım dedi. Açıkçası ben seni yazar yapmak istemiyorum, çevirmen bırakmak istiyorum dedi. Çünkü çevirmen kalırsan sende üç dört kitap olabilir bana vereceğın. Ama yazar olursan bir kitap.”

*Eflatun Kız* evli bir kadının eski aşkıyla yeni aşkı arasında kalmasını filan anlatıyor.

Ortakların arasında beni fazlasıyla beğenen bir adam vardı. Sonunda bana “Seni yazar olarak kimse tanımıyor. Ama çevirmen olarak tanıyan çok. Bu *Eflatun Kız*’ı yine o Amerikalı adam yazmış olsun, sen de çevir.” Kiradayım 2 çocuk. Çok zor durumdayım.” Sonradan *Mazi Kalbimde bir Yaradır* olan roman bu (1987).

Bir yerde mahsus İngilizce bıraktım. (Tomorrow tomorrow).

Cumhuriyet’e konuşup açıklamamızın nedenine gelince çok isteyen vardı. Nihal Hanım ne olur bizim gazete patlatsın, bizim dergi patlatsın diye. Yıllarından daha olgun: bak bu laf da İngilizce’den çeviri oldu.

1985’te döndüğümde Cem yayınevi *Eflatun Kız*’ı sahiplendi. *Mazi Kalbimde Bir Yaradır* dedik onun adına. O sıralar yine, oğlumun çok yakın arkadaşı Tarık Ersoy. O, “Ben sizle bir röportaj yapayım,” dedi. İyi de oldu. Cumhuriyetin Kültür Sanat Sayfasında çıktı. İlk kez orda deşifre oldu *Genç Kızlar*’ı benim yazdığım.

Kızımın řu an 50 yařlarında olan bir arkadařı dedi ki “Biz kadın olarak dik duruřu ve cesur olmayı sizin romanınızdan öğrendik,” dedi.

Feminizm aısından tamamen öncüdür, diye geiyor bazı yazılarda da. Erotizmi yazıyorum. ünkü erkekler yazıyor çoğunlukla ve kötü yazıyorlar. Ameliyat anlatır gibi. Bunların yazılmasının gerektiğine inanıyorum. Önemli olduğunu düşünüyorum. Bütün kadınlarda var olduğuna ama çok bastırılmış olduğuna inanıyorum. Ama bunu didaktik bir şekilde başkaları yazsın, didaktik olduğu zaman ilgin olmuyor gibi geliyor bana. Benim konum insanlık halleri, anlayan anlasın. Ben altını kalın çizmeden vermeyi seviyorum. Ama mesajı almayan da çok aslında. Okuyup da bu ne demek istiyor diyen çok yok. Bazen (*Gazel*’de mesela) bayağı kalemimi tuttu bu endişe. Böyle yazarsam kimse anlamayacak gibi. Daha altını çizmeliyim, vurgulamalıyım gibi. Ama yapamıyorum. Yani öyle akıyor. Anlayan anlasın. *Gazel* diyorum çünkü ilk cümlesi: “Bakireyim de ondan”.

Tüm sinema âlemi benim kitaplarımla ilgileniyordu. Kitabın da ismi var sizin de isminiz var, dediler. Diziye çekmek isteyen oldu. Ezel Akay *Gen Kızlar*’ı istedi dizi çekmek için.

RC Quarterly diye bir mezun dergisi var ya. Orada okudum. Biri yazmış hakkımda. Ne cesur kadınmış, kelli felli yayıncıları filan karşısına alma pahasına bu işi yapmış. Türkiye’deki “repressed sexuality” diyor orada. Doğru.

## APPENDIX C

BLURB ON GENÇ KIZLAR'S 2003 EDITION COVER PAGE<sup>11</sup>



Nihal Yeğınobalı  
(Vincent Ewing)

GENÇ KIZLAR

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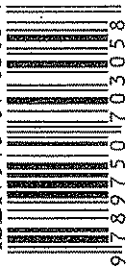
“Elli yıl kadar önce ilk romanım *Genç Kızlar*’ı yazdığım da ben de bir genç kızdım. Romanın gerçekçi olabilmesi için katmam gereken erotizm dozunu, o günün ölçülerine göre fazla ağır kaçacağımı bildiğimden, takma bir erkek adı kullandım: *Vincent Ewing*. O yıllarda çeviri romanlar telif romanlardan daha gözüdeydi, bu erkeğin Amerikalı olmasına karar verdim ve romanı İngilizce’den çeviriyormuş gibi kaleme aldım. Yayınlandığı günlerde bir anda o zamana kadar en çok satılan, sevilen Türk romanı oluvermesi beni çok şaşırtmıştı. Oysa *Genç Kızlar*’ı benim yazdığımı, yakın çevremdeki birkaç kişiden başka bilen yoktu. Bu aldatmaca, o yaşında bana çok keyifli bir oyun gibi gelmişti. Uzun yıllar romanımın kapağında *Vincent Ewing* takma adını kullanmayı sürdürdüm. Artık bu yabancı adın ardına sinmenin eski tadda kalmadı, gereği de. Pek çok kişi bu gerçeği öğrendi. *Genç Kızlar* romanım, Can Yayınları’ndaki yeni baskısıyla birlikte, ilk olarak okurlarının karşısına, takma adının yanısıra, gerçek adımla çıkıyor: *Nihal Yeğınobalı* ya da *Vincent Ewing*. Hem yazarlardan ‘esindikleri’ malzemeleri, yapıtlarında kendilerininmiş gibi gösteregeldikleri bir ülkede, genç bir yazarın kendi özgün ürettiği bir yabancıya mal etmek gereği duymasının ardındaki -yer yer kara mizaha kaçan- ilginç öyküyü kitabın önsözünde bulacaksınız.”

NİHAL YEĞINOBALI

Kapakdaki fotoğraf: MORTON SCHINDEL  
Nihal Yeğınobalı,  
*Genç Kızlar* romanını yazdığı yıllarda.

EDİR

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# Nihal Yeğınobalı (Vincent Ewing)

## GENÇ KIZLAR

roman



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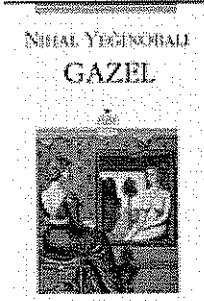


GENÇ KIZLAR

Nihal Yeğınobalı

## APPENDIX D

### BAKİRE OLMAK KOLAY KADIN OLMAK ZOR<sup>42</sup>



Nihal Yeğinoğlu yeni romanı 'Gazel'de farklı bir kadın karakter yaratıyor. 'Serap, erkeğin istediği oyunu oynamıyor; onun dayattığı kurallarla değil kendine göre yaşıyor mahremiyetini ve cinselliğini'

25/05/2007 (1082 defa okundu)

*HANDE ÖĞÜT* (E-mektup | Arşivi)

Nihal Yeğinoğlu, yeni romanı Gazel'de, 'uğruna' nice kadının katledildiği bekâreti sorunsal ediyor. 1948 yılında, İstanbul Mirgânköy'de, kendini 'bakire bilici' addeden Serap'ın etrafında gelişen ve sırta kadem basan Gazel'in anımsanmasıyla geri dönüş ve hayallerle sarmalanan romanda bekâret, Nyssalı Gregorius'un 'Bekâret Üzerine' adlı risalesinde bahsettiği türden bir kendini koruma, sakınma yönünde ironik olarak işleniyor. Gregorius gibi Yeğinoğlu'nun da kastettiği, kişinin kendisini etinden ayırması, yüreğinin ve bedeninin temizliğiyle yoksun kaldığı ölümsüzlüğe yeniden kavuşması...

Yıllar sonra çevirmeni değil yazarı olduğunu açıkladığı Genç Kızlar romanının tekrar basımının yarattığı büyük ilgi ile yazarlığa yeniden dönen, Belki Defne, Mazi Kalbimde Bir Yaradır, Cumhuriyet Çocuğu, Sitem ve nihayetinde Gazel ile Türk toplumundaki bastırılmış cinselliği gizemli bir erotizmle anlatan ünlü çevirmen Nihal



Yeğınobalı ile kadın cinselliđi, kadın dili ve son romanı üzerine söyleřtik...

Kadın aşkı ve arzusunu, eril parametrelerle tanımladı, 20. yüzyılın başına kadar Batı ve Türk edebiyatı. Sizin romanlarınızdaki kadınlar ise -Genç Kızlar'dan başlayarak- eril bakışın olumladığı kalıbın içine girmez. Ancak son romanınız Gazel 'de Serap'ın yaklaşımı bakireliđi sanki kutsar yönde...

Evet, Serap'ın yaklaşımı bakireliđi kutsar yönde. Çünkü o dönem, içinde yaşadığı toplum böyledir; gerçi halen kadın-erkek ilişkilerinde bu olgunun sürdüğünü görüyorum. Ki bu töre cinayetleri ve namusun yüceltildiđi televizyon dizilerinde ortaya çıkıyor. Türkiye sadece İstanbul'dan ibaret deđil; bir de sessiz çođunluk var. Anadolu kadını hâlâ bu sorunu yaşıyor.

Bakirelik bir zayıflık deđil Serap'ta, bilakis korunma mekanizması. Eril hakimiyetin ikiyüzlülüđünü ortaya çıkarmak için ironik olarak kullanıyorum. Serap erkeğin istediđi oyunu oynamıyor, onun dayattığı kurallarla deđil kendine göre yaşıyor mahremiyetini ve cinselliđini.

Genç bakire İfigenya'nın kadim öyküsü ve imgesi Serap'ta karanlık bir coşku oluşturur. 'Kız' olmak tılsımlıdır. Bu aşılamayan tabu yüzünden yüzlerce genç kız intihar eder ya da öldürölürken bekâretin tılsımlı bir yanı olabilir mi?

Gazel, 1950 öncesini anlatan bir roman olduđuna göre, Serap da o dönemde üstünkörü bir ilişki denemektense bakireliđine sadık kalıp kadın-erkek karmaşasına uzaktan ve biraz da yukarıdan bakıyor. Bakireliđini koruması aslında dokunulmazlıđını korumak. Dokunulmak istemiyor, çünkü kadın hep dokunulan, sergilenen olmuş. Arkadaşıyla yaptığı hayali konuşmada dediđi gibi bakire olmanın kolay, kadın olmanın zor olduđunu düşünüyor.

Modernitenin cinsellikten arındırılmış diline alışıldı ama cinselleştirilmiş imgelerine alışılmadı. Ancak siz tüm romanlarınızda kadın cinselliđini de tema edindiniz.

Gazel'de Serap da Zerrin de kadın olmayı reddeder, hep genç kız olarak kalmayı arzularlar. Genç Kızlar'da ise tersi bir durum söz konusudur. Bunca yıldan sonra, bakış açınızdaki bu değişimin nedeni nedir?

Aradaki fark, sanırım geçen yıllar. Hâlâ sevişmenin, erotizmin önemine inanıyorum. Ama dünya ölçeğinde kadının cinselliğine sahip çıkabildiğine inanmıyorum. Bunun en basit göstergesi modadır. Kadınlar moda ne temrin ederse uyguluyor. Bunun bir bilinçlenmeyle alakası yok, son derece yüzeysel bir öykünme. Benim genç kızlığımda, sanki daha özgür ve rahattık. 1950'lerden 2000'lere gelindiğinde namus endişesinin giderek arttığını görüyoruz. Sitem ile 30'lara, Mazi Kalbimde Bir Yaradır ile 40'lara döndüm; o zamanki Türkiye çok daha özgürdü. Geçmişten bugüne baktığımızda ne yazık ki tersine bir ilerleme söz konusu. Bunu vurgulamak istedim; ama asla nostaljik bir şekilde değil. Çünkü hayata dair duyarlılıkları, felsefe yapmayı, eskiyi kutsamayı sevmiyorum.

Latife Tekin binlerce yıldır değişik vücutlarda varlığını sürdüren bir kadın sesini Muinar 'ı; Leyla Erbil Üç Başlı Ejderha'da Roma, Bizans ve Osmanlı tarihinin ve 2000'e kadar yakın dönem tarihini iç içe yoğurarak her şeyi sorgulayan bir bilinci; Müge İplikçi Cemre'de iç içe geçen kadın benliklerini; Ayşegül Devecioğlu dinleyicisini masalların kadim dünyasına götüren bilge bir Çingene'yi anlattı. Siz bir bakire biliciden söz ediyorsunuz. Kadın kahraman modeli değişiyor, yeni bir kadın dili mi geliyor?

Kadın yazarlar, kadını yazma ihtiyacı her zaman duyarlar. Ama bunu mitolojiye yüklemek, böyle bir soyutlama kaybettirir. Ben klasik kurgusu, olay örgüsü, yaşayan kahramanları olan romanları seviyorum. İyi çizilmiş bir roman kahramanıyla karşılaşınca sahici bir insan tanımış gibi oluyorum.

En çok hangi kahramanınızı içselleştirdiniz peki?

Sitem'i... Sitem, heba olmuş Anadolu kadınının, köylüsünün masumiyeti, cevheri gibi geliyor bana. Ama kent kültürü Sitem'e sahip çıkmadı, onu bencilce kullandı. İlk romanınız Genç Kızlar'ı Vincent Ewing adıyla yayımlattınız, dönemin şartları gereği. Kendini gizleyen kadınlardan biri de Emily Dickinson idi. Ki o, içinde sakladığı gerçek kimliğinin ve arzularının ortaya çıkması halinde en çok kendisinin ürkeceğini söyler. Siz de böyle bir tedirginlik hissettiniz mi?

Hayır ürküntü hissetmedim. Çünkü zaten çağımız özgürlük çağıydı. Benim kişiliğim de biraz cesur ve baskındı, Yörük kıızıydım, cesurum, bağımsızım. Tedirginlik duymaktansa Türk erkeğinin ikiyüzlülüğünden çok tiksindim. Ama yine de Vincent Ewing olmak beni çok eğlendirdi, müthiş bir keyif alarak yazdım.

Mazi Kalbimde Bir Yaradır'da Türk toplumundaki bastırılmış cinselliği gizemli bir erotizmle; Sitem'de, cinsellikle ilk tanışmanın ve başa çıkmaya çabalamanın sarsıntısını ve bir tutku cinayetini; Genç Kızlar'da, kadının dürtüleri ve heyecanlarını; Belki Defne'de cinsellik ve kadın olmak gibi kavramların ayrımını anlatıyorsunuz. Kadının cinsel ve manevi uyanışı, bir gerilim olmadan gerçekleşmiyor gibi... Cinselliği bilinçli olarak yaşamak, kadın olmak ve anne olmak elbette manevi bir uyanışı gerektiriyor. Bir gerilim ve patlama olmadan kadının özgürleşmesi çok zor. Kitabın arka kapağında "Gazel, okurlarımıza eski melodramların tadına doyum olmaz hüznü ve nostaljisi ile konuk olacak" yazıyor. Siz katılıyor musunuz melodram yazdığınıza?

Katiyen katılmıyorum. Kitabın arka kapağını okuduğumda ben de çok şaşırdım. Gıyabımda son derece acelece yazılmış bir cümle ve okuru da yanlış yönlendiriyor; aynı şekilde ilanlarda da benzer bir hata var. Ben sadece 19. yüzyıl klasiklerini çevirmedi; Cortazar, Eduardo Galeano, Patricia Highsmith gibi çağdaş dünya yazarlarını da çevirdim. Roman da bir melodram değil, psikolojik gerilimdir.

Genç Kızlar'da oral seks hakkında yazdığınız (çevirdiğiniz) iki cümle yüzünden büyük bir tantana kopmuş, yayınevi ile sorun yaşamışsınız. Ama çevirmeyip yazdığınızı söyleyememişsiniz. Manuel Puig'in Örümcek Kadının Öpücüğü'nü çevirirken ise 'ufacık' bir sansürü kendiniz yaptınız. Bir yazarın eserini değiştirmek onu bir şekilde yerelleştirmek değil mi?

Tabii ki sansüre taraftar değilim. Ama toplumda, kültürde çok belirgin, men edici öğeler varsa, bir zaman için bunların dikkate alınmasından yana olabiliyorum.

Örümcek Kadının Öpücüğü, küçücük bir sansürle üç baskı yaptı ve Türk okuru Manuel Puig'i tanıdı. Söz gümüş, sükût altınsa; biz okura bir gümüş hazine veriyoruz, sadece çok kısa bir süre susuyoruz. Bu elbette romanın değerinden ve anlamından, yazarın seçiminden, ideolojisinden ödün vermediği takdirde geçerli. Özgürlüğe ve aşka inanan mücadeleci kadınları anlatıyorsunuz. Ama feminist olmadığınızı söylüyorsunuz. Neden?

Feministlerden daha geniş bir açığa sahibim. Kiminin erkeklerle yarışmakta ve zıtlaşmakta kaldıklarına inanıyorum. Oysa erkekler de kurbandır, onların durumu da çok acıklı. Bu durum, Belki Defne'yi yazdığım da yine karşıma çıktı. Defne boşanınca hayatını yaşıyor ve kendinin farkına varıyor. Ancak sonra kocasına dönüyor. Pek çok kadından tepki aldım, neden kocasına döndü diye. Çünkü Defne anne olmak istiyor; bu yine onun kendi rızasıyla verdiği bir karar. Ben kadın erkek eşitliğine inanıyorum. Mesela en büyük mücadelem, Hürriyet'in ilk sayfasına her gün koydukları yarı çıplak kadının, dönüşümlü olarak yerini yarı çıplak bir erkeğe bırakması!..

## APPENDIX E

KOD ADI: VINCENT <sup>45</sup>

Müstehcen bölümlerinden utandığı için kitabını Vincent Ewing adıyla yazan Nihal Yeğınobalı, "İki yüzlü ahlak anlayışından hep nefret ettim" diyor

Nihal Yeğınobalı çevirmen olarak başladığı yazın dünyasına 19-20 yaşlarında yazdığı ilk kitabı 'Genç Kızlar'la devam etti. Kitap biraz erotik olduğu için Vincent Ewing adıyla yayınlandı. Evlenip Amerika'ya yerleşti, iki çocuğı oldu. Adı Nihal Yeğınobalı, 76 yaşında. Yılların yorgunluğu, yüzünün çizgilerinde gizli. Ama gözleri; Hala 16 yaşında bir genç kızın çevikliği ve kurnazlığıyla bakıyor. Yüreğı hala 16 yaş heyecanıyla çarpıyor. Yüzüne yerleşen yıllar, yüreğini ele geçiremediğı için ilk günlerdeki hevesle yazmaya devam ediyor.

Onun yazıyla tanışması çok eskilere dayanıyor. Annesiyle babası ayrılmaya karar verince, ailenin yükünü üzerine alıp, yayınevlerine kitap çevirileri yapıyor. Tabii bu işi bulana kadar pek çok kadının hala başına gelen şeyleri bir bir yaşıyor. "O dönem çalışan kadın çok azdı. Çalışan kadınların çoğı iş yeri sahiplerinin kızları, akrabaları falandı. O yüzden işimi bulana kadar bazı insanların sözlü tacizlerine maruz kaldım", diyen Yeğınobalı, yaptığı çeviriler beğenilince gözde çevirmenlerden biri olmayı başarmış. Ama çevirdiğı kitapların etkisiyle olsa gerek, kendi kitabını da yazmış: 'Genç kızlar'. "O zaman ben de bir genç kızdım. O dönem kadınların hele de genç kızların dünyası erkekler için bir sırdı. Bildiğim bir konuydu ve yazmak istedim."

İşte sorun tam da bu noktada ortaya çıkıyor. Çünkü Nihal Yeğınobalı'nın kitabı, 1940'lı yılların normlarına göre "müstehcen" ifadeler taşıyor. İki cümleyle bile olsa oral seksin adı geçiyor, tutkulu bir aşk sahnesi üzeri kapalı ifadelerle ne kadar iyi anlatılabilirse, o kadar iyi anlatılıyor ve Yeğınobalı, utandığı için kitaba kendi ismini

veremiyor. Vincent Ewing diye uydurma bir isim buluyor, Vouge dergisinden de Fransız soylusu Kont de Paris'nin fotoğrafını keserek, "İşte bu Vincent Ewing" diyor.

### Yörük Kanı

"Aslında kitabı beğendiklerinde açıklamak niyetindeydim. Fakat kitap hem çok beğenildi, hem de erotik bulundu. O yüzden saklamak istedim. Hatta kitap yüzünden yine sözlü tacizlere maruz kaldım. Birisi bana 'Kırmızı aylı gece gibi bir geceyi yaşamamış olsan bu kadar iyi çeviremezdin' dedi. O zaman çok sinirlenmiştim. Çünkü okulum bitmişti, profesyonel olarak çalışıyordum, kendi hayatımı kurmuştum. Ama insanlar bir kadın olarak seksi yaşamaya hakkım olduğunu düşünmüyordu. Üstelik yaşamışım veya yaşamamışım kime neydi ki bundan? Bu yüzden iki yüzlü ahlak anlayışından hep nefret ettim. Bu benim asi Yörük tarafıma dokundu herhalde." Bu tartışmalar sürerken her şeyden sıkılıyor Ankara'ya gidiyor Nihal Yeğinoğlu. Bir süre ablasında kalmaya karar veriyor. "O dönem bütün Amerika Ankara'daydı. Türk kızları da özellikle Amerikalı askerlerle evleniyordu. Morton Schindel de Amerikan Konsolosluğu'nda görevliydi. Birbirimize aşık olduk ve evlenmeye karar verdik. Tabii bunu rahmetli Cemal Süreyya'ya bir türlü anlatamadım. Bana hep 'senin albay' diye tuttururdu. Eski eşimin asker olmadığını bir türlü anlatamamıştım ona." Evliliğin ardından Amerika'ya yerleşiyorlar. Ancak Amerikan kültürüne hiçbir zaman ısınamamış olan Yeğinoğlu, buradaki hayata pek alışamamış. İki çocukları olmuş. Ama ne Nihal hanım, ne de Morton Schindel ülkelerinden kopamamış. Böylece ayrılık kaçınılmaz olmuş. "İlk görüşte, tutkulu bir aşkı bizim ki. Ama ikimiz de köklerimizden kopmak istemiyorduk, o yüzden sürmedi. Çok kötü ayrıldık. Uzun yıllar görüşmedik. Ama şimdi dostça görüşüyoruz. Hatta yazılarımı çok beğenirdi, benden şimdi bazılarını istiyor. Ona çevirip gönderiyorum." Belki evliliğin kötü anıları yüzünden belki de tercih etmediğinden

bir daha evlenmiyor Nihal Yeğınobalı. Ama aşk, hayatında hep oluyor. "Çocuklarım yüzünden evlenmeyi hiç istemedim. Evlenmeyeceğim diye de hayattan kopmadım. Yeniden aşık oldum, ilişkilerim oldu. Ama kimsenin bana sahip olmasına izin vermedim. Hatta bir sevgilim vardı. Bana ve çocuklarıma kendince 'sahip çıkmak' istedi. Bana öyle bir teklif getirdi ki inanamadım. Özgürlüğüne bu kadar düşkün bir kadına yapılmayacak bir teklifti. Fakat o bunun farkında bile değildi. İlişkimiz hemen bitti, istemedim."

"Erkekleri hep sevdim"

Onun ki belki bir inattı, belki damarlarında dolaşan Yörtük kanının zorlamasıyla bir başkaldırı. Özgürlüğe, aşka inanan mücadelecı bir cumhuriyet kadının başkaldırısı... Her şeyi erkeklere hak, kadınlara günah gören iki yüzlü ahlak anlayışına, dönemin koşullarında boşanmış kadın olmanın getirdiğı zorluklara, onu sürekli zorlamaktan neredeyse keyif alan hayata karşı... "Bunları söylüyorum, ama feminist değilim. Yani düşünülen anlamda. Tüm bunlarla mücadele etmeme karşı, erkekleri 'tu kaka' görmedim. Onları sevdim. Sadece düşüncelerini sevmedim. Kim bilir belki de bu yüzden bir Amerikalı'yla evlendim." Şimdi hayatı geçmişinden daha sakın sürüyor. Kedileri, çocukları ve kitaplarıyla. Bir de o güzel anılarıyla...

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