

WOMEN'S COPING STRATEGIES AGAINST GENDER OPPRESSION:
EXAMPLE OF ADALET AĞAOĞLU'S *DAR ZAMANLAR (NARROW TIMES)*
TRILOGY

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to conceptualize women’s coping strategies against gender oppression in the society within the context of Turkish Literature. In order to focus on women’s coping strategies against gender oppression, Adalet Ağaoğlu’s *Narrow Times* Trilogy will be analyzed with the methodology of feminist criticism in order to construct women’s experience within patriarchal society through women’s own perception. In that sense, *Narrow Times* trilogy’s main character Aysel’s struggle with the patriarchal hegemony and her resistance against gender oppression will be highlighted. Throughout the thesis, Aysel’s personal narration of her self-actualization will be evaluated with its relevance to gender inequality, political opposition and patriarchal hegemony within the social and historical context that she is embedded. In this study, Aysel’s practices, which she performs while she is trying to embody her autonomous self, are conceptualized as practices of strategies against gender oppression. These feminist resistances which oppose to patriarchy have diverse strategies that can be observed within the context of Aysel’s everyday life including usage of her sexuality as an emancipatory tool, absence from the social events that do not align with her values, and to reconstruct her personal story by the act of remembrance. As result of this analysis, it has been claimed that Aysel’s personal

experiences of actualizing herself shows common aspects with the collective reality of women in her generation and provides hope for the future generations by reclaiming feminist coping strategies with gender oppression.

Keywords: Adalet Ağaoğlu, feminist literature, patriarchal hegemony, gender oppression, autonomy and agency



ÖZ

KADINLARIN TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYETE DAYALI BASKI İLE MÜCADELE BİÇİMLERİ: ADALET AĞAOĞLU’NUN *DAR ZAMANLAR* ÜÇLEMESİ ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu çalışmanın amacı toplumda kadınların toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı baskıya karşı gösterdikleri mücadele yöntemlerini Türk Edebiyatı bağlamında ele almaktır. Çalışmada kadınların toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı baskı ile mücadele etme biçimlerini kadınların deneyimini önceleyen bir bakış açısıyla anlamak için Adalet Ağaoğlu’nun *Dar Zamanlar* üçlemesi feminist eleştiri yöntemi ile incelenmiştir. Bu kapsamda *Dar Zamanlar* üçlemesinin ana karakteri olan Aysel’in patriyarkal hegemonya ile olan mücadelesi ve toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı baskı karşısında geliştirdiği direniş stratejileri vurgulanmıştır. Tez boyunca Aysel’in kendisini gerçekleştirme deneyimine dayalı kendisine ait anlatısı; içinde yaşadığı tarihsel ve sosyal bağlamda kendisini gösteren toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliği, siyasi kutuplaşma ve patriyarkal hegemonya kavramlarıyla bağ kuracak biçimde değerlendirilmiştir. Bu çalışmada Aysel’in kendi otonom kimliğini ortaya çıkartabilmek için uyguladığı stratejiler feminist direniş biçimleri olarak ele alınmıştır. Aysel’in patriyarkaya karşı çıkan feminist direnişi; Aysel’in cinselliğini kendisini özgürleştirecek bir deneyim olarak kullanması, kendi değerleri ile uyuşmayan sosyal etkinliklere katılmaması ve kendi kişisel hikayesini

yeniden hatırlayarak baştan kurgulaması olmak üzere farklı biçimlerde kendisini gösterir. Bunların analiz edilmesinin sonucunda Aysel'in kişisel deneyimlerinin kendi kuşağındaki kadınların kolektif gerçekliği ile benzer özellikler gösterdiği ve farklı feminist mücadele yöntemlerine alan açarak kendisinden sonraki kuşaklara umut verdiği saptanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Adalet Ağaoğlu, feminist edebiyat, patriyarkal hegemonya, toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı baskı, otonomi



Yok ediliŖe karŖı var olmanın yollarını arayanlara



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1.Purpose of the Study

The aim of this thesis is to conceptualize Adalet Ağaoğlu's selected works through their focus on women's experience of everyday life within the patriarchal society within parallel to feminist movement and gender issues in Turkey. In this thesis, this conceptualization will be done through her three novels including *Ölmeye Yatmak* (*Lying Down to Die*), *Bir Düğün Gecesi* (*A Wedding's Night*) and *Hayır* (*No*) which published in 1973, 1979, and 1987 as in order, that together consist *Dar Zamanlar* (*Narrow Times*) trilogy.

Adalet Ağaoğlu was born in Ankara, Nallıhan in 1929. She is known as Turkish novel and playwright. She also wrote essays, stories and memories. She entered the literature by writing criticisms. She is one of the founders of first independent theatre in Ankara. She wrote her first novel, *Ölmeye Yatmak* in 1973 which criticizes changes and transformations in Turkish society. Then, her following books were subjected to political discussions because of their problematization of transformations in the Turkish society. She died in 2020 with many awards for her books, an honorary doctorate for her effort in literature, and left behind many political criticisms both for herself and her works.

The main purpose of this chapter is to conceptualize *Dar Zamanlar* as a collective story of womanhood in Turkey through its relations with existing social and political realities in the society including gender oppression, gender inequality, patriarchal hegemony, and political opposition. The main reason behind the selection of these themes as this thesis' focus is to highlight women's experiences in everyday life within the historical period that *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy covers. While these texts

narrate the story of a woman through a focus on her own experiences, it reflects the common experience of women who are struggling with gender oppression in the society. By doing so, *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy becomes able to contextualize women's everyday experience in society. Besides, because of the existing political opposition that the trilogy problematizes, it also reflects the political pressure that intellectuals struggle with, in addition to gender issues in the society. The political opposition that is experienced by leftist intellectuals is one of the results of military coup in Turkey, as seen throughout the novels. Hence, the selected themes including gender oppression, gender inequality, patriarchal hegemony, and political opposition are the common experiences that women struggle with during this period.

For Arıkan and Aytan, Ağaoğlu's *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy focuses on "the memory making of the individual within the framework of a historical narrative the ways in which deals with historical events of post-republic Turkey in relation to the formation of the individuals' identity and offers a strong critique of social realities" (2021: 542). In this chapter, in order to consider *Dar Zamanlar* within the social and political atmosphere, correlations between the narrated reality and the existing social and political reality will be discussed. By doing so, this thesis will be able to reflect coping strategies with gender oppression that Aysel performs through *Dar Zamanlar*. The main focus of thesis is discovering feminist subjectivities that are produced through women's own ways of autonomous coping mechanisms within Ağaoğlu's *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy, which will be understood by gendered realities and representations throughout the trilogy. This thesis conceptualizes feminist subjectivities as women's usage of their own agency and autonomy against the gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony in the society. Representations of feminist subjectivities should be emphasized in addition to gender representations within the context of feminist narratives. Gender representations and gendered experiences in literature texts show how different genders are depicted through texts, and gender oppression that is caused by patriarchal ideology. While gender representations in literature refer to how different genders are portrayed through texts, gendered experiences stand for individuals' social experience as in relation to their gender.

By understanding gender representations, both feminist strategies that Aġaoġlu's woman characters practice and the ways in which shapes their gendered experiences in the society will be understood. Feminists focus on “*representations and gender differentiations instead of femininity*” because differences in representations derives from gender inequalities in the society (Gouma-Peterson and Mathews, 1987: 326-357). In other words, the difference on the depiction of different gender identities provides understanding of gender inequalities in the society. Thus, it becomes crucial to understand how women are represented within the sphere of literature by using feminist methodology in order to understand women's issues and ways of coping with gender oppression.

It is known that “Aġaoġlu reexamines the womanhood construction of the republic through *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy” (Sumbaş, 2017: 5). *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy narrates the personal story of Aysel, who is the main character of these three novels. Aysel does not only represent new generation of the republic but at the same time she represents “the new woman of Turkey which is constructed through nation state ideology and modernization project” (Sumbaş, 2017: 5). Hence, Aysel as a character represents a generation's story within the context of Turkey.

Trilogy starts from Aysel's childhood memories in the early years of the republic and continues to the historical period that effects of the 1980 military coup started to be felt within the daily life. Hence, social and political climate of this period can be followed through Aysel's personal experiences. Throughout the trilogy, Aysel's experiences and memories are on the main focus. Although she is on focus as the main character, her reality is strongly connected to other women's experiences in relation to gender oppression. Besides, the name of the trilogy, *Dar Zamanlar* (*Narrow Times*) emphasizes a metaphorical meaning by reminding that Aysel's memories and experiences are tightened into a small amount of time. Yet, within this short amount of time, Aysel recalls her past, which is a collective history that women share as a result of the existing patriarchal hegemony and gender inequalities in the society.

In that sense, *Dar Zamanlar* can be taken into account as a narrative which problematizes common experience of everyday life within a patriarchal context since it is constituted from daily challenges and struggles of women, and also their strategies of coping with them. In terms of thematic continuity, themes of “facing with the

republic's ideology, becoming an individual, and actualizing herself" are seen throughout the trilogy (Apaydın, 2006: 20). Furthermore, within the trilogy, we follow the story of Aysel while she resists to patriarchy and gender oppression in various forms, alienates to the society, and experiences political pressure. These themes that are composed of daily experiences of Aysel are common themes that seen through all these three books despite their changing time and events.

In the first novel of the trilogy, *Ölmeye Yatmak (Lying Down to Die)* (1973), social and political issues between 1938 to 1968 are described in accordance with Aysel's personal memories. Throughout the book, Aysel resists to gender oppression in order not to fit into the new womanhood construction of the republic and normative structure of the society. Thus, she experiences a struggle in order to embody her personal agency and freedom which she will remain with her own strategies of resistance to gender oppression and rejection of authority. These conflicts between Aysel's autonomous existence and constructed womanhood constitutes the thematic structure of *Ölmeye Yatmak*. The book opens up by the scene that Aysel lies down to die in a hotel room while she questions her entire life and waits for her own death. There are two diverse time constructions in the novel including the lived, real time and the narrated, memorized time.

While the first one consists of an hour and twenty-seven minutes, the second time construction focuses on thirty year, starting from Aysel's memories in her childhood. By these memories, we understand that Aysel struggles to complete her education despite her family's negative attitude, she married with Ömer whom she never plans to have a child with, works as an associate professor, and had an extramarital affair with one of her students from the university. While she faces with her past, we witness the collective story of a generation in Turkey because her memories are connected with social and political realities. Thus, Aysel faces with the idealized new womanhood construction and gender role that republic attaches to her. At the end of the book, she achieves to connect with her existence by embodying her agency and autonomy. Thus, she decides not to die. When she completes her examination of her past, she goes out from the hotel room and continues to live

through her daily life as a woman who succeed to actualize herself for the first time in her life.

Second book of the trilogy *Bir Düğün Gecesi* (*A Wedding Night*) (1979) can be considered as a microcosmos of the society that Aysel is embedded. *Bir Düğün Gecesi* is considered as a microcosmos of Turkish society since it reflects political oppositions of individuals from differentiated ideological backgrounds which can be observed even in the micro social interactions. Thematically, the book focuses on ideological segregations in the society, as well as brutality of militarism and patriarchy through providing a lens to a wedding that Aysel does not participate. Although Aysel is not on the main focus in this novel, we observe the social and political conditions that shape and/or restrict Aysel, as a woman living in patriarchal society. Like the first book, this novel also consists of a short amount of time which is a night. In this night,

Aysel's brother İlhan's daughter Ayşen's and major general Hayrettin Özkan's son Ercan's wedding takes place in Anatolian Club, where usually bureaucrats of Turkish Republic use as a meeting place.

It should be noted that this couple is considered as a brick to the republic since Ayşen and Ercan are coming from diverse ideological backgrounds. Within three-tofour-hour long wedding ceremony, we witness intellectuals' inner conflicts as in relation to social and political issues of 1970s, which is a period between two military coups in Turkey. Main issue of this wedding night is Aysel's absence in the ceremony despite the fact that one of her close relatives is getting married. Because of Aysel's absence, her sister Tezel and her husband Ömer start to spend their time together by trying to escape from the social interactions with other people who try to talk with them in the wedding ceremony. By streams of consciousness of Ayşen, Tezel, and Ömer, it is understood that Aysel has a specific place within their mind as a figure who always tries to emancipate herself from the social and political oppressions that oppress her despite her limitations. They see their future as an uncertain path that will be determined by outer authorities except themselves.

Hayır (*No*) (1987) is the last and third book of the trilogy which provides a detailed account about the fractions that intellectuals in Turkey experiences. The book can also be described as the story of an intellectual woman who is experiencing oppositions with the existing political power. Throughout the book, Aysel's

opposition with the political power because of her ideological standing is used as a theme to provide a reflection on the fragmentations in the society. Aysel is one of these individuals who cannot find a way out from this divided social environment where political oppressions are on their highest level. *Hayır* focuses on Aysel's one day which she gets ready for a ceremony that she will be given an award for her scientific studies that tries to investigate intellectuals' suicides. However, Aysel does not participate to this ceremony as a resistance against political power.

When Aysel's friends decide to look for her at her home, they cannot find Aysel but her texts which provides an explanation based on her political standing and identity. At the end of the book, we don't understand Aysel's fate, whether she is alive or dead, since her friends cannot find her despite their efforts. Yet, throughout the day that book covers, Aysel's remembrance of her past that is composed of traumas and failures give the necessary knowledge based on the reality of being a woman intellectual in a patriarchal society with political opposition. Aysel's past is shaped by her failures within her personal life, academic life and military coups. Hence, although the focus is Aysel's personal story, her experiences result from collective realities that are experienced by the society as a whole. In that sense, *Hayır* conceptualizes Aysel's personal struggle as a narration of collective reality.

In the following parts of the thesis, Aysel's story within the context of these three novels will be analysed by focusing on her experience with patriarchal hegemony and gender inequalities in the society. Translations from the books from Turkish to English belong to me. The reason behind choosing these novels is their potential to reflect women's issues as in relation to social and political realities in the society.

Adalet Ağaoğlu does not define herself as "feminist" primarily, as a writer. However, by conceptualization of Ağaoğlu's works as feminist narrative, this thesis claims that her way of understanding the world and representing social relations through literature reflects a feminist standing and paradigm.

In addition to Aysel, there are numerous characters within Ağaoğlu's works who can be considered as feminist(s) since they question patriarchal power relations, try to empower themselves, challenge to re-gain their sexual freedom, and to

participate into social and economic life autonomously as in relation to existing feminist movement's objectives in Turkey during those years. These woman characters' personal challenges and issues within society cannot be reduced to these objectives mentioned above but their challenges are crucial to understand how Ağaoğlu represents woman characters through a feminist standing. However, main objective of this thesis is to conceptualize Aysel's personal story as a reflection of her generation's women's common history. Thus, other characters of *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy and from Ağaoğlu's other books who also can be considered as feminists, and their stories will not be analyzed in order not to move out from the focus of this study. Besides, since Ağaoğlu emphasizes women's issues and everyday realities through her narrative, her work deserves to be analysed by a feminist paradigm. In order to provide a clear focus for women's issues, within Ağaoğlu's woman characters Aysel is selected to analyse since she is the main character of selected books in *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy which also has a strong connection with the social and political issues in the society.

1.2. Significance of the Study

Among other social and political issues, gender inequalities have crucial significance in women's everyday life since these inequalities are visible in diverse spheres of life. "Women have traditionally been in situations of subordination and dependency, lacking identity and rights" (Sue Anderson, 2003: 158). In a patriarchal social context where gender inequalities and gender oppression are inevitable, women lack their dependency, identity and rights as Sue Anderson highlights the ways in which results with preventing capabilities of women to be themselves. In that sense, women's experience of having or lacking autonomy derives importance in terms of analysing the consequences of gender oppression in the society since autonomy provide necessary tools for social independence of women as Aysel tries to gain.

Aysel's personal story is valuable in terms of understanding the reasons behind women's oppression and their ways of coping with these oppressions since Aysel is constructed as a prototype of Turkish republican woman. The books that trilogy covers represents social and political transformations in Turkey, in addition to their

emphasis on women's issues. Hence, they sustain their significance for those trying to understand historical transformations in women's movement and issues in Turkey and also, similarities between today's context and the past in terms of gender roles and representations.

Within this framework, *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy represents a woman who is trying to struggle with gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony through her own coping methods in order to embody her autonomy and agency. Especially for women, autonomy provide necessary social conditions the ways in which "do not limit her options and ability to act towards her values in order to provide a tool to resist gender oppression" (Friedman, 2003: 18). Hence, despite gender oppression's and patriarchal hegemony's subordination on women, women can strategically resist this subordination by their capabilities provided by autonomy. Both their limitations on women's autonomy and women's resistance against them by using their personal autonomy can be followed through Aysel's daily experiences within *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy.

Ağaoğlu gathers subjective experiences of women living in patriarchal society by a feminist perspective the ways in which focuses on women's autonomy and selfdependency. Hence, evaluation of this narrative through a focus on feminist themes has potential to provide hope and motivation for the resistance of women against gender oppression, and to encourage them to embody their own autonomous standings against patriarchal hegemony. By delivering the analysis on feminist subjectivities and resistances in Ağaoğlu's writing, gendered construction of social life, patriarchal power relations, and women's coping strategies against these patriarchal relations can be observed. Through their analysis, their significance on women's everyday life can be better understood.

1.3. Background of the Study

Concepts of gender oppression, gender inequality, patriarchal hegemony, and political opposition are selected while analysing Aysel's story since these are the most common themes that Aysel struggle with. Besides, these themes are connected with

each other since they both occur as different outcomes of patriarchal power relations in the society which subordinates women and reproduce traditional gender roles of women. Yet, women's agency while resisting to these concepts should also be highlighted. Although women have diverse strategies to cope with these issues, Aysel practices embodying her autonomous standing while trying to cope with gender oppression throughout the trilogy. Throughout the thesis, I used the concept of "gender oppression" as an umbrella term that covers gender inequality, patriarchal hegemony and political opposition. Since gender oppression occurs as the common outcomes of gender inequality, patriarchal hegemony, and political opposition; it will be used to point these issues. Hence, I consider Aysel as a woman who uses her autonomous standing while coping with gender oppression in the society since her main struggle is to defeat gender oppression in order to actualize her own desires and actions.

To be autonomous, in other words to have autonomy can be described as "to be able to live out one's plans, projects and aspirations" and, in that sense to "write the story of one's own life" (Mendus, 2000: 128). As Mendus emphasizes, autonomous people are the ones who act towards their own values, desires, decisions which can also be understood as dependent individuals. Besides, autonomy includes the "ability to shape our own lives and to live authentically rather than being directed by external forces that manipulate or distort us" (Veltman and Piper, 2014: 1). In that sense, autonomous people can "reflect on themselves and their lives, and they can reach decisions" (Meyers, 2002: 19). Hence, autonomy is considered as a tool which provides personal independence of women by allocating necessary skills in order to decide, act and live. These necessary skills are composed of "self-determination, selfgovernance, and self-authorization" (Mackenzie, 2014: 17).

Women usually lack autonomy and other necessary skills that will provide dependence within patriarchal society as one of the results of gender oppression. "Gender stereotypes, expectations and forms of oppression have more complex relation to autonomy" (Johnston, 2017: 315). Despite women's independence in certain aspects of social life, because of the patriarchal structure of the society women cannot live through their autonomous and authentic identities. "Membership in subordinated social identities affect one's autonomy" (Johnston, 2017: 313). Thus,

women's autonomy becomes vulnerable as a result of gender oppression in the society.

Autonomy requires the self to play "an active determining role in the choices she makes and the actions she undertakes" (Friedman, 2003: 8). By these active roles, the self can construct herself to the social context that she exists, as seen throughout Aysel's experience. On the other side, when autonomy is lacking, women may experience difficulties in terms of living through their own desires, values, and commitments as Aysel also experiences. In that sense, autonomy requires social contexts that provides gender equality to be recognized, otherwise individuals who hold subordinated identities including leftist intellectuals and women, cannot have freedom and opportunities to make their own choices because of the oppression. Especially other women as well as Aysel, who is the main character of these selected novels, usually experience difficulties while fitting into the standardized norms of ideal woman construction of the society the ways in which creates obstacles against having personal autonomy and dependence.

"These normative conceptions are socially constructed" by patriarchy as an ideological instrument in the society (Deutsch, 2007: 106-107). So that, patriarchal relations restrict women's living experiences in addition to their autonomy. Patriarchal power relations that consisted by patriarchal hegemony, creates a stereotypical construction of subordinated womanhood that decreases "women's social status" (Lorber, 1994: 32). Thus, patriarchal ideology shapes the idealized womanhood by restricting autonomy and dependence. By doing so, it ideologically constructs the ways in which women be able to express themselves in the society. Male dominance appears in both public and private relationships between women and men as a result of men's control over resources and power. As a result of male dominance, "men in general benefit from gender inequalities" (Connell, 2009: 7). Hence, women's participation to public life depends on certain prerequisites which includes behaving in accordance with patriarchal normative framework that harms autonomy of women.

By the formation of Turkish Republic in 1923, contradictions based on women's issues started to be seen in diverse aspects including dichotomies between women's visibility in public and private spheres. Reforms of the republic "relatively

improved the conditions of women” since patriarchal ideology were still existing as a force which dominates the articulation of women’s movement (Coşar, 2007: 116). Thus, emancipation of women is limited within two aspects; firstly, it considers the public sphere as the *only social sphere* that emancipation of women become possible; and secondly, the degree that women could be modernized is *limited* by traditional ideological discourses as Kandiyoti emphasizes (1987: 317-338). Furthermore, these reforms were seen as “tools for national development” instead of a paradigm shift that furthers the development of consciousness of women (Arat, 1994: 59). In accordance with this patriarchal construction of womanhood, “ ‘new woman’ was defined as ‘selfsacrificing Turkish woman’ who is allowed to take part within the social culture only as teachers and nurses who did not threaten the new identity of woman” (Eslenziya and Korkut, 2004: 317).

It is crucial to realize these gendered realities and personal experiences embedded within the patriarchal social structure. Because knowing and understanding unequal social realities that differentiates through gender is the first step of transforming patriarchal power relations. Analysing gendered experiences and realities within Ağaoğlu’s feminist narrative will help to grow feminist knowledge accumulation based on women’s subjective experiences starting from the formation of Turkish republic until the period of 1980’s. Adalet Ağaoğlu is not the only woman writer who provides a feminist paradigm through her narrative. Other woman writers whose perspective is similar to Ağaoğlu within feminist canon of Turkish literature challenged gender representations, too. These woman writers within the feminist canon of Turkish literature can be considered as, but not limited to, Suat Derviş, Fatma Aliye, Halide Edip Adivar, Nezihe Meriç, Selçuk Baran, Pınar Kür, Latife Tekin, Duygu Asena, and Erendiz Atasü.

Although these woman writers also challenged gender norms and representations of the patriarchal society through their writing, Ağaoğlu’s work is specifically selected for this thesis because of multiple reasons. Firstly, Ağaoğlu as a social realist writer reflects social realities in the society through her writing the ways in which allows to analyse existing gender-related issues in the society within the texts.

Secondly, in Ağaoğlu’s novels, the connection with the social and political atmosphere of the historical period is strong enough to locate characters’ experiences

to a social analysis. Last but not least, Ağaoğlu's woman characters practice their own coping strategies towards the existing patriarchal power structure in the society in order to embody their autonomy, instead of accepting the normative structure of the society.

Within Ağaoğlu's woman characters, Aysel is specifically selected as main focus of this analysis. In this thesis, Aysel's story is observed as in relation with the society that she is embedded since her story can be followed from her childhood to end of her life.

Argunşah notes that "after 1970s, the number of woman writer increased since before that, women were considered as consumers of literature instead of knowledge producers" within the sphere of literature (2006: 39). Including Adalet Ağaoğlu, feminist writers problematized women's experiences including "facing with the past, alienation to the society, issues of political power, issues of womanhood, criticisms to the state, women's bodies, women's sexual freedom, gender inequality, and modernization process of Turkey" (Karataş, 2006: 1668-1671). Their common objective was to problematize gender inequality and patriarchy, in general. In that sense, it should be taken into consideration that feminist writers in Turkey problematized gender issues and experiences as in relation to existing social and political structure in the society. Thus, feminist writers provide an opportunity to broaden the edges of fiction by connecting women's issues in their texts with the existing realities in the society. Within literature texts that depicts women as passive and oppressed individuals, feminist literature provided a lens to understand women's issues. Hence, feminist literature provides a critical analysis on women's issues that caused by living in patriarchal society as oppressed gender.

Feminist paradigm that prioritizes women's experiences becomes crucial while analysing women's gender(ed) experiences within patriarchal society so that, gendered realities of social life can be understood. Although the scope of gendered realities of social life is broad, I consider gender oppression, gender inequalities, patriarchal hegemony, and political opposition as the ones that are seen throughout the trilogy since Aysel is affected from them as the main character of the trilogy. "The feminist critique of cultural institutions (including literature) has, in large part,

proceed from the evidence of women's traditional exclusion and has therefore implied either that those institutions must be expanded to include what has been excluded" (Kamuf, 1982: 43). As Kamuf highlights, the main objective of feminist criticism is to emphasize women's exclusion from the society and to include women's gender(ed) experiences to knowledge production. On the other hand, by considering "literature text as a source which transmits the reality of women" from writers to the readers, struggles and objectives of feminist movement can be understood by using feminist literary criticism (Çayırıcıoğlu, 2022: 50). The goal of feminist literary criticism is to analyse women's experiences within literary texts. Yet, it is not easy to differentiate feminist criticism and feminist literary criticism from each other since they both provide a strong emphasis on women's subjective experiences in patriarchal society.

Similar to feminist literary criticism, feminist criticism also tries to understand patterns of gender inequalities and patriarchy when applied to literary texts by connecting them to existing issues in the society. Feminist criticism has four main objectives when applied to literary texts including: invisibility of women writers, women representation within literature, the issue of "feminist reader", and conceptualizing woman writer as a knowledge producer (Kamuf, 1982: 42-47). By implementing these objectives, feminist criticism aims to uncover women's experiences within the context of literature, specifically within feminist narratives.

Accordingly, through the methodology of feminist literary criticism, this thesis tries to focus on women's realities and experiences within Ağaoğlu's *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy that consists of three novels. Therefore, existing gender(ed) issues and women's strategies of coping with these issues in the patriarchal society will be analysed. Feminist critic of literature stands for any critic that is "sensitive to relations of oppression and subordination between the sexes, and the results derived from this unequal relation" (Culler, 1982: 56). Literature, especially feminist canon of literature reflects the gendered experiences and everyday social realities of women as Culler emphasizes. By using feminist literary criticism, which is the main methodological approach of this thesis, women's experiences in social life can be analysed. Consequently, feminist literary criticism derives its critical approach from both the feminist methodology itself and from the social relations within the literature texts.

Ağaoğlu's texts as feminist narratives gathers the information of being a woman in a patriarchal society, as well as the experience of not fitting into the necessary features that are attributed to women by the gender ideology. In her texts, Ağaoğlu represents women characters as who are in a state of objection to patriarchal power structure in the society and within a challenge to liberate themselves from gender inequalities in the society. Because instead of gender regime that regulates social life within patriarchal society that reduce women's existences to private sphere, these woman characters desire to be seen by their public identities. Thus, in Ağaoğlu's writing, women's struggle of being independent individuals despite the challenges of patriarchal society and family are observed.

Because of Ağaoğlu's social realist perspective, not only women's struggle and everyday social realities in the patriarchal society but at the same time, modernization process and developmental ideologies of existing political powers for diverse historical periods and social contexts can be analysed. Aysel, who is the main character of *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy, is a woman who struggles with fitting into the stereotypical identity based on "idealized representation of republican woman". Çayırıcıoğlu highlights her "liminal existence between traditional values and republican state ideology" (2022: 126-127). As a result of her liminal experience, becoming herself in accordance with her personal ideals and dreams becomes a challenge which necessitates coping strategies that are done by multiple ways. Through Ağaoğlu's perspective, challenges of women living in patriarchal society will be better understood when they are analysed in accordance with existing hegemonic ideologies and systems of oppression of this specific historical period, as this thesis conceptualizes.

By the emergence of questioning gender roles and status of women within society, literature functioned as a tool which provides women to escape from the brutality of patriarchal hegemony. Hence, I believe that it has potential to transmit feminist conscious. In that sense, literature is both affected by the existing social realities of the society and affects the transformation of ideas within the society. Problematizing gender representations which in accordance with the existing gender regime of the society allows us to highlight women's experience of making

themselves instead of fitting into the constructed womanhood within the sphere of literature. Addressing transformation of women representations in accordance with patriarchal ideology provides the emergence of a “counter-public sphere that reflects feminist subjectivities” (Felski, 1989: 44). Thus, literature becomes one of the ways in which embrace the possibility of feminist resistance by opening up a space for subjectivities to exist.

Feminist writers like Pınar Kür, Adalet Ağaoğlu, Duygu Asena in Turkey after 1960’s reflected growth of feminist movement by showing the ways in which women are oppressed in society through their works. So that, since their narratives carry the “inspiration and courage” from feminism (Çayırıcıoğlu, 2022). Yet, it should not mean that feminist movement emerged as a result of feminist canon within Turkish literature, nor the feminist canon in itself resulted with women’s movement. However, their interaction should not be denied but emphasized. Ağaoğlu did not represent women as passive individuals who are embedded in patriarchal norms of the society but instead, she depicted women as strong, independent and self-conscious agents who have capacity to question, challenge, and transform the normative framework of the society in order to gain the control of their own lives. Because, as mentioned above, Ağaoğlu’s woman characters practices feminist resistance in order to actualize themselves by taking actions to embody their autonomous existence, including Aysel. Therefore, it should be claimed that Ağaoğlu gave voice to women who does not accept gender regime of the society. In order to embrace feminist subjectivity and agency, women’s everyday realities and experiences should be derived from her works.

By analyzing Ağaoğlu’s feminist works, women’s coping strategies in order to gain their autonomy and independence will be understood. In that sense, I conceptualized coping strategies of women as women’s own ways of resisting with gender oppression by using their own methods throughout the thesis. Lastly, understanding the ways in which feminist resistance show itself throughout these selected novels derives importance in terms of feminist knowledge accumulation since feminist literature consists of subjectivities of those oppressed. Understanding feminist resistance through literature opens up a space for feminist subjectivities to manifest themselves despite ongoing patriarchal hegemony in the society, as this thesis tries to achieve. Through the analysis of Aysel’s feminist resistance against

selected themes including gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony, the ways in which women struggle with gender inequalities will be analysed through feminist paradigm. In the next chapter that is literature review, existing gender and women's studies literature will be analysed in order to contextualize Ađaođlu's work. Besides, in the following chapter, Aysel's experiences within Ađaođlu's work will be evaluated through concepts of gender and women's studies in order to understand Aysel's own ways of coping with gender oppression that she performs throughout the trilogy.



CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Experiences of Gender in Everyday Life

Adalet Ağaoğlu, as a social realist writer, tries to show how women struggle with everyday realities both within public and private spheres of social life through her emphasis on patriarchal power relations and gender inequalities within diverse spheres of the society. The aim of this chapter is to grasp the social issues that Ağaoğlu's selected works are embedded which include gender oppression, patriarchal hegemony, gender inequalities, and new ideal womanhood. By doing so, Aysel's experience and her struggle to embody her autonomy and agency will be understood as in relation to patriarchal hegemony and gender oppression in the society. Hence, in this chapter, I will problematize and analyze the ways in which gendered realities and patriarchal power relations show itself within everyday life so that, Ağaoğlu's work can be understood better through a feminist paradigm.

In Ağaoğlu's narrative, gendered realities and patriarchal power relations show themselves the ways in which clarifies gender inequalities through women's experiences and woman representations throughout the texts. While analyzing Ağaoğlu's work from a feminist perspective, it should be taken into consideration that her narrative reflects gender inequalities in the society as a result of her social realist perspective. Because Ağaoğlu depicts women characters as in relation to social realities and existing political issues that consist of ideological oppositions of selected historical period within her novels. Hence, this background aims to provide clarification for further analysis to question the ways in which patriarchal hegemony is reproduced and women cope with it within *Dar Zamanlar (Narrow Times)* trilogy.

As well as other social realist feminist writers in Turkish literature, Ağaoğlu's work should be understood within a social and political context. Thus, in order to understand women's realities that includes gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony throughout *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy, social and historical realities of gender inequality, and social and political realities of women in Turkey should be considered as turning points since women's issues and experiences within Ağaoğlu's narrative is strongly connected to them. These social and political realities of existing historical period can be considered as patriarchal oppression, gender inequality in the society including public and private spheres, ideological oppression that intellectuals experience, which both result with gender oppression. In that sense social and historical realities of women, development of women's movement in Turkey, and women's issues between 1970's and 1990's will be analyzed in order to provide a background which will locate Ağaoğlu's feminist narrative. By doing so, Ağaoğlu's feminist standing and her narrative's interaction with the gender issues will be better understood.

Gender is one of the essential categories that regulate the social life by various instruments. Social institutions like state, family, and education are gendered the ways in which reproduce the gender oppression against women and reduce the identity of womanhood to domestic sphere. "The term *gendered institutions* means that gender is present in the process, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life" (Acker, 1992: 567). As Acker emphasizes, gender and gendered social realities show themselves in every single aspect of social life, as well as in the institutions that society leans on. "It is valid that each woman begins from her personal experiences and it is important to see how these are political... We must all recognize that our personal experiences are shaped by the culture with all its prejudices" (Bunch, 1988: 290). As Bunch argues, although every woman has a diverse experience and reality which are shaped through personal experiences, these personal experiences are political, too. It is crucial to understand these personal experiences of women within social life in order to analyze how women are oppressed by men and social institutions within patriarchal society.

Besides, understanding these personal realities and experiences of women provides a feminist paradigm which can locate women as active agents and free entities, who decides and acts through their individual wills and desires. Feminist paradigm emphasizes subjectivity and agency of the individual. Gornick argues that women have to reach to the “center of their experiences” in order to become whole and complete as individuals (1973: 112). Besides, she highlights the importance of seeing and remembering who we are, as women instead of leaning on male-centered knowledge accumulation. Hence, feminist paradigm within literature and women’s writing can lead the way of women living in patriarchal society while at the same time, it gathers the knowledge of womanhood through personal experiences and realities of women.

Questioning novels in terms of feminist subjectivity provides a reflection for women’s resistance against patriarchal hegemony in the society. Art is not a process of individuality, but it is “a process that individuals are affected by outer realities” (Nocklin, 1971: 135-136). Myth of modernity considers artists’ productions as if they are “independent from the gendered experiences and realities but actually, modernity’s assumption of objectivity refers to male-centered gaze” within the process of knowledge production (Hammond, 1977: 35). Because of this male gaze, women’s realities are in danger of being undermined since it only values male-centered point of view. In order to gain this objectivity back by liberating it from male-gazed approach which undermines women’s experiences, women’s subjective narratives are crucial. Because objectivity separates people from “knowledge of their subjectivity” (Stanley, 1991: 11). Therefore, considering feminist texts is essential in order to analyze women’s issues in social life since their characters carry the knowledge of their own stories.

Feminist knowledge refers to “spoken experience of actual women speaking of and in the actualities of their everyday worlds” (Smith, 1988: 107). Ağaoğlu’s *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy provides opportunity to witness a woman’s life from beginning to end. Hence, it is classified as *bildungsroman*, which focuses on a personal story of growing up. In that sense, possible challenges while living through a patriarchal society can be observed. Besides, possible strategies of women while resisting against patriarchal hegemony can be analyzed within selected novels.

By doing so, feminist narratives and women's writing gain a transformative nature which also has potential to influence the society's gender regime and patriarchal order. "Gender was first employed to emphasize the social and relational nature of differences between man and woman in contrast to biological differences between sexes" (Acker, 1992: 565). However, as Acker highlights, gender does not only imply social differences but at the same time, differentiations on power distributions between genders as a result of social and political order which creates a "gender hierarchy". "Groups unequal in power are correspondingly unequal in their ability to make their standpoint known to themselves and others" (Hill Collins, 1990: 26). Obviously, as Hill Collins points out, women as those should know themselves since knowledge is the first step of transforming the inequality because gender hierarchy shows itself even within the process of creating knowledge. Feminist literature is one of the ways in which has potential to influence women in terms of creating their own reality. In order to understand how Ağaoğlu provides a focus to women's reality, women's experience in the patriarchal society and development of women's movement will be analyzed in the following parts. Thus, it will be easier to link Aysel's personal story to the collective reality of womanhood.

2.1.1. Social and Historical Realities of Women

In this section, everyday realities of women will be analyzed in accordance with the existing literature on gender and woman's studies in order to understand reasons behind gender oppression. These everyday realities are shaped through accumulation of gender inequalities in the society the ways in lower women's social status in the society by reducing the identity of womanhood to idealized roles and restrict their interaction with the society by naturalizing their domestic existence. It is possible to define gender in multiple forms yet, it should be noted that for this case, gender's relation with the social life should be highlighted to derive the importance of Aysel's struggle. "Gender is not a free-standing phenomenon independent from social life, but it is shaped through social interactions and socially constructed knowledge" (Bohan, 1993: 12-13). Hence, gender cannot be considered as independent from social life.

However, gender essentialism reduces categories of manhood and womanhood to internalized aspects of sex that are derived from attributed biological features of sex. It assigns fixed gender roles based on the stereotypical characteristics which consists of women's inferiority and men's superiority. It rejects the notion of social construction although gendered social experiences claim social construction of gender and its contextual existence. Gender is not only reproduced through individuals' social experiences, but it also exists "at the level of representation, being expressed in images and symbols, texts and ideologies" (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 198). Therefore, representations and/or reproductions of gender, gendered realities, gender oppression become significant in terms of women's process of "learning and creating about themselves" since they carry the seeds of unseen reality (Haraway, 1991: 230).

Men and women experience life differently because of the gender inequalities which separates everyday experiences of men and women in the society. "As a social institution, gender is a process of creating distinguishable social statuses for the assignment of rights and responsibilities" (Lorber, 1994: 32). Once the gender is ascribed, individuals find themselves in positions which holds them within the structure of gendered norms and expectations. However, it should be taken into mind that category of "womanhood" is not a single category consists of one single fixed reality, but every woman has different realities and experiences. "As a social institution, gender is one of the major ways that human beings organize their lives" (Lorber, 1994: 14-15). As Lorber highlights, social life and the social relations that embedded to social life are often organized through gender. "Gender is socially constructed in the light of the normative conceptions of men and women which vary across time, ethnic group, social situation" (Deutsch, 2007: 106-107).

Gendered social interactions in the society results from inequalities but they also reinforce and reproduce gender inequalities. Consequently, gendered inequalities which are embedded in social interactions operates at multiple levels including relations between structural and interactional levels in the society. Thus, individuals experience social life through structured gender inequalities and the limitations based on gender categories, which produces and reproduces "dominance-dependence relations" (Hartmann, 1976: 139).

Gender identity of individuals are shaped through social experiences and gender is always in the process of reconstruction since it is performative. When

Beauvoir emphasized that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman”, she portrayed gender as a *received cultural construction* that is always in the process of *becoming* (1973: 301). “It is no longer possible to attribute the values or social functions of women to biological necessity” (Butler, 1986: 35). Because gender, as a received social and cultural identity, is reflexive which is constituted through possibilities within the social field. Although gender is socially constructed and shaped by social and cultural interactions that are contextually specific, in patriarchal societies there are restrictive gender roles attributed to men and women that provide reproduction of male oppression. “Men in general benefit from the inequalities of the gender order” (Connell, 2009: 7). This unequal structure of gender order that Connell emphasizes results from gender arrangements which are resulting of social recognition and identity while they provide a legitimation basis for injustice and harm. Thus, gender’s political feature cannot be denied since power and privilege structures in society are shaped through restrictive and regulative mechanisms of gender constructions.

Spatial differentiation is gendered, as well as the organization of social life. “As a process, gender creates the social differences that define ‘woman’ and ‘man’ ” (Lorber, 1993: 114). Through these social differences, human beings organize their lives by the *predictable division of labor* (Lorber, 1993: 113). While public sphere is considered as a “male domain”, private spheres is accepted as a “female sphere” (Massey, 2013). Thus, since women are identified with both their familial ties and private sphere, their existence in the public sphere is not socially accepted and welcomed. Even if women experience the public life, there are certain limitations and restrictions that women should obey in order to be accepted in the public sphere. However, there are different normative regulations for men and women that should be followed in public life. Hence, it should be highlighted that social realities and organization of social life consists of gendered and structured inequalities that serve benefit of men while excluding women from every sphere of social life including economic, political, cultural spheres.

However, social, economic and political activities take place in the public sphere, which excludes women from such activities because of androcentric biases.

While men are welcomed for income generating activities that take place in the public sphere, women were responsible for reproduction of social life by participating to both procreative activities, and by unpaid family labor in the private sphere. “As a structure, gender divides work in the home and in the economic production” (Connell, 1987: 91-

142). Because of this spatial differentiation and women’s exclusion from different aspects of public sphere and social life, throughout the history, women lack access to necessary resources that men have as a privileged group. Although these sources are multiple, they all have a common aspect which is providing independency and empowerment.

Furthermore, women do not only lack some resources, but these resources’ lack reproduces other inequalities in an accumulative way. “Women are excluded from access to state resources and power as part of the patriarchal system” (Walby, 1989: 224). Consequently, there are social structures and mechanisms behind reproduction of gender inequality in every sphere of social life. Besides, there are androcentric arguments based on the legitimation of these gender inequalities and gendered doublestandards which make them seem inevitable and as natural consequences of biological attributions of sexual features of human beings.

Women’s consideration as inferior to men is an outcome of nature and culture dichotomy, which results with gender essentialism. “Production is identified with a public male sphere and reproduction with a domestic, female sphere” (Acker, 1989: 239). According to patriarchal ideology, men are the main agents of culture who invents civilization while women are accepted as representatives of nature whose responsibility is to bear children and take care of their family, which is reproducing the social life as Acker highlights. Because of the biological essentialism that serves as the main ideology behind patriarchal hegemony and gendered spatial segregation, women lack autonomy since they are not equipped with necessary knowledge and skills the ways in which can be used in income generating activities.

Because of the dichotomy of public and private spheres, women are excluded from access to professional knowledge and skills, which results with lower social and economic status of women when compared to men who have access to necessary knowledge and skills for a higher status in modern society. Acker highlights that spatial distinction has *ideological effects* (1989: 239). In other words, spatial

dichotomy does not only exclude women from reaching to knowledge and skills but at the same time, it helps men to reproduce their privileged position in the society by reproducing gendered social and economic inequalities the way in which reproduce the ideology of patriarchy. Spatial relations cannot be taken into consideration as independent from social relations. In that sense, social processes and spatial relations that are resulted by differentiations based on social status are not independent from each other, but they need to be considered within an interactive process. Hence, gendered social processes can be understood in accordance with differentiation of public and private spheres, and reproduction of gender inequalities through this differentiation in social life.

Gendered nature of public and private spheres is not a fixed reality, but they have fluid aspects which allows for transformations of gender identities in different social contexts. Spatial social relations have a “dynamic simultaneity” which is implicated in both history and politics (Massey, 2013: 2-39). Hence, this fluidity allows for unique gender performances which can change through social context that individuals are embedded.

Because of the changing gender roles of men and women in the public and private spheres, their gender identities in the society differentiate the ways in which influence other aspects such as power, status, agency, and autonomy of individuals. “Once spatial forms are created, they tend to become institutionalized, and in some ways influence future social processes” (Harvey, 1973: 27). As Harvey highlights, spatial regulations and relations are crucial in terms of formation of future social processes thus, spatial segregation reinforces status differences between genders and gender inequalities caused by inequality based on the access to knowledge and skill for necessary material accumulation within capitalist mode of production. Consequently, dichotomy of public and private spheres operates the ways in which strengthen male advantages and deepen the inferiority of females.

Furthermore, spatial differentiation can also be considered as a social mechanism which determines who will hold more social and economic privilege in which ways. Spatial control functions as a social regulation mechanism that restricts entrance of genders to certain social spheres, for instance, it restricts women to join

urban sphere. Because urban sphere is the “material manifestation of a patriarchal society” (Spain, 2014: 585). Even if they enter to a social sphere that is restricted for this gender category, there are certain normative codes and values that individuals are allowed to perform. In Ağaoğlu’s writing, women’s participation to public sphere depends on gender-specific norms and regulations. Hence, it is necessary to consider gender-based spatial differentiations while analyzing women’s coping strategies with patriarchal power relations.

Berktaş highlights the “impossibility of collecting and keeping the record of every historical reality” (2003: 18). Because of this impossibility, history operationalizes as an “ideological instrument” which is only able to reflect certain selected historical realities and events. Although there is a limited amount of knowledge accumulation based on women’s realities and stories, there are created and accumulated by a male gaze which reduces and devaluates women’s subjectivity and their own ways to cope with gender issues in the society. By analyzing gender issues, Ağaoğlu’s narrative as a woman writer who reflects unseen experiences of women embedded in patriarchal power relations and idealized womanhood can be better understood.

In that sense, different realities and experiences of different genders should be taken into account as one of the consequences of hierarchical gender relations mediated by society-wide organizations. Within this social structure, “patriarchy plays a regulatory role in which women are oppressed” (Connell, 1990: 514). “Gender construction starts at birth” and continues throughout the whole process of living by normative frameworks based on how men and women should act (Lorber and Farrell, 1991: 14). As a consequence, most of the gendered prejudices and assumptions are derived from both biological-essentialist arguments and from stereotypical gender categories.

Despite these stereotypical assumptions, gender should be conceptualized as “a multi-dimensional concept” which is both affected by other social institutions and affects them at the same time. Because gender is shaped by interactive social processes with other social institutions. Social and political systems have role in the “construction of gender categories” (Burton, 1985). In that sense, identity, power, religion, state, sexuality, education, and work are some of the social institutions which reinforce gender inequalities in order to sustain male privileges in the society. By the

socialization process, individuals learn appropriate behavior based on traditional gender expectations of the society. Traditional gender expectations have been shaped through reproductive roles of men and women. “In our society the sexual division of labor is hierarchical, which men on top and women on the bottom” (Hartmann, 1976: 137). This division of labor by gender segregation have further extended through the development of capitalist relations of production. Besides, since women are not welcomed to public sphere and their place of belonging is considered as their home, they lack education which results with their exclusion from any kind of economic activities. Consequently, women become dependent to a male member of her family, who is usually their fathers or husbands because of their lack of economic independence, which resulted with decrease in the social status of women.

Social relations between genders are socially constructed the ways in which subordinate women and reproduce the power of men within social, political, cultural and economic spheres. Patriarchy as a concept, refers to “principles underlying women’s oppression” (Beechey, 1974: 66). This unequal social construction of power between men and women refers to patriarchy. In patriarchal systems, women are not only subordinated by unequal power dynamics between genders but there are several other spheres of social life that deepen the inequality between women and men including the social processes within public and private spheres. Hartmann emphasizes

“public and private separation’s role” on the increasing control of men over women that is mediated by society (1976: 138). By the gendered spatial segregation, women are controlled by men in the private spheres by doing gender roles that reproduce the idea based on women’s existence as good mothers and wives.

“Patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” consists social relations and realities in the society, which are constructed through gender inequalities that serve benefit of men (Walby, 1990: 20). As Walby highlights, the concept of patriarchy refers to both public dimensions, and private dimensions of male domination which results from social and historical realities of gender inequality. “Feminists mainly use the term ‘patriarchy’ to describe the power relationship between men and women” (Sultana, 2010: 2). By

describing patriarchy as power inequalities between genders, the term helps us to understand women's realities which are different than men's realities because of gender oppression.

Through the oppression of patriarchal relations in the society, men benefit from "higher wages and unpaid family labor" (Hartmann, 1976: 140). Hence, patriarchy does not only refer to social relations between and within genders but a social system with a material base that helps to reproduce capitalist mode of production, too. Patriarchy, as a structuring structure that operates in different levels and institutions of the society, determines the nature of social relations through men's oppression and women's subordination. Walby defines patriarchal structures that constitute the system of patriarchy as levels of abstraction which are "patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations, patriarchal state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal culture" (1989: 220). Hence, different social spheres and institutions are operated through diverse dimensions of patriarchal power relations.

Patriarchy naturalizes gender inequalities by making them seen inevitable, natural, and necessary. By doing so, it internalizes women's exclusion from access to social, economic, political, and cultural resources and power, which creates an obstacle in women's empowerment and liberation. "Sexual division of labor and male dominance based on men's superiority and strength, ability and experience derived from their hunting experience" (Lerner, 1986: 17). However, real basis of women's subordination is not biology nor emotions, but "the concept of patriarchy has been used to address the question of real basis of the subordination of women" (Beechey, 1979: 66). Patriarchy and patriarchal social relations in general, explains the social construction of gender oppression based on relations of superiority and inferiority.

In patriarchal societies, social life is divided by gender identities the ways in which restricts women from joining social, economic, political and cultural activities that take place in the public sphere, and internalizes women's existence to private, familial sphere in order to legitimize women's exploitation through unpaid family labor. "Throughout the history and across cultures, architectural and geographic spatial arrangements have reinforced status differences between women and men" (Spain, 1992: 3). This spatial differentiation between public and private spheres provides gender stratification to function the ways in which lowers women's status

and reproduce the social and economic privilege of men. Since women are accepted as second sex and inferior to men, their existence in different spheres of social life is not considered as equal to men but women have been seen through their “procreative function” and their identities within family as mothers and wives.

According to Ferber “since women bear children, they are better suited for raising them, and by extension, also better suited to homemaking in general” (2003. 11). Attribution of women’s social role as bearer of children results with their exclusion from income generating activities and from public sphere, in general. In society, women’s existence on social life is limited because of the structured inequalities. In such a context which women’s participation to public sphere is not welcomed, women’s existence in public life can be one of the ways in which necessitates women’s independence and empowerment. Yet, women are likely to experience social pressure when they be visible in the public sphere, as it can be observed in *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy.

Social conditions that result with gender inequalities and the results of gender inequalities differ through context so that, these realities are not stabilized enough to make generalizations. However, there are historical realities behind gender inequalities which show similarities between modern capitalist societies, as mentioned in this chapter. Despite differentiations on the patterns of gender inequality and the results of gender inequality, the conditions that derive gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony should be understood. By grasping these realities, the objectives of feminist individuals will be understood since they are resisting gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony.

Aysel tries to struggle with gender inequality in the society in order to embody her autonomous existence by resisting to gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony by existing in the public sphere with her own autonomous identity. She develops her own ways to deal with gender oppression instead of performing ascribed roles of womanhood. By doing so, she becomes able to construct her autonomous self and to act through her own decisions instead of following the normative structure of the society. So that, it becomes crucial to understand the realities behind them in order to be able to understand Aysel’s story of embodying her autonomous existence. Since

Aysel tries to struggle with power inequality between genders, she is trying to actualize herself by resisting the conditions that create gender inequality including gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony. Thus, in this chapter, main causes and results of gender inequality have been discussed so that, Aysel's story of coping with gender oppression which occurs as the result of gender inequalities will be better understood in the following chapters.

2.1.2. Development of Women's Movement in Turkey

In this section, the social structure that Aysel is embedded will be understood by taking a look at women's movement in Turkey. The main objective of this chapter is to highlight the common causes behind both Aysel's struggle to embody her autonomous being and the reasons that cultivate growth of feminist women's movement in Turkey. They have mutual reasons behind themselves since they both occur as results of patriarchal hegemony and gender oppression within the society. Besides, the social and political structure that Aysel is embedded is shaped through political oppositions resulting from ambiguous political climate of Turkey that is shaped by military coups. Hence, by conceptualizing Aysel's story to the existing social and political structure, this chapter seeks to provide emphasis on collective nature of Aysel's story that reflects women's everyday realities in Turkey.

After the formation of Turkish Republic in 1923, integration of women into modernization process had been accepted as a need in order to achieve a status that is western and developed since the reforms considered society as a project with "the goal of moving it from traditional to western" (White, 2003: 148). Public existence of women, education and working opportunities, equality based on the legal structure were considered as main pillars of emancipation of women. At the same time, these goals are development targets that has been started to be implemented in the first half of the nineteenth century in Turkey the way in which shaped through the structure of society. Instead of promoting empowerment and independence of women, emancipation of women has been considered as an instrument to increase the quality of modernization process by political power.

By the formation of Turkish Republic, there has been made several legal and structural changes regarding gender issues in the society. "The advancement of

women's rights was one of the main achievements of the republic" (Eslen-Ziya and Korkut, 2020: 312). However, these achievements of the Turkish republic were not sufficient enough to promote gender equality and women's liberation since these transformations were made in accordance with westernization-oriented modernization paradigm. Westernization paradigm had been integral goal of the Turkish modernization process by giving legitimacy to Turkish transformation program that is in opposition with cultural tradition in accordance with religious/Islamic norms. By starting from 1950's, the political climate of Turkey has started to be transformed.

These political transformations have started with the end of one-party-rule and application of multi-party politics in Turkey. Women organization in Turkey tried to protect status-quo between 1950's and 1970's. Civil society gained momentum after 1950's but it was not yet powerful enough to shape political agenda. After the military coup of 1960, the 1961 Constitution emerged in order to enhance rights and freedoms. By 1961, constitutional reforms and political structuring has started to be made. According to Arat, these constitutional reforms and political restructurings made longterm implications for women's struggle and emancipation because of the liberal ethos that 1961 Constitution triggered in addition to its facilitation of women's activity in social movements within the movements of the left (1990). Until 1980's, women's movement in Turkey did not questioned women's activities and statuses within diverse spheres of social life but instead, they focused on class-related issues. Hence, feminists did not create an independent political movement before 1980's but they choose to be a part of a bigger social and political movement within leftist movement in Turkey so that, state feminism and its limitations started to be questioned.

"State feminism was concerned primarily with women's public emancipation, but little concerned with their private lives as women" (White, 2003: 147). In that sense, modernization process did not directly increase the standards of female population in Turkey because of its instrumentalization of women's rights and liberties. Instead, women's emancipation operated as a "political project of the state which resulted with 'parallel lives' as a result" (Kandiyoti, 1987: 324). Since emancipation of women was seen as one of the most crucial pillars of modernization

process of Turkey, Turkish women were granted certain rights and liberties such as right to vote, education and inheritance in terms of legal context. “Gender equality was granted in the public realm and women’s professionalism was supported at the same time as patriarchal norms continued to be practiced and replicated in the private realm” (Arat, 2000: 111-112). Consequently, women were granted new rights and liberties on the public sphere while they were still experiencing patriarchal hegemony within the private sphere the way in which resulted with living parallel lives as both Arat and Kandiyoti emphasize.

According to state feminism approach, women should get a quality education in order to be beneficial for the younger generations of Turkey instead of participating the economic life and gain economic independence for themselves. “Modernity, as defined by Turkish state, included marriage and children as a national duty for women” (White, 2003: 146). Besides, women should develop themselves to be a good and loving spouse for their husbands, so that they need to develop themselves not for themselves, but for their families. However, the qualifications of women should be used only in the private sphere and they should choose jobs in accordance with their traditional gender roles and expectations if they want to participate to economic life. “State feminism did not concern itself with what happened behind the closed doors of the home” (White, 2003: 146). These idealized women identities reproduced traditional gender roles of the patriarchal society so that, reproduced women’s inferiority. The only transformation regarding gender issue was the change of women’s location from private sphere to public sphere.

In that sense, it should be taken into consideration that emancipation does not stand for liberation of women within Turkish context. Yet, emerged possibilities for women should not be undermined since they provided a background for rising the conscious of women and a women’s movement. Furthermore, because of the existing independence movement of women resulted from modernization efforts started in the nineteenth century in the Ottoman Empire, modern and Westernized Turkish Republic granted equal rights to women with men. Hence, women’s efforts for emancipation which lasted for at least a half century resulted with their rights and liberties’ protection by the law of new Turkish state. However, this protection of rights by the legal structure only provided benefit to urban and upper-middle class women since it left rural women behind. “The Republican state determined the characteristics of the

ideal women and set up a monopolistic system to propagate this ideal in a population that held often quite different values and perceptions of ideal women's behavior" (White, 2003: 145). Although new republic guaranteed women's rights under the law, most of the women left behind because of the new "ideal type of republican woman" created by state.

Consequently, by the expansion of possibilities for women, feminism started to develop outside the state's ideology and "woman as citizen" model through liberalization movements. Tekeli argues that Turkish women's movement arose only after the 1980's because "Kemalism and leftist ideology functioned as barriers to women's movement" (1990: 13). Because of state supported feminism, women's questioning of patriarchal norms and traditions in the society started late while "women's emancipation in Turkey is achieved by series of legal reforms following the war of independence and the establishment by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk of a secular republic" (Kandiyoti, 1987: 320).

Despite the fact that acceptance of formation of a secular republic as a turning point for granting legal rights to woman citizens, women's struggle for equality and visibility in the social life goes back to Tanzimat Period. As Çakır (1994) highlights, women's movement in Turkey started to grow in Tanzimat period by women's magazines and associations which focus on women's emancipation. These women's magazines and associations were mainly focusing on women's emancipation by targeting to provide opportunity for women to express themselves as independent individuals and to develop solutions to women's issues. Arat consider these texts as "a way of women's own ways of narrating their own stories as they wished" (2000: 114). Since the subject of traditional history writing is man, mainstream narratives cannot reproduce the information of women. Until Tanzimat period, women's existence was limited to domestic roles such as mothers and wives however, these roles were subject to change by starting from Tanzimat period. Emerging women's associations and magazines started to question traditional gender roles and status of women within social life although their numbers were extremely limited.

Still, it should not be denied that formation of the secular Turkish Republic was the beginning of a new era for women. These reforms had potential to "question

patriarchal hierarchy” between genders (Avcı, 2007: 2). Women had given gender equality in marriage, divorce, inheritance rights and child custody by new civil code of 1926 but “these changes affected only a small layer” since much of the Anatolian hinterland was excluded from the central state (Kandiyoti, 1988: 312). Most of the Kemalist feminists were claiming that those women in the Anatolian rural are the one who are uneducated, hence, they do not know their rights. The main discourse was based on “backwardness” of women in the rural areas since they had “the illusion that ‘education’ was the key to everything” and educated ones still could emancipate themselves despite ongoing patriarchal power relations (Tekeli, 1988: 12).

In addition to emancipation project’s exclusion of rural women, gender equality in the public realms was not providing an equal basis for men and women in the private sphere. Even in the public sphere, women’s visibility was depending on being genderless in the public sphere by holding back their gender identity. Perceiving women as carriers of national honor was one of the key components of Turkish modernization. When women accept their position as bearer of honor, they pay the price of entering into public sphere by not showing their gender identity in order to protect their honor by suppressing their sexuality” (Sancar, 2004: 9). In that sense, through the Turkish modernization process, women sacrifice certain parts of their identity in order to be accepted in the public sphere. Women had to act like a man or at least as a genderless citizen by concealing their feminine identity in the public sphere in order to be accepted because women were socially and historically accepted as “selfsacrificing sacred creatures” (Müftüler-Bac, 1999: 307).

Women’s existence in the public sphere was a common phenomenon so that women had to develop certain strategies in order to be accepted to public sphere. The main gender approach in the early republic was based on women’s achievement to men’s status in the society which necessitates the exclusion of womanhood identity from the public life. Not only Kemalist ideology was controlling women’s visibility in the public sphere but at the same time, Islamic tradition was controlling women’s existence in the public sphere by the division of public and private dichotomy. While public sphere was associated with male identity, women were only allowed to spend their times within the private sphere. History of gendered spatial differentiation results from Islam’s understanding that furthers the growth of “patriarchal hierarchy” as a religion (Yılmaz, 2010: 193). So that, culturally and historically, women in Turkey

were not even allowed to enjoy public sphere because of this gendered spatial differentiation.

“Women are excluded from access to state resources and power as part of the patriarchal system” (Walby, 1989: 224). This exclusion of women from resources and power structure show itself as women’s invisibility in certain areas such as public sphere the ways in which “subordinate women in them” (Walby, 1989: 228). Male identity was considered as a higher status to be achieved since it was seen as more valuable and publicly accepted than the female identity, which claims the inequality between gender identities. Despite the equal rights and liberties on paper for women and men, women had to shrink their feminine visibility on the public sphere because of the existing normative structure of the patriarchal society.

Besides, although women had equal rights to get education, work, participate in politics, regulations in the early republic could not become successful in terms of promoting these rights and freedoms because these reforms were only focused on upper-middle class women living in big cities. “A few lucky women who came from the highest socioeconomic backgrounds in Turkey were chosen as the leading army. This small, privileged group was able to receive the same education as men and compete them under the same conditions for jobs” (Müftüler-Bac, 1999: 303). Although the exiting rights and liberties of these selected women, most of the women from rural backgrounds could not enjoy these rights since there were not any policies to support gender equality. In the early years of republic, only a prestigious group of women could enjoy their equal rights and liberties that women’s movement gained for women.

Another issue which creates an obstacle for women’s liberation was state feminism, that is promoted by Turkish Republic through its early years. “The republican state determined the characteristics of the ideal women” (White, 2003: 145). On the societal level, women were accepted as ideal citizens only when they are mothers and wives because the future of the nation was depending on the efforts of women who were considered as mothers and wives before their individual identities. In that sense, it can be said that women were seen as reproductive agents that will reproduce the cultural norms and values of the Turkish society by raising younger

Turkish generation. Hence, ideal of gender equality of Turkish Republic could only stay in the discursive level instead of turning into a practice in social life and most of scholars argued that Turkish women are “emancipated but unliberated” (Arat, 1989; Kandiyoti, 1987; Tekeli, 1995). Despite her lack of liberation, Aysel is one of the women who emancipated because of the republic. She becomes able to get education and to become an intellectual with the reforms of the republic.

Aysel becomes an academician since it is one of “accepted” jobs for women in the public sphere because of the responsibility of women as mothers of the nation. However, Aysel is not completely autonomous and liberated in her private life despite her status in the society. Still, the emancipation that republic provides for women cannot be denied since it provides a structure for women’s awareness. In order to reach this autonomous self-actualization, there are certain aspects that women need to struggle with. Despite these legal and structural changes, women were still oppressed by the patriarchal system. Women’s bodies are one of the ways in which reproduce patriarchal hegemony on women. “The battleground of modernization was women’s bodies and the most visible form of control over women’s bodies is their virginity” (Müftüler-Bac, 1999: 309-310).

Besides, there had been a strict control over women’s sexuality, and it was believed that society’s morality is protected by sexual purity of women. Women’s sexuality had been controlled by state mechanisms which are operated on women’s bodies since “women’s sexual behavior is the measure of both the society’s and the state’s dominant values in Turkey” (Müftüler-Bac, 1999: 309). For instance, virginity control for unmarried women was one of the tools that provide control and regulation over female bodies by the state mechanisms since it is “a particularly modern form of institutionalized violence used to secure the sign of the modern and/but chaste woman” (Parla, 2001: 66). Not only through state mechanisms but at the same time, through customs and norms, female bodies are instrumentalized as biological bearers of culture of the Turkish nation and women’s sexual purity and modesty were essential elements for the survival of cultural norms and traditions.

Hence, women were defined through their traditional gender identities, which are mothers and wives whose responsibility is to protect the cultural norms and values of the society within its national borders. Even though women would join the public sphere or working life, their places in the society were defined through traditional

gender regime. There were appropriate jobs for women that reproduce the gender inferiority and traditional gender expectations as it can be seen through Ağaoğlu's work. Aysel does not fulfill the standards that society expects from a woman, but she is always in a state of struggle and bargaining with patriarchal values as in parallel to feminist movement's objectives within this historical period. Feminists in Turkey started to question normative framework that is attributed to women after 1980's, as well as Aysel.

State feminism approach was letting women to join the public sphere, but it had pre-requisites for women to be accepted on the public sphere, as it was mentioned above. Tekeli perceives women's instrumentalization by state as a mechanism to be seen as modernized and westernized, and she argues that women's being objects of political interests is a "necessary continuation of the patriarchal domination of men over women" (1995: 10). It cannot be denied that women's oppression creates an obstacle for the modernization process, so that at least the oppression within the visible public spheres should be eradicated although equality on paper does not directly provide equality in all spheres of daily life. In that sense, although state feminism did not completely eradicate gender inequality, it provided a sphere that "women's rights can expand" (Arat, 2000: 119).

The belief that providing equal rights to women and men will solve the gender issues in both public and private spheres of the society did not work as it was predicted but it encouraged women to start a new fire with their limited opportunities. In Turkish society, women are the ones who affected most from the developments and modernization process and at the same time, they are the ones "who reflect these changes more than any other social group" (Gülendam, 2006: 14). "After 1980s, a heterogenous group of women those who call them feminists were the first to have a public voice" (Arat, 2000: 113). Therefore, by their efforts and contributions, women's liberation movements started to gain a momentum in 1980's. This movement challenged legal system and dominant social norms of the society that oppress women.

After the military coup in 1980, the 1982 Constitution tried to establish a controlled social and political environment for democracy in Turkey since *it turned*

out to be authoritarian (Harris, 2011: 209). Therefore, women's movement in Turkey could no longer survive within leftist movement but it emerged as an independent social movement in order to strengthen the solidarity among women. It should be noted that "political climate of 1980's was creating pressure" on individuals through authoritarianism (Karagöz, 2008: 170). During these years, feminists were trying to achieve a more comprehensive transformation of society. These feminists were the second generation of educated women of Turkish Republic although they were not defining themselves as Kemalists but instead, they were radical intellectual women who are trying to institutionalize women's rights within the gender regime of Turkish Republic including the private matters that were always undermined. Since women's rights gained by new Turkish Republic felt short of satisfying liberal women's needs and demands, women's movement occurred after 1980's targeted a more radical transformation and institutionalization of women's rights, which creates a focus on "understanding the dichotomies of public and private spheres" (Savran, 2002: 255).

Certain major women's associations in Turkey emerged after the efforts of feminists in 1980's since 1980's witnessed a major advancement towards realization of women's movement in Turkey. By the changing social and political context of women's movement as it gained independence from leftist movement, feminists found the possibility to be organized within diverse ideological stances and backgrounds. In 1986, feminist groups in Istanbul and Ankara organized petition campaign in order to ask government's approval of UN Convention About the Abolition of All Discrimination Against Women (1979). In 1987, feminist groups in Istanbul organized the "first street demonstration after the military coup in 1980" in order to protect against wife beating (Tekeli, 1995: 13). In 1989, first feminist congress was held in Ankara, which ended with a manifesto which claims that women's oppression is multiple.

Major institutions that claim the "institutionalization of feminism" started in 1990's including women's library in Istanbul that opened in 1990, foundation of Flying Broom (Uçan Süpürge) in 1996 and the Association for Supporting Women's Candidacy (Kadın Adayları Destekleme ve Eğitim Derneği, KA-DER) in 1997 (Eslen-Ziya and Korkut, 2010: 322). In addition to these, women's magazines were established such as Monday (Pazartesi) in 1995 and these magazines continue to

appear regularly as an outcome of rising feminist movement and conscious in Turkey. These new organizations started to work together in with state programs which targeted to solve issues related to gender and women. According to Tekeli, accepted and normalized ideal woman construction that is developed through Kemalism started to be questioned in 1980's, and finally started to "disseminate feminist ideas behind elite women" (1995: 18).

Besides, women's questioning of their social status and gender roles within the society provided a basis for women's movement. However, this questioning did not immediately start, but instead, women's questioning on their social status and gender roles in the society has a long history that can be followed through the works of feminist woman writers throughout the Turkish literature. Although historical records and mainstream knowledge accumulation does not claim the existence of feminist consciousness and organizations before 1980's, its existence and transformation can be followed through narratives of women within the sphere of literature. "Feminist narratives enunciate modes of subjectivity, and they address themselves to a community of readers" (Zerilli, 1991: 15). Thus, literature should be accepted as a medium that collect and preserve the gendered knowledge of women so that, it provides an emphasis on the subjectivities of women. By consideration of these social realities that shape everyday experiences of women, Ağaoğlu's work will be derived in accordance with social and historical realities.

As consequence, a feminist counter public sphere that is composed of feminist knowledge accumulation will be created. When Aysel's personal story is understood through the existing gender oppression in the society, we also become acknowledged on her strategies of dealing with gender oppression that she experiences. In that sense, Ağaoğlu's text provides the opportunity of observing the gender(ed) issues that women experience. Besides, inequalities and oppression that women experience can be derived as in relation to social and political atmosphere of the society within Ağaoğlu's work. Aysel's story, specifically, provides a clear account on gender issues in Turkey, starting from the early republican years to 1980's military coup since Aysel is represented as embedded to patriarchal society throughout the trilogy. Hence, it provides an intersectional context which Aysel can easily be located as a woman who

experience multiple issues at once the ways in which allows to grasp the realities of society from a perspective of a woman. These issues that Aysel has to face can be summarized as ideological opposition, gender oppression, patriarchal hegemony, and new ideal womanhood construction.

When Aysel's story comes together with the existing gender oppression in the society, as problematized in this chapter, it will be easier to follow both feminist patterns of Aysel's coping with gender oppression and the issues that Aysel has to resist in order to gain her autonomous existence in the society. Thus, this literature specifically gives detailed account of gender issues and inequalities in Turkey the ways in which clarifies the predetermined role and given responsibilities of Turkish women, ideologically constructed history and lack of personal, feminist narratives, lack of women's agency because of patriarchal hegemony, and Turkish women's liminality between tradition and modernity. Ağaoğlu's *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy makes possible to observe these issues together in a detailed account through Aysel's personal story that overlaps with political realities shaped by authoritarian government and collective gender oppression that women in her generation also experiences.

CHAPTER 3

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Gender Oppression and Autonomy of Women

In this chapter I will focus primarily on the autonomy of women for the purpose of understanding gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony's influences over women's personal autonomy by analyzing Aysel's experiences of coping with gender oppression through selected novels. By doing so, this chapter analyzes how and in which ways normative structure of the society and idealized woman construction prevent women to have autonomy in order to resist against gender oppression. Prevention of women's autonomy by the gender regime will be analyzed in accordance with Aysel's experiences throughout selected novels which are *Ölmeye Yatmak* (Lying Down to Die), *Bir Düğün Gecesi* (A Wedding's Night), and *Hayır* (No) that together consist Adalet Ağaoğlu's *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy.

Through these novels, Ağaoğlu locates Aysel to focus as a woman “who grows up through oppression” so that, Ağaoğlu will be able to provide a profile of a woman who tries to exist as herself independently from oppressions (Çayırıcıoğlu, 2022: 8993). The reason behind locating autonomy as the thematic focus is its ability to show the effects of gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony on women's everyday experiences. Through the analysis of Aysel's experience of embodying her autonomy and existing as herself thematically, this thesis examines why and how women resist to gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony. Thus, in this chapter I will consider the ways in which women experience social pressure through restrictions on their autonomy through analyzing Aysel's experiences by feminist criticism. In this thesis, Aysel's experience will be analyzed within the framework of

concepts that are seen throughout *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy including gender oppression, patriarchal hegemony, gender inequalities and political opposition. Hence, analysis of these concepts will provide a background to locate gender issues that Aysel and other women in this historical and social context experience including liminality between traditional and modern structure, exclusion and marginalization based on gender, political oppression that intellectuals experience because of the military coup.

Understanding Aysel's personal narration which shows similarities with her generation's women provides a clear account on women's diverse strategies to deal with gender oppression. Since Aysel and her generation of women experience gender oppression through their lives, they create their own ways of resisting with this. Hence, although every woman has her ability to create her own way of resisting with gender oppression, I believe that providing a focus to Aysel's story of struggle since she is considered as a prototype of republican Turkish woman. Aysel's story can be considered as the common story of womanhood in Turkey because the conditions that result with her struggle are being experienced by many women. Thus, I suggest focusing on the ways in which she exists as herself and embody her agency despite ongoing gender oppression, instead of focusing on woman representation within the trilogy. By doing so, we become able to understand diverse strategies of resistance against gender oppression and coping strategies for gender issues.

In this thesis, I conceptualize autonomy of women as women's ability to act towards their own desire, in accordance with the existing literature on women's autonomy in order to conceptualize Aysel's experience through a feminist and transformative lens. By doing so, it is considered as women become able to experience daily life independently from authority, including patriarchal social structure. Yet, since the concept of personal autonomy also includes independence of women in terms of social, cultural and material aspects, it does not always become possible to act autonomously as it is observed through Aysel's daily experiences. In this part, it is crucial to highlight Aysel's social position since she represents upper-middle class, educated woman with her economic independence. Thus, the issues that seen in Aysel's life and her ways of resisting against the oppression may have some differentiations with other women. Yet, it should be emphasized that although she has an advantageous position in terms of socio-economic status when compared to other women, she is still affected by the gender regime which subordinates women.

Besides, as well as many other women in her generation, she lacks personal autonomy because of this gender regime that subordinates women. Historical and ideological constructions of the society may “exclude women to have necessary ideals of autonomy” (Veltman and Piper, 2014: 4). Since autonomy is shaped through diverse aspects including power, gender and social identity, gender differences and inequalities are significant determinants of gendered inequalities in the distribution of autonomy, too.

At first, Aysel seems like an ordinary, ideal and desirable woman who fits into the standards of ideal womanhood construction of the society since she has a university degree as encouraged for women after the formation of Turkish Republic, she works as an associate professor which is a job that socially appropriate for women, she has upper-middle class identity that an ideal citizen should have, and she usually tries to act properly in the public the ways in which a woman in her age and status should behave as determined by social norms and values. Yet, she actually problematizes this ideal womanhood construction and her manifestation of idealized womanhood, which is the main reason behind choosing her story as this thesis’s focus. According to Parla, Aysel’s story can be considered as a story which is “constructed together by collective history and personal history” (2011: 181). As Parla argues, Aysel’s daily experiences and struggles do not only belong to her but they belong to a whole generation who grows up through same significant social and historical events.

In this thesis, I suggest considering Aysel’s experience of struggling with gender oppression in order to embody her autonomous being as coping strategies. Since Aysel is a woman who tries to free herself from constructed womanhood and traditional gender roles by her actions, these actions can be considered as coping mechanisms with gender oppression the women experience. Besides, considering these actions as coping mechanisms has potential provide a different perspective to feminist struggle which will make possible to focus on resistance and agency, instead of oppression. Hence, I argue that Aysel practices her own ways of resisting with gender oppression by using these coping strategies and mechanisms in order to embody her autonomous existence.

She starts to question her life starting from her childhood when she decides to lie down to die in a hotel room in the first book. In that sense, *Ölmeye Yatmak (Lying Down to Die)* can also be considered as a bildungsroman which focuses on character's story of growing up. While she remembers her memories that she collected throughout her life, she especially focuses on memories that are shaped through society's normative framework. This normative framework can be considered as the narration of both gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony since they are shaped by gender regime. She connects with herself, her physical body, and her existence while she lays down to die in a hotel room by herself, independent from any social reality and normative construction. Thus, she decides not to die and to continue with her life as a result of this achievement of finally realizing her existence.

In second book, which is *Bir Düğün Gecesi (A Wedding's Night)*, we find Aysel in a social context which is composed of her close friends and family the ways in which gives us the opportunity of observing her embedded in normative structure of patriarchal society. These social realities are usually the ones that are shaped through social expectations from individuals based on how they should behave and show themselves in the society. Thus, because of the gender inequalities in the society, women usually experience more pressure on themselves in terms of following the normative structure of the society as Aysel also experiences throughout the novels.

Lastly, in *Hayır... (No...)* which is the last book, Aysel experiences changes in her body due to getting old. Although Aysel is confident with her body and she recognizes these changes as natural and inevitable outcomes of getting old, the social gaze that Aysel exposes to as an old woman is not parallel with her body-positive attitude because of the gendered social constructions. Yet, sometimes she questions the physical transformations of her body, especially when she come across with other people's opinion and prejudice based on her body. However, she still insists on her desire to act through her courage to show herself within the society in accordance with her desires.

Although these books' narrative focus on a few hours or a day, writer gives the details of Aysel's experiences and thoughts that developed throughout her entire life by providing flashbacks and streams of consciousness. By those flashbacks and streams of consciousness, it is understood that Aysel is a character who cannot be easily fitted into ideal woman construction of the society because of her resisting

attitude towards gender oppression that she experiences. Aysel, as a woman who actively engages with the public sphere, yet she cannot easily protect her autonomous being and social independence although women's emancipation provided by new regime of Turkey. Although she portrays herself as a self-dependent and autonomous woman, social realities that are shaped by gender inequalities and patriarchal normative structure create diverse obstacles for her to struggle with. Hence, Aysel struggles with "dominance and dependence relations between genders" as one of the results of gender inequality in the society (Hartmann, 1976: 139). Besides, as a woman, she needs to experience this resistance as someone "excluded from resources and power" when compared to men since she is struggling with the patriarchal hegemony (Walby, 1989: 224).

Despite her challenges, Ağaoğlu depicts Aysel as a character who does not give up from her authentic existence although the gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony that she experiences. Throughout this thesis, Aysel's experience of struggling with gender inequalities and patriarchal normative structure in the society will be discussed through a feminist methodology the ways in which allows to observe Aysel's feminist standing against them. Although neither Ağaoğlu as writer nor Aysel as the fictional character do not define Aysel as feminist, her standing can be considered as feminist since it includes resistance to gender regime. Hence, Aysel's feminist standing derives the importance of analyzing *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy by understanding Aysel's struggle against restrictions on her autonomy by diverse aspects.

White considers "conservative morality, and the requirement to remain true to the state's modernizing project and state interests" as two essential aspects that restricts the autonomy of republican women (2003: 153). In addition to this restriction on autonomy, the state had already determined the characteristics that an ideal Turkish woman should have which results with women's exclusion when they do not fit into this ideal construction. Besides, Turkish republican women were encouraged to "attend universities, obtain professional degrees and contribute to the development of the nation" (White, 2003: 150). Aysel's exposure to these idealistic but unrealistic standards of womanhood can be followed through her memories, experiences and

thoughts within selected novels. In the following parts of the thesis, the oppression that Aysel experiences and Aysel's ways of rejecting this oppression will be analyzed. By doing so, this thesis will be able to both clarify the reason behind women's struggle and their ways of resistances against gender oppression.

I analyzed Aysel's ways of coping with gender oppression in four themes in total including reexamination of womanhood, being able to take her decisions and actions, resisting against the authority, and reconstructing her own story. In order to highlight the flow of Aysel's experiences, I decided to analyze her experiences from different books from the trilogy under the related themes in every section. It should be noted that her experiences from different books are showing similarities within each other which necessitates their togetherness. Besides, while some themes may show themselves in every book, some of them are not that significant in terms of Aysel's experience of embodying her autonomy within the trilogy. Hence, it should be taken into consideration that these sections do not necessarily include narrations from each book and themes of different books find their places under diverse sections.

3.1.1 Reexamination of Womanhood

In this section, I will analyze how Aysel becomes aware of the gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony in the society. I consider Aysel's awareness based on the systems of oppression that she is embedded as a path that will provide her to develop strategies of resistance. Since becoming aware of the oppression is the first step of struggling with this oppression, Aysel starts to develop her own coping mechanisms to deal with the gender oppression after realizing her burden and weight as a woman. Then, by realizing this oppression, she starts to reexamine womanhood construction which gives this burden and weight to her. Her reexamination furthers the development of her feminist consciousness and awareness that will help her to embody her personal autonomy in her life.

The first book of the trilogy *Ölmeye Yatmak (Lying Down to Die)* (1973) portrays the pressure that Aysel experiences starting from her childhood until her adulthood. Furthermore, throughout the book, the social realities that lead Aysel to lie down to die focus on her personal life with their details. In the following, these details' collective and political substances will be discussed the ways in which shows that

how Aysel is strongly connected to the collective experience of womanhood and how her childhood is situated through hegemonic ideas of the republic, and so that she becomes able to reexamine the womanhood construction that she is embedded. Through her reexamination, she becomes aware of gender inequalities, patriarchal hegemony and womanhood construction made by the republic. In other words, Aysel realizes the systems of oppression by this reexamination which she is embedded.

Although Aysel grows up through oppression, she does not become aware of this oppression until she goes to a hotel room to face with her past. Because of the pressure of ideal womanhood construction, Aysel questions her own desires until she realizes that she has been guided through gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony while taking her decisions. When Aysel lies down to die in the hotel room, she starts to remember the details from her childhood that reminds her nation state's expectations from its citizens. Her desire of suicide can be considered as one of the consequences of crises resulted from the pressure of fitting into ideal standards that are determined for women by the formation of Turkish republic.. Because the republic itself as a

“gendered institution”, it operationalizes gender's presence in the process of socialization, as Acker highlights (1992: 567). State provides an idealistic expectation for its citizens which creates the pressure of fulfilling these gender expectations. The details that she remembers from her childhood are constituted from scenes that she is forced to remember her gender identity and gender role.

The first chapter of the book clarifies Aysel's aim of lying down to die in this hotel room: “Death does not always come that fast. It is necessary to fight with death. ... I did not think that fighting with death will be necessary when lying down to die” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 8). From now on, it is understood that Aysel is a woman who is in struggle even for her death because of burden resulted from gender oppression. Then, she starts to recall her past and childhood, which will be elaborated in the following parts of this section. By these memories, we begin to witness the collective experiences of Aysel's generation since these are not only Aysel's flashbacks from Aysel's childhood but also, everyday realities of the whole generation. For Bunch,

“individuals’ personal experiences are shaped by culture” that they live through (1988: 290). Accordingly, Aysel’s experiences resulting from patriarchal culture since she is excluded from certain aspects like power and resource in the society as a woman (Walby, 1989: 224). Not only her memories but her urge to die is one of the results of the pressure that she experiences as a woman in this patriarchal culture and hegemonic ideals of the republic.

As a young girl of the republic, Aysel needs to be tidy and clean, including her dress and body. This expectation on Aysel operates from a control mechanism on her body which is done by other males or her teacher as the authority. Indeed, while they are getting ready for a ceremony at school, she is detected by a male student and warned by her teacher since she did not make her hair: “ ‘Aysel did not braid her hair, teacher’ All heads turned to Aysel. The girl’s brown hair, which was close to yellow, was falling down to her waist. Her yellow face immediately turned into a red. A heavy sweat descended from her waist” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 11). The society does not only

control and regulate Aysel’s body but at the same time, they legitimize embarrassing Aysel since she is a girl who is always in need of controlling her bodily performances. Aysel’s realization of this pressure can be considered as one of her first awakening in terms of realizing gender oppression that she experiences.

Through Aysel’s childhood memories, it is understood that Aysel does not only represent new generation of Turkish Republic but also, “new ideal woman of republic who consists of asexual social identity, modernity and nationalistic attitude” at the same time (Sumbaş, 2017: 5-6). Besides, as Sumbaş emphasizes, liminality of Aysel between modern and traditional womanhood construction creates a crisis that provide a burden for Aysel which does not allow her to actualize herself and her desires through her autonomous identity.

Her first exposure to new republican womanhood starts with discourses based on nation state’s ideals. There are characteristics of the ideal woman that are propagated by the republican state through various instruments which include being well-educated, having asexualized identity in the public sphere, and being a good role model for her children (White, 2003: 145). In her childhood, nation state shows itself by one of the instruments which is education. In this case, Aysel’s teacher Dündar

represents the ideology of the republic since he is dedicated and loyal to ideas of both Kemalism and secularism. Aysel is usually exposed to nation state's ideology through school and discourses of her teacher, who can be accepted as an authority within Aysel's daily life. Aysel's teacher gives importance to national ceremonies, he reads a Kemalist newspaper every day and he encourage students to remember national anthems.

Dündar Teacher gives so importance to modernization that she considers the ceremony that they are preparing as a signifier of becoming modern: "First ceremony at school. First graduation ceremony. This school is even late for this ceremony. If it wasn't for this year, Teacher Dündar would have been in trouble. He would be incompetent, defeated, turned his back on the country" (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 13). In that sense, nation state's ideals based on the objectives of modernization is manifested in order to construct citizens of Turkish Republic by starting from their early ages. Since these authority figures reproduce the ideology of nation state, Aysel experiences the pressure of fitting into the "ideal" starting from her early socialization. Aysel's realization of this exposure will make her realize the normative constructions.

Besides, since normative constructions of both society and political ideology start to become visible through ideological instruments and representatives of the state like education, individuals who take part of this socialization process begin to reproduce discourses the ways in which further the dissemination of patriarchal and nationalistic ideology. Since "state feminism approach operated as a project that focuses on public lives of women rather than private life, women were considered as educated and modernized mothers of the nation" who will be having necessary skills through education (Kandiyoti, 1987: 324). For instance, Ali, a friend of Aysel reminds her ideal woman citizen description by quoting Atatürk, which Aysel does not interest:

"Our women need to be more cultured, acknowledged, awake than men. Especially if they want to be the *mother of this nation*" (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 107). Aysel's careless behavior proves that her existence in the society can be done "without the possibility of not fitting into womanhood construction created by the ideological authorities" (Çayırıcıoğlu, 2022: 91-92). In that sense, Çayırıcıoğlu's analysis on Aysel's struggle

of existing out of the ideological construction also represents Aysel's personal attitude towards her whole life as a woman who creates her own truth to live through.

In Aysel's flashbacks from her childhood, her experience at school and in the society reflects nation state's expectations from modern citizens. Youth of Turkey including Aysel, should be educated to become modern citizens of Turkish Republic. As Tekeli highlights, education was seen as *key to everything* (1988: 12). Despite the paradigm that locates education to its focus, during the first years of the republic "Anatolian hinterland did not influenced too much from these changes" (Kandiyoti, 1988: 312). Because new regulations that target women's emancipation only affected a small layer of the center. Although Aysel is a girl who can reach her right to education, Aysel's father who is one of the traditional characters in the book and he did not want to send his daughter to school at first. The district governor insists Aysel's father to provide education for Aysel which results with a good example for the society: "I am happy to point you out as the good example in this district. Thank you. You did not disappoint me. You did not disappoint the district governor. You sent Aysel to middle school" (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 55). Although Aysel's education was one of the crucial elements that will provide her emancipation, it is still possible to observe the operationalization of women's education in order to reach a modern and developed nation, as one of the components of republican ideology.

Despite the fact that Aysel's father finally approves his daughter's education, he could not resist his urge to feel exhausted when he confronts with any symbol that stands for modernization project: "He has been exhausted since his daughter become literate. He feels exhausted when he sees the teacher" (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 55). However, throughout the book, political ideology is depicted as the most powerful instrument that shape citizens since it can be understood from remaining discourse: "The hand that constructs the history constructs you, too. Happy for you!" (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 103). This leitmotif emphasizes the value of being constructed as an individual and it gives the idea that being constructed rather than having personal autonomy is something desirable, even a chance to be thankful for. Müftüler-Bac argues that women are accepted as "self-sacrificing creatures" (1999: 307). Hence, the emphasis of "the hand that constructs the history" implies that women's necessity to submit to the authority and to sacrifice themselves for the well-being of the society. Aysel's

recall of this leitmotiv highlights her awareness in terms of her experience of being constructed by the state and society.

Although modernization project operates as a top-down approach that constructs the society, it provides opportunities for girls and women the ways in which provides emancipation to a limited degree, within the public sphere. While they create opportunities for women and girls that did not existed in the past, they also create burden and limitations for women and girls since they are expected to fit in these idealized standards rather than being encouraged to exist as autonomous and selfdependent subjects who are independent from idealized historical constructions as emphasized by the leitmotif of the trilogy. For Çayırıcıoğlu, “women cannot find their place in the new constructed history of Turkey since this history is written by men for women to follow, and this leitmotif highlights gendered construction of history through *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy” (2022: 128).

This ideological construction does not only shape the experiences of citizens but at the same time, it creates an ideal to be reached for in order to operationalize women while “moving from traditional to western” (White, 2003: 148). The persona that citizens should be fit in is already predetermined since women and girls were considered as “tools for national development” (Arat, 1994: 59). The more students work hard to be modern and educated citizens in the future, the more they will be able to fit into this ideal construction. From Aysel’s childhood memories, not only students but also parents and teachers try to fulfill the expectations of modern regime from its citizens. Dünder Teacher prepares an official ceremony and tries to ensure that parents participate this ceremony as audience although they are usually traditional people who are not even comfortable with education of their children. This ceremony is the first time that most of the people in the town get together with different genders: “Old women cover their faces with their veils. They are praying ten times, my God, do not write sins. It is the first time that men and women are meeting in a public place” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 14). Every individual takes their part in this collective project of modernization. In that sense, Aysel’s teacher is one of those individuals who represent authority and ideology of Turkish Republic since he tries to increase the level of modernization of the town where he works and lives.

Besides, some parents like Aysel's dad, are so traditional that they do not want their daughter to be a part of the official graduation ceremony. This dichotomy can be considered as one of the examples of "parallel lives" that Kandiyoti highlights, which stands for the dichotomies that women experience between their public and private lives (1987: 324). Aysel's father reaction of not wanting her daughter to be a part of the ceremony can be seen as a traditional, patriarchal manifestation but at the same time, it is considered as *backwardness* since it is contextualized as the opposite of state's modernization project (Tekeli, 1988: 12). In that sense, Aysel becomes aware of both the transformation process and liminality between traditional and modern values that are experienced by the society, in general.

However, there are other people who feel the urge to follow ideology of modernity and tries to fight with backwardness of these traditional people. For instance, Aysel's friend's dad mediate with Aysel's dad to convince him to give permission to Aysel to participate the ceremony: "Aysel's dad is a conservative man. He did not even want to let Aysel to join graduation ceremony. Again, my modern and conscious dad mediated. ... Poor Aysel! For me, she will never be like a Turkish girl as our Atatürk desires" (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 44). Although Aysel manages to get education, she is still perceived as a girl who will never be able to fit into ideal womanhood that is determined by ideology of Turkish Republic in the future since she is coming a traditional family and will never be able to become modernized enough.

Because the social environment that Aysel grow up is a rural area with a strong emphasis on traditional values. Thus, it reflects patriarchal values. Despite the existence of "education as key to everything approach, women cannot emancipate themselves because of ongoing patriarchal relations" (Tekeli, 1988: 12).

In that sense, in addition to institutions like school that reflects new republican ideology, the family and the household that Aysel lives should be considered as traditional the ways in which results with "Aysel's in betweenness in terms of ideological existence both as a citizen and a woman" (Çavuş, 2018: 340). For instance, "her father takes Aysel out of the education for a year when they moved" (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 109). These patriarchal values of the family usually operate as tools to control visibility of women and girls in the public and private sphere: "She is like going to middle school in Ankara. Her head is covered all the time and she changes her way if

she sees a male-friend. ... It is hard to raise our Turkey to the level of modern civilizations when our women are not completely Western” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 84-85). This dialectical understanding between modernization and tradition locates Aysel to a liminality which will make her feel incomplete in terms of fulfilling the necessities of modernization. When Aysel consider her liminality, she becomes aware that she is not the only one who experience this situation, but she experiences this as a result of gender oppression in the society.

While she is waiting to die in a hotel room, she still carries “the hesitation of looking like a whore because of her unpinned buttons” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 70). As an autonomou woman she decides to die, Aysel still feels the pressure of traditional normative structure in the society. In that sense, Aysel still carries the burden of “liminality between traditional values and republican state ideology” (Çayırıcıoğlu, 2022: 126-127). While she experiences a transformation by the education, she gets on the one hand, on the other hand she experiences the risk of never fulfilling the standards for an ideal woman citizen because of her traditional background. Hence, Aysel feels the need of controlling her visibility even though she is not living with her family as a result of internalized patriarchy and gender oppression until she questions these constructions.

Because of this liminality, Aysel has to struggle to embody her autonomy. This burden will not come to an end even when she grows up and becomes an adult. In fact, in her adulthood we witness the story of her lying down to death which results from political oppositions, gender oppression, and patriarchal hegemony in general. She continues to question the responsibilities that are given to Turkish youth while she is waiting to die in a hotel room: “ ‘A new generation is born!’ That is said to our childhood. This kind of birth has another responsibility. ‘Turkish youth! Your first responsibility is...’ What is this first responsibility? A responsibility that is given to you, a responsibility that you take without measuring your own power” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 29).

Aysel criticizes the way that Turkish republic gives responsibilities to its citizens that they struggle to carry. In other words, she questions the existence of *characteristics of an ideal woman* has to carry (White, 2003: 145). As other women

in her generation, Aysel suffers from ideal women construction, liminality between traditional and modern structures, and women's operationalization by the republican ideology which reproduces gender oppression that are experienced by women. Yet, she becomes aware that she is not the only one who suffer from them and she manages to realize that it is not her fault to experience the gender pressure after her reexamination.

Women's emancipation was limited with certain selected spheres of public life including education but still, Aysel is one of the members of the first generation who were able to get education. Hence, because of the republican reforms that target women's emancipation, Aysel becomes able to get a profession which will help her to liberate herself. Yet, at one point in her life she becomes aware that she is not liberated because of the burden and weight that are given to her. In that sense, her reexamination of constructed womanhood has a significance in terms of embodying her autonomy. When she criticizes the burden and weigh that are given to her, she starts to escape from the pressure of being constructed and fitting into ideal womanhood. Hence, I consider Aysel's realization of the oppression that she is embedded as her awakening.

3.1.2. Being Able to Take Her Decisions and Actions

As Aysel realizes that most of the actions that resulting from her identity in the society are not because of her decisions but from society's constructions, she leaves her burden and weight that prevents her to embody her autonomous identity. She finds out that she never takes a decision on her own, for herself by herself. In the first book, *Ölmeye Yatmak (Lying Down to Die)* she realizes that going to this hotel room to lie down to die is the first decision that she takes without experiencing the pressure of fitting into ideal womanhood. As she discovers that she is capable and have enough agency to take her actions and decisions, she does not feel the hesitation of expressing her desires.

Although lying down to die as a decision will make her to be subjected to gender oppression and criticism more than ever before, she claims her decision. Since as a republican woman, Aysel is considered as in a need of being grateful for the republican regime for the things that she has. Because Aysel is one of those women

who are emancipated because of the reforms made by republican ideology. However, instead of being grateful, she shows the courage to question the values and norms of republic that are imposed on women since she realizes the operationalization and instrumentalization of womanhood are resulting from them.

In that sense, she faces with the threat of dealing with gender oppression by her decision of lying down to die as she reexamines the womanhood construction of the republic. Yet, she decides to continue her questioning for herself by her free will despite she will be criticized and excluded from the society. Besides, she is aware that even her girl students will not understand Aysel: “One of my girl-students will laugh if she sees me lying down to die like Anna Karenina or Madame Bovary! They will make fun with my decisions together...” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 31). Aysel considers herself specifically as Anne Karenina or Madame Bovary because by taking her own decision, she becomes the main character of her own story. Apart from her decision of lying down to die, her previous experiences as the ones that are forced by the authority were constructing her in accordance with her gender regime of the republic. Although her situation was worth making fun with it, she does not hesitate to stop since lying down to die as a decision will provide her a strategy to resist against gender oppression.

As a republican woman, she is responsible with contributing to the development of nation without showing her gender identity in the public sphere. Hence, she feels disconnected with her own body that carries her gender identity. Instead, she exists in the society by her identity as ‘intellectual woman of the republic’. Because of this disconnection, she even treats all of her self-care activities like “doing manicure and pedicure, washing her face off with a good cream, putting her face a light moisturizer...” as the missions independent from her femininity but as the ones that are done for her health and comfort (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 198). “Did I become myself at all? Did we even become ourselves at all? Did I have somewhere that missions are putting together? ... What is the reason behind my body’s independence from myself for all these years?” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 198-199). She thinks that because of the constructed identities, she has never become herself autonomously.

Aysel perceives this act of suicide as a liberating experience since “Aysel is capable to choose her own death as modern, intellectual woman of Turkey” (Çayırıcıoğlu, 2022: 93). Because of the social and cultural capital that she has, even though she was not aware that she can choose her own death before lying down to die, she is capable to take decisions and actions. By taking the decision of lying down to die, she resists the gender oppression which guides her actions and performances in everyday life. When she liberates herself from the chains of womanhood construction, she does not only reconnect with herself but at the same time she learns that she is able to hold the chains of her life in her own hands.

Because of the normative construction of the patriarchal society, Aysel struggles to achieve independence since she come across with structural inequalities and patriarchal oppression. While she is trying to actualize herself, she complaints about “conditionings” that are imposed on herself (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 196). Besides, she struggles for having autonomy instead of fitting into ideal womanhood in the society, too. Whenever she tries to determine her own faith, she comes across with “inequalities in power and resources resulted from patriarchal system” (Walby, 1989: 224). Hence, her experience in the society differs from other people, especially men, who have access to resources and power when compared to women’s experience.

As a result of gender oppression in the society, Aysel experiences the necessity of shrinking her identity into a predetermined persona which holds both her womanhood and her professional, intellectual identity as an associate professor. Even while she is on the coiffeur, she likes to be seen in a rush, always:

“I was always saying quickly, I will catch up with the conference, I will tape the report that will be given to the research institute, or I will be late for the class, or something. I would never say that if I was invited to a cocktail after a pedicure, or if I was going to shopping, or if we had guests for the evening. I always need to have serious missions” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 200).

Because of these restrictions, she feels the need of controlling herself for sustaining her acceptance in the society. Although she can have simple tasks in her everyday life, she chooses to seem like catching up with serious missions. I suggest considering her decision of looking like a busy and serious person in the society as a decision that will provide a coping strategy with the gender oppression that she

experiences. Because her identity is not only composed of these serious missions but at the same time, she is quite aware of her desires. In that sense, she chooses to differentiate the actions that will cause her exclusion from the society and the ones that will provide her to look like an ideal woman.

Although she represents herself as a woman who has serious missions, she does not hesitate to break the normative structure of the society in order to actualize her desires. For instance, she is married but she is in love with one of her students from the university who she is planning to have sex with. Her desire to have sex with her student is one of her ways of coping with the gender oppression that she is embedded. Since she autonomously claims this desire, she escapes from the conditionings that an ideal intellectual woman should follow. When she spends a night with this student by talking about the things that she enjoys for the first time in a long while, she suddenly starts to feel more alive. Because even by expressing herself, Aysel feels her independence despite the gender oppression that subordinates her identity of womanhood and also her professional identity as an intellectual:

“I did not deny myself anything the whole night. Not that much. I had some frauds. I was aware that how he is looking at me. But I stand as if I was not aware. Not because of conditionings of womanhood. But because I could not yet escape from conditionings of being an associate professor. Again, I became an alive and complete girl. ... As starting from that morning, I started to understand that my body’s concrete existence as something that can be hold and seen” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 195-197).

Aysel’s this decision of talking about the things that she enjoys, apart from her serious missions in life, cannot liberate herself totally. Yet, by this action, she becomes aware of her own autonomous existence apart from constructed womanhood. Hence, she stops blaming herself for not fitting into the ideal type but instead, she accepts herself as an autonomous individual with her own desires.

Aysel manages to find turning points that reminds her existence yet, she had to continue to live her daily life with conditionings that shaped through gender inequalities and patriarchal hegemony. After these unwinding moments, she immediately turns back to her reality which is composed of the pressure of fitting into

ideal womanhood as a woman intellectual of Turkish Republic, who is professional and asexualized, free from any gendered identity. Because of the “dominance dependence relations” based on gender categories, she is considered as the one who is dominated by the hegemonic ideology of the society (Hartmann, 1976: 139). These conditionings based on fitting into ideal womanhood does not start by Aysel’s adulthood, but they can be followed through Aysel’s flashbacks that goes until her youth. Starting from her youth, she has been trying to develop coping strategies against gender oppression within the society in order to protect her autonomy.

Friedman highlights the determining role of autonomy while “taking actions and making choices” (2003: 8). In that sense, she uses her sexuality as a force that can liberate herself from predetermined construction of idealized womanhood: “The hymen becomes whole, after years. It seems like it hasn't changed at all. You tear off all captivity, and then you look untouched again” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 52). She highlights that taking her own autonomous actions liberate herself and transforms her fragmented identity into a whole.

Hence, Aysel conceptualizes the experience of sexuality out of her marriage as an empowering experience:

“Yes, I had sex with my student once. For a moment, I had a different sensation from that. That was real. It was a desire of an empire in my head instead of my body, maybe. If humans cannot liberate themselves alone and if they drown within the desire of liberation on their own, they have to lie down under the ones coming after them” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 49).

She perceives the experience of being an outlier as a form of liberation. As a married, middle aged and a professional woman, she depicts her sexual intercourse with one of her students as ‘the only way’ of being liberated. Because even her actions that faces with the normative frameworks are forms of liberation so that, they provide her to develop new ways of coping with gender oppression. Contrary to the existing normative structure that locates “women’s sexual behavior as the measure of both society’s and the state’s dominant values”, Aysel perceives her sexuality as an emancipatory tool (Müftüler-Bac, 1999: 309). Since she cannot liberate herself from ideal descriptions of womanhood, she uses her body as a tool that will provide this

necessary liberation. In the end, Aysel's decisions based on her sexuality provides her autonomy against the patriarchal norms based on women's bodies.

Besides, she begins to manage her thoughts that she could not dare to question before having this autonomy: "I laughed again in the bed. Here, I catch myself once again. What does it matter if I am dying? ... Especially my fear of looking like a whore!" (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 71). Aysel considers her experience of having sex with her student as a liberating experience since this experience claims Aysel's autonomy to take her own decisions despite they do not align with the normative structure and womanhood construction of the society that she is embedded. Although lying down to die in a hotel room naked is not a behavior that an ideal woman intellectual should perform in accordance with the patriarchal norms, Aysel does not feel the hesitation of looking like a whore but she owns her own autonomous decision. Instead of feeling the need of fitting into ideal womanhood construction, she makes fun with the normative structure of the society that perceives her like a whore just because she chooses to question this gender oppression.

It is crucial to highlight that Aysel gains the power to make fun with the normative structure of the society instead of fitting into ideal womanhood after she realizes that she was also capable to take her own autonomous actions in the past. Aysel remembers that having sex with Engin, who was her student, was one of the decisions that she takes through her autonomous desires when she reexamines her past in the hotel room while she was lying down to die. After that point, she feels power to resist against gender oppression as she did before, by using her own ways of coping with it.

Aysel finally becomes able to differentiate the things that matter to her when she is waiting to die in the hotel room. "The ways in which women are oppressed is determined by patriarchy", as well as the conditionings that women have to fit in (Connell, 1990: 514). The conditionings resulted from gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony are so heavy that Aysel can only become able to free herself from their burden while she is waiting to die in a hotel room. Furthermore, after she starts to question the necessity of her concerns, she realizes the importance of disobedience and her right to disobey as an intellectual:

“Nothing will take too long now. I will die in this bed. Or I'll get up and get dressed. I'm going to take my bag and leave. I will go down sixteen floors with the elevator. I'll look at the flowers in the entry hall. I will pay my account to the cashier. I'll push the door and go out. I will go to my house if it is night and to the faculty if it is the day” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 243).

Aysel, after her experience of deciding to lie down to die, feels her power to disobey by being an outlier. Her experience of lying down to die is her first exposure to showing her dare to rebel against society's values and its expectations from a woman. Since she become aware of the fact that she is capable to question these norms and values the ways in which provide her opportunity to rebel against them, she no longer feels the necessity of fulfilling every single expectation of society. In that sense, Aysel's disobedience represents her power to decide. Because even choosing to disobey instead of fitting into ideal womanhood is a decision by itself. Besides, while she chooses to disobey, she realizes that she holds the chains in her own hands including the right to decide whether she will commit to suicide or she will continue to live through her everyday life after she finishes her reexamination.

There are several decisions and actions in Aysel's life that can be considered as examples of outcomes of having a status in the society and being in more advantageous position than most of the women. But Aysel's decision of lying down to die is the most crucial decision that proves her place in the society as one of the republican professional women who has power to decide her own destiny: “Again, I wear back all those rights that are given to me, I reach out those rights once again. Again, I become advantageous woman of Turkey. Here, I have chosen my own death. I die for myself, too... By transferring my magnificent shift...” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 121). She highlights her own autonomy while taking this crucial decision. Yet, she conceptualizes her decision to die as a decision that one could not have easily since it necessitates a higher status and emancipation. Although the experience of choosing to die is an example that show class privileges which women usually do not have right to do, making this decision is one of the signifiers of Aysel's agency. She becomes proud with herself that she manages to make her own decision to die although she did not complete this suicide and decides to continue through her life.

Aysel manages to decide to live through her everyday life with her serious missions but she still blames herself for not having necessary courage to complete this suicide. Because in the second option which she decides to continue to complete her tasks, she would be responsible to carry her burden of in betweenness throughout her entire life, again. She emphasizes this burden by an analogy of a flower pot: “I hear myself cracking a flower pot and slowly spreading to the ground. But I don't know whether earth will grasp me or not” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 393). The only way of escaping from this burden is to know herself and to act accordingly including her aims, desires, and beliefs in life, and to carry them by herself accordingly. This contradiction shows that she is still oppressed as an advantageous, intellectual woman because of gender inequalities and patriarchal hegemony but she manages to liberate herself from expectations at least to a certain degree by taking her decisions and actions.

Patriarchy does not only oppress women through visible realities in the society, but it manages to influence invisible spheres within people's lives, decisions and actions through its hegemonic representations, as it can be observed from Aysel's experience. Because she unconsciously carries the idea that she is not capable to implement her decision. Haraway considers women's conditioning of being not enough while creating about themselves as “the seeds of unseen reality (1991: 230). For Haraway, these “seeds of the unseen reality” are composed of “representations of gender, gendered realities, and gender oppression which becomes significant in women's social processes” (Haraway, 1991: 230). Because of the gender oppression that she experiences, Aysel finds herself in a position that is restricted by the normative structure of the society.

For Friedman, “autonomy requires the self to play an active determining role in the choices” and Aysel tries to implement her autonomy by taking decisions that have potential to change or influence her life (2003: 8). Although her struggle of gaining her autonomy back despite gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony, she comes into a conclusion that liberation cannot be done by herself but collectively: “Tell me Engin: now, is the woman that you are facing with by admiration and trust free? Did she liberate, at least herself? Tell me Engin. Did she save something? Is it possible? Is it possible to save and to liberate by herself, alone?” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a:

392). Aysel realizes that nobody can free herself from the chains of patriarchal pressure and political opposition alone.

Aysel both criticizes her struggle to liberate herself alone and the idea that liberation can be done by herself. Then, she decides to achieve this liberation with someone, by using her sexual freedom instead of following the actions that society imposes on herself. Her sexuality was one of the most crucial tools that will help Aysel to liberate herself. Because by taking autonomous decisions based on her sexuality, she starts to embody her autonomy more than before. Aysel rejects the necessity of sustaining an unhappy marriage and she does not feel hesitation to harm her marriage. Instead of preserving her marriage, she decides to experience her sexuality in accordance with her desires.

Throughout the book, the questioning that Aysel had in the hotel room can also be considered as a reflection of social normativity's pressure on women. While her ascribed role includes being an asexual woman in the public, a loving wife to her husband in her family, and being well educated intellectual that will educate young generations of Turkey in her professional life; she has to break down all these identities in order to "grow herself up" (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 399). By taking these autonomous decisions step by step, she makes herself.

When she processes her feelings that guide her way to make the decision to die in the first book, she does not only decide to continue through her life, but she continues to live through this life as a woman who is at least capable to make a decision despite this patriarchal brutality that she lives in. As mentioned before, the book ends when Aysel goes out from the hotel room as alive, deciding not to die. The questioning that she went through within this one and a half hour in this hotel room makes her to realize her autonomy. By the awareness of her autonomous self and independence, she continues to live through her daily life.

In the second book of *Dar Zamanlar (Narrow Times)* trilogy, which is *Bir Düğün Gecesi (A Wedding's Night)*, main crisis of the book is Aysel's decision of not participating to the wedding. By analyzing Aysel's decisions and actions within this context, her capability and motivation to find ways to cope with gender oppression will be understood.

Ayşen and Ercan, who will be married in this wedding night are seen as hope of the republic through their marriage's instrumentalization by "creating a basis for

the structure of Turkey” as mentioned in the wedding invitation card of the couple (Ağaoğlu, 2014b: 8). Since these two people are coming from different ideological backgrounds, their togetherness is considered as a hope for the society by showing the possibility of togetherness of opposed ideologies within the context of military coup. Aysel decides not to participate this wedding since she chooses to consider this wedding night as “a bad novel” (Ağaoğlu, 2014b: 233). Because nobody in this wedding night has their own free will to marry since this is an arranged wedding.

Although Ayşen and Ercan are the ones getting married, their family members, especially their parents have more power in decision making process than them in terms of arranging this marriage. Ayşen’s father İlhan, who is Aysel’s brother at the same time, is the one who promotes this marriage: “If your brother wants, whether there won’t be any marriage, or you (Aysel) will be there. Not even your brother! Even if Müjgan really wants, Ayşen’s wedding would be different and you will be there.

Müjgan’s voice in the phone: I know, Aysel won’t come even if we want” (Ağaoğlu, 2014b: 14). This passage emphasizes that Aysel is capable to decide on her own despite ongoing gender oppression.

Aysel’s absence started to be felt in the beginning of the wedding: “Is it possible that my wife, Aysel has nothing to do with this wedding?” (Ağaoğlu, 2014b: 7). Ömer, Aysel’s husband perceives Aysel’s disinterest with both her family and this fictional social environment, that is wedding. Göle claims that public sphere exists “as a product of authoritarian state modernism, so that public sphere has the structure based on gender and authoritarian nature” (2000: 22). Besides, in the public sphere, existences of women with men in the social environments, their participation to education and working life, their dresses, their participations to balls and meetings are symbolic bearers of civilization.

In that sense, the venue that this marriage takes place can be considered as a public space where women are only allowed when they fulfill necessary conditions for acceptance. The venue of the wedding is Anadolu Kulübü (Anatolian Club), which is a club that is founded by Atatürk after the formation of republic and usually meetings of bureaucrats and politicians took place. Hence, the place has a symbolic

importance since it represents republican ideology and modernization process of Turkey.

In wedding invitation card of this couple, there is a strong emphasis on the operationalization of patriarchal nuclear family institution as a structure that will further the growth of Turkish Republic and its level of civilization: “Our daughter Ayşen and our son Ercan, who are getting married in order to be a new basis to the structure of our developing nation, will be pleased to see you in their marriage and wedding ceremony that will be taking place in the Anatolian Club” (Ağaoğlu, 2014: 8). Marriage or founding a family is not always constrained by oppressions, rather, their legitimizations are based on “approvals of gender roles through cultural attitudes” (Özdaş Çelik, 2020: 96). Besides, women are operationalized through their reproductive roles the ways in which highlights national values and civilization. By doing so, women are undermined within this system that “perceives family and national values as primary concerns” (Özdaş Çelik, 2020: 109-110).

In that sense, Aysel does not only decides not to participate to this wedding, but at the same time, she decides not to be a part of this system that subordinates women by instrumentalizing them. Thus, taking this decision helps Aysel to liberate herself from the gender oppression.

3.1.3 Resisting Against the Authority

Resisting against the authority is one of the ways in which Aysel copes with gender oppression. Because of the gender inequalities and patriarchal hegemony, women are subordinated in terms of their actions. While taking her actions, Aysel feels the pressure of normative structure which limits her actions. Hence, she chooses to resist the authority that limits herself instead of being subjected to the womanhood construction.

Her resistance against gender oppression in the first book, *Ölmeye Yatmak* (*Lying Down to Die*) can be followed through a passage that she resists against the limitation of young girls’ spending time with boys on the public sphere when she is seventeen:

“Why should I hide? Why should I wander on the edges of roads? From side to side like crabs but why? Let’s go directly to the street. Let’s sit on the middle of Güvenpark, too. I will just sit. They’ll see... I’ll be seventeen in September. Nobody can do something. They’ll beat or swear. They’ll speak up. They are not death at all. They will not take our lives. I will go straight to the middle of the street with you. I will sit in front of the pool where they can see me directly. I have nothing to hesitate” (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 329).

Patriarchal ideology manifests itself through pressure on girls and women through the emphasis of their *sexual purity*, as Aysel experiences. Because “women’s bodies are the battleground and their sexual purity is controlled through virginity” (Müftüler-Bac, 1990: 309-310). Yet, Aysel resists this gender oppression by acting against the normative framework but in accordance with her own desires. She does not feel the hesitation of showing herself in the public sphere despite the threat of gender oppression.

In the second book *Bir Düğün Gecesi (A Wedding’s Night)*, we perceive that Aysel is in a place of opposition with the society’s normative framework and she is in a constant state of struggle with the patriarchal structure of the society. She does not follow patriarchal norms but instead, she acts through her own desires and objectives:

“Aysel was never there. Bang, bang, bang. I wish I hadn't said that last sentence. I wish I had convinced her that I had sunk. This morning her voice came out through the sound of the typewriter extremely clear, steady, neither angry, nor vicious, nor offended, but perhaps a little tired. It added a gentle but almost luminous smile to that little fatigue. All by herself, yes. But who was going to her so that she wouldn't be alone? İlhan, Tezel, Müjgan, you or Ayşen? Who was stopping by old grandma? Isn't it a shameful thing to send flowers to one's mother through a florist on new year and aids? Or isn't it a gross ugliness made by lovelessness that she hires a driver on Sundays and sends her to get outdoors at the Farm?” (Ağaoğlu, 2014b: 103-104).

There are differences between men’s and women’s roles and responsibilities both within the family and in the society. Because “as a process, gender creates the social differences that define woman and man” (Lorber, 1993: 114). Thus, Aysel becomes the one who is responsible for caregiving tasks. However, she does not

practice the gender role assigned to women but instead, she tries to find ways to cope with the oppression that she experiences by hiring people to take care with her mother.

Aysel's independent struggle of being herself starts to bother everyone including Tezel, who was the only supporter of Aysel, in the past. At one point, Tezel does not continue to encourage her for her actions and decisions anymore when she becomes aware of the fact that Aysel harmed Tezel by using her independence:

“ ‘You have done us a great harm. It didn't happen. You failed. You didn't think about your younger siblings, the children who will come after you. If you had thought about it, those who came after you wouldn't have been eating away your mistakes. You haven't shown what I respect most in your generation. Dedication.’ Tezel would go even further if she knew. Besides, you wouldn't be fired from your university chair (our moralists could only wait two years) just because you slept with a student once. This would be covered up right away. She might even say, what are they, masters at covering up, wouldn't they just cover up this innocent young man? As long as she can walk to the end on the way to beat up Aysel. ... ‘I cannot even make Aysel angry anymore’ said Tezel” (Ağaoğlu, 2014b: 111).

Tezel criticizes Aysel since she is not a responsible person in terms of fulfilling the necessities of her generation. These necessities are composed of considering the upcoming generation and taking her actions accordingly, being an ideal woman who is loyal and dedicated to her husband and her family. In fact, it is not surprising that Tezel's expectations from Aysel overlap with roles of “new republican womanhood which are determined by republican state” (White, 2003: 145). Tezel does not find her behaviors as suitable for her age, her generation and the role that is assigned to Aysel. The hand that constructs the history cannot make Aysel because Aysel is constantly struggling for not to be constructed by this brutal, patriarchal hand. In order to escape from the brutality of the hand that constructs the history, Aysel dares to reject predetermined roles and responsibilities. Hence, she resists the authority which practices gender oppression on herself. In past, Aysel was also afraid to leave the borders of constructed womanhood identity that is determined by modernization project and republican ideology. However, now she dares to reject normativity and flawlessness: “She was afraid to make mistakes, always. Now, there is an Aysel who is ready to do wrong. But to do new wrongs, not old ones” (Ağaoğlu, 2014b: 113-

114). Against constructed identity, Aysel chooses her own authentic existence and autonomous identity by resisting the constructed norms and values.

Indeed, Aysel tries to make herself, by herself in accordance with her own values. As a result, nobody including Tezel cannot even make her angry because Aysel is well aware of herself and her actions. Aysel has to perform her gender role instead of implementing her own autonomous decisions, especially in the public sphere. Although she is capable to implement her actions despite it necessitates a resistance to the authority, she continues to be criticized by other people. In that sense, Aysel is “emancipated but unliberated” as other women in the Turkish society since her acceptance in the public sphere depends on certain prerequisites and she is not welcomed when she takes her actions according to her own desires (Arat, 1989; Kandiyoti, 1987; Tekeli, 1995).

Yet, she is dedicated to herself, her own truth, and her inner power so that she does not get angry when her sister Tezel complains and criticizes her past, actions and decisions:

“However, when I interrupted Aysel, there was neither anger, fragility, nor devastation. Because while Aysel was telling me, I perceived something terrible that night: If a person can operate herself without anesthesia, cutting herself without numbing the places to be cut, and if she can do this without dying, she will also achieve the most difficult part of life for human beings, the thing called being alone. There was an Aysel in front of me who had no account to give to anyone but to herself. Her clear gaze, without an escape. She is ready to bear the new burdens of the days to come” (Ağaoğlu, 2014b: 113).

Tezel emphasizes that Aysel does not mind being interrupted since nobody can harm the flow of her own truths and ideas. She has already crossed the threshold of being alone as a result of her self-actualization although her autonomy as a republican woman is restricted by “conservative morality and requirement to remain true to the state’s modernizing project and state interests” (White, 2003: 153). From now on, Aysel will continue to autonomously exist in the society despite increasing criticism based on her actions. Aysel does not get angry because she has nothing to explain to anyone but to herself since she only lives for herself.

Tezel has the impression that after all those difficulties within Aysel's life, she is ready to bear this burden, again and again. This burden does not only given to Aysel but every woman in the society. However, not all women can escape from this burden since it necessitates higher levels of personal autonomy and self-dependence. Aysel could manage to escape from the brutality of reality but still, she cannot completely be herself in the society. Aysel is strong and dedicated enough to free herself from the hand that constructs the history so that, she is not made by the ideology. However, the pressure of this hand continues to be seen throughout her entire life the ways in which clarifies the existence of "parallel lives" that women have to experience because of the dichotomies between their private and public lives (Kandiyoti, 1987: 324).

In that sense, she still carries the pressure of fitting into certain categories in different people's lives by her different roles and responsibilities. For instance, Tezel expects from Aysel to participate the wedding since she has a role in the family: "I hope Aysel comes to the wedding. If Aysel doesn't come to the wedding, she won't know that she has burdened me with guilt that I cannot overcome and that she has destroyed a world that I can't handle" (Ağaoğlu, 2014b: 96). Because as an ideal republican woman, Aysel should have an ideal and predetermined identity, and a place both in the society and within the family. But in the end, despite its importance, Aysel's absence in the wedding is her own way to resist against gender oppression.

Lazzaro-Weis notes that "bildungsroman tradition has always represented conflicts between individual agency and society" (1990: 25). Hence, conflicts between her agency and social structures are inevitable within Aysel's experiences. In that sense, Aysel's attitude while experiencing these conflicts can be considered as forms of resistances against both the authority in the social structure and within her family.

The society expects from Aysel to behave in accordance with her domestic roles as a woman while she contributes her nation's development by being an ideal republican woman. Besides, her family desires to see Aysel in a position where she preserves her close ties with her family by fulfilling her tasks as the daughter. Thus, Aysel both struggles with society's expectations from her and her family's expectations from her which are in accordance with patriarchal hegemony and gender inequality. Aysel escapes from all these pressures because she believes that a system

that is constructed upon these pressures whether it is a family or a society, can be nothing but an unsatisfactory novel at most:

“ ‘Coctail, marriage ceremony, dining wedding! A very solid foundation!’ Tezel said something. But I couldn’t understand. Then she had to ask: ‘What do you think deeply in this foundation ceremony?’ I said that ‘I am writing an unsatisfying novel’ ” (Ağaoğlu, 2014b: 233).

Because for Aysel, this marriage is a foundation, a solid structure rather than a togetherness of two person within the roof of family. So that, in such a context, Aysel always questions the necessity of this unnecessary ceremony. Aysel criticizes this marriage since it seems like a rational and predetermined effort of developing the country but without emotions and individuals’ own desires.

However, this unsatisfying novel does not have a main character. But if it would have, Ayşen would be the main character as the bride accordance to Aysel: “If we would make someone the main character, we would make Ayşen, right? After all, this is her wedding or funeral” (Ağaoğlu, 2014b: 233). As a matter of a fact, Ayşen is oppressed although she is the one who need to have an opinion about marriage since she is the one getting married. However, because of her father İlhan’s pressure, she cannot even make her own decision on one the topics that will influence her life totally.

Thus, Aysel emphasizes the oppression on Ayşen through the analogy of funeral. Ayşen is so desperate that this is more like a funeral than a wedding because she does not have any autonomy or freedom to decide. For Mendus, autonomy refers to “be able to write the story of one’s own life” which Ayşen is not capable to write (2000: 128). According to Aysel, the whole issue and focus of this wedding night is to emphasize a woman’s hopeless situation which she will be a part of an institution, a family that she does not fancy at all. Ayşen sacrifices herself for the sake of nation’s development because she cannot stand up against her father’s pressure, as well as many other women during this period.

Although this wedding ceremony belongs to Ayşen, for Aysel: “There isn’t any main character of this novel” (Ağaoğlu, 2014b: 233). Because Ayşen is only one of those who cannot decide their future by herself. Thus, Aysel chooses to resist the

normative structure of the society by not participating to this wedding since it does not align with her autonomous standing.

The allegory of “the hand that constructs the history” follows Aysel from the beginning of trilogy, in other words from her childhood until the end of her life, that is narrated through the last book, *Hayır* (No) the ways in which reflects the political authority that determines people’s lives.

In the last book, we start to observe Aysel as she starts to get ready for the upcoming day that she will be given an honor award for her scientific studies. In *Hayır*, Aysel’s autonomous standing is observed through her attempts to continue her research in accordance with her own self-interest, wear the clothes that she desires despite ongoing social exclusion because of the prejudice based on her age, and she choose to hope for the upcoming days instead of choosing death. She chooses to wear clothes with “warm colors instead of dark ones” (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 62). Besides, she resists to wear “clothes that are designed for her age” since she finds these clothes boring (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 52). In that sense, by choosing what she wants to wear, instead of what she should wear, she finds her own way to cope with the pressure of normative structure.

Since Aysel become aware of the fact that resistance provides freedom, she does not hesitate to reject the things that she no longer wants to become a part of. She also does not accept the authorities who are in charge organizing Aysel’s ceremony. She does not want to participate the ceremony at first, but then she realizes the importance of her participation. After her final decision of participating the ceremony, she starts to choose her clothes that she will be wearing in the ceremony.

However, she does not want to wear something that she will not enjoy. She tries to find clothes that will make herself as she is, not as someone that she isn’t. For the ceremony, she resists to wear skin-colored socks that everyone in her age wears: “Yes, I won’t be wearing the nude tights, especially those in my age always wear the same. I will wear silk stockings with roses” (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 52). Although the decision of clothing does not seem like a crucial decision to take, it is important for Aysel since it reflects her ability to choose autonomously. For Friedman, “autonomy refers to ability to act towards her values to resist gender oppression”, especially for women who are oppressed by the patriarchy (2003, 18). In that sense, women who

have autonomy are the ones who are capable to follow their decisions despite ongoing relations of oppression and subordination.

In Aysel's experience, there is an ongoing gender oppression based on how a woman in her age should wear. Despite this pressure, her ability to choose and her determination based on applying this decision are crucial signifiers of her autonomous standing. Choosing what to wear is one of those decisions that emphasize her autonomy. Hence, choosing what she like instead of what she has to wear is one of the strong and crucial signifiers her coping strategies against gender oppression.

After she collects necessary parts of her outfit from home as much as she can, she decides to buy a shirt for the honor of this special day so, she goes to a store. At the store, nobody shows interest for Aysel because the girls working in this store do not consider Aysel as their customer since they are selling clothing for younger women than Aysel. Because of this disinterest, she needs to state her purpose: "I want to look for shirt" (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 62). When she says that she came here to buy a shirt, one of these girls asks who it was for: "Who would it be for? I mean how old is she? In which size?" (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 62). Aysel feels disappointed since the salesperson assumes that she is looking for a shirt for somebody else, not for herself, because of her age. Aysel, as a dedicated and strong woman, feels the pressure of her intention for the first time:

"Why it is so hard to say that it is for myself? This time, I don't want something earth-colored or bone-colored. It should be a living color, not a dead one. It should light up the day, flirt with tiny rosebuds above my ankles. ... If the girls had seen my picture in the newspaper this morning, they would have tried to find something to cheer me up" (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 62-63).

At first, she hesitates to say that this shirt will be for her but then, she says that she is looking for a shirt for herself by rejecting the stereotyping that she experiences. But she comes across with the negative reactions from the salesperson. Because salesperson in the store does not find this shirt as suitable for Aysel's age: "You better go to YGB. They sell clothes for both old and plus-sized" (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 63).

Aysel's resistance in terms of her insistence on wearing the clothes that she desires instead of the ones that are considered suitable for her age is not an exception

but only a reflection of her autonomous and feminist standing. In reality, she has the capacity to resist anything that is dictated on her rather than being her own decision. Although she comes across with a criticism from everyone around her from the salesperson to the audience who come to listen Aysel's presentation, she never turns back from wearing what she wants or looking like she desires to be seen.

Aysel does not only tries to escape from stereotypical construction of womanhood but also, she is trying to restrain from fitting into the stereotype of old, intellectual woman by her decision and actions. For instance, she participates to a sport activity that is "designed for young people" in order to show that she is physically strong enough to complete this despite her age (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 108). So that, she usually engages into activities that give her the pleasure of being alive and reminding her youth. She resists the stereotypes based on gender and age that are produced by the patriarchal norms in the society. In general, "patriarchy, as the term, is used to describe power relationship between men and women" (Sultana, 2010: 2). Hence, as a social structure, patriarchy regulates the social life through a normative framework which show itself through diverse relations of oppression and dependence. These relations of oppression and dependence restrict women within different spheres of daily life but within the context of Aysel's experience, it shows itself through categorizations which women are forced to follow in order to be considered as acceptable individuals in the society. Accordingly, daily activities also differentiate including the ones that an old woman are allowed to participate and the ones that are not found suitable for her.

Mountain climbing is one of the activities that Aysel decides to experience when she first realizes the advertisement. However, when she comes into the tourism office that organizes climbing tours, she comes across with the negative reaction of the saleswoman in the office, once again. She has to come out from the office with despair:

"She is wrong. The tourism office she entered was an office that organizes mountain tours only for the young people. It was not a pleasant moment when one realizes that she has entered a period of being excluded out of life. No one had ever told me so openly that I was too old to climb mountains. ... I still went to that tour. I went specifically" (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 108).

When it is being said to Aysel that she could not join this climbing tour, she resists the ageist attitude that exclude her from the society because of her age. Regardless of this exclusion, she is determined enough to join this climbing tour that is specifically organized for young people. Indeed, she participates this tour to come against the stereotypical assumption that old people cannot climb to mountains and join the society, in general. By deciding the activities that she desires to participate without considering other people's prejudices and exclusions, she tries to embody her personal autonomy. Hence, she autonomously accomplishes her objectives whether they are aligned with society's norms or not.

While she is rejecting society's assumptions on how a woman like her should behave, she also resists the fact that she is getting older, both for its social meaning and its physical transformations. She perceives the process of getting old as a pressure that reduces her identity and existence which brings despair:

“How yellow are my nails? The nail polish can no longer cover it. One day you will see the pale yellow of your nails, one day your under eyes will swell. One by one getting old. Didn't Mersault in Camus' *Stranger* say “The only incurable disease is getting old?” It doesn't get better but becomes worse each day. Anyway, Camus died at a fairly young age. My nails are fine. Neither yellow nor anything” (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 45).

Aysel rejects the signs of getting old. Moreover, she tries to get rid of negative thoughts about getting old by convincing herself that Camus, who is the one talks about getting old, died in a young age, which turns his thoughts meaningless. Thus, her resistance towards the assigned clothes and social activities that is found suitable for an old woman are examples of resisting against the authority which dictates what old women should or should not do.

Besides, Aysel does not consider any people as authority whose ideas, realities and political standing are different than herself. Furthermore, she does not consider different people's complements valuable as a result of this ideological opposition and her autonomous standing. Although she is aware of her success in the academia, she does not hold on complements of people that she does not respect. A professor from another country complements her from his advantageous position:

“ ‘But your life is also a great example of resistance’... She's uncomfortable with the praise she gets. What a great condemnation lies beneath that gaze! This is why I am most disappointed here. She felt capable to appreciate herself, but she could not bear the astonishment of people from different worlds. Was it possible to applause and support something that was not truly understandable?’” (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 221).

For Aysel, there is a hypocrisy behind this complement since she believes that her ideas are not understood by the ones who hold power and advantaged positions. Therefore, she chooses her own autonomy instead of an outside opinion and her own agency instead of leaning on other people's thoughts. Hence, Aysel also resists to the idea that her life is full of resistances since this idea comes from an authority that she does not respect.

It should be highlighted that Aysel does not resist against the authority directly in these examples, but she manages to find ways to cope with gender oppression by rejecting the authority's influence on herself. Aysel's autonomous standing against the constructed social structure, traditional gender roles, and normative structure provides her diverse strategies to deal with gender oppression within the context of authoritarian environments. Hence, her resistance against the representatives of authority in various forms can be considered as one of her ways to coping against gender oppression.

3.1.4 Reconstructing Her Own Story

Throughout the trilogy, Aysel perceives the act of remembrance as a resistance against the hand that constructs the history. By remembering the things that she did in her life, she reconstructs her memories in accordance with her autonomy instead of the constructed history. Hence, by recalling her memories, she reconstructs her identity through her autonomous existence. In that sense, she becomes able to reconstruct her own story by rejecting the ideal construction of womanhood that is constituted through traditional gender roles and patriarchal normativity.

In the first book, *Ölmeye Yatmak (Lying Down to Die)*, she starts to question her existence through her actions and decisions within her life. As she questions her existence in the society through her memories, she re-gains her autonomy back at least

for certain aspects of her life. Aysel's ability to remember her memories confirms her autonomy since "autonomous people can reflect on themselves and their lives" (Meyers, 2002: 19). By recalling her memories, she manages to question her existence in the society the ways in which provides a mindful reflection on herself and the necessary skills to gain her autonomous self.

Besides, even though her daily life and existence in the society as a woman seem perfectly fine from the outside, she emphasizes the fact that questioning these perfections derives importance if she is planning to liberate herself:

"Everything seemed fine. But it should not seem like that from now on. A rebellion must exist if a person cannot reach a point in thirty years. This nothingness also should be experienced. One should be fall into this nothingness. This fall should show the reality. One cannot live as if this nothingness does not exist. The stars cannot be watched from this hollow" (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 114).

As it can be seen from this passage, Aysel highlights the importance of having the urge to create one's own life, especially if this person did not question a single thing within her whole life. Thus, remembering her memories becomes her first step towards questioning the womanhood construction, which creates gender oppression on both Aysel and other women in her generation. For Mackenzie, the necessary skills to autonomously act, decide and live are composed of "self-determination, selfgovernance, and self-authorization" (2014: 17). She understands that she will be able to control her own life when she manages to hold these skills. After she experienced this nothingness, she decides to take back the responsibility of her existence in the society as a woman who can actualize herself, instead of being constructed by "the hand that constructs history": "Maybe I wanted to grow myself up" (Ağaoğlu, 2014a: 399). She comes into a conclusion that she lied down to die in order to understand herself and her desires. While she recalls her memories to reconstruct her own story, she grows herself up by dealing with the oppression that she experienced.

Yet, Aysel still continues to experience gender oppression although she manages to remember her own history instead of the historical constructions. Since

“patriarchal ideology still exists as a force that dominates women”, Aysel has to live through patriarchal restrictions because of her gender (Coşar, 2007: 116). Although she manages to emancipate herself and provide her independence to a certain level which will be enough to take the decision of lying down to die, she still has to struggle for embodying her autonomous self in the society.

Although Aysel’s experiences while trying to find ways to cope with gender oppression usually contains the theme of re-making herself and her story, the theme if

“reconstructing her own story” starts to capture more attention in the last book of the trilogy, *Hayır (No)*. *Hayır* consists of Aysel’s experiences and memories within different periods. Novel also includes Aysel’s past and future that are not experienced and will not be experienced. In that sense, these non-existing memories are actually products of her real memories that she is having issues with remembering whether they are real or not. Aysel includes these hypothetical moments and experiences into her memories because she is trying not to forget the things that construct herself so that, she recalls everything she manages to remember. Because she perceives the act of remembrance as a strategy to actualize herself against the oppression of hand that constructs the history. Although Aysel is not sure whether these memories really existed or not, they will be analyzed in this section as if they are experiences of her since they still reflect gender inequalities and patriarchal hegemony in the society within the context of the book.

These memories that Aysel tries to remember are strongly connected to the gender oppression in the society which results from both patriarchal hegemony and political oppositions of the current political climate of the country. However, she finds the dichotomies that she has been experiencing as bizarre. Because while several years ago she was accusing of being a betrayer, now she is getting an honor award for her studies. Besides, while an institution, the government that she is the citizen of, criticize her actions; other researchers compliment her for her research.

Staying within the normative framework prevents Aysel from actualizing herself so she decides not to limit her actions within this constructed reality:

“Not as if listening to a magnificent symphonic music, but as if listening to a magnificent symphonic music, which changes constantly from oppression, shame and fear to pride, greatness and pride, as that music itself. Could not

be repeated. As if it were repeated, the spell would be broken. A cosmic moment. Balance and harmony after chaos. Isn't this something like the creation of the universe? It really couldn't be repeated. Did Aysel intuitively find what could not happen again?" (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 219).

Aysel still remembers her past despite passing years because there are certain moments that Aysel becomes able to embody her autonomy within this past. In that sense, remembering the moments that she considers as "from chaos to balance" provides her to reconstruct her own story against gender oppression.

When Aysel recalls her memories, she realizes that Aysel does not find a life that is fulfilled with marriage and children as meaningful life. Because this kind of family life is predetermined by the society and imposed upon the individuals the way in which reproduce gender oppression. For Aysel: "What did we do? What have I done? In the end, if the house will be bought, the children will be seated at the table at the same time every evening and thank God for giving our food" (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 185). Aysel regrets for the things that she has done in order to reach a life that she does not desire to live through at all. The family life and sacred marriage mean nothing to Aysel but the feeling of hopelessness. Instead of trying to reach a devoted marriage, she chooses to live a life that she can fulfill her desires. Hence, by realizing that she did what she believes, she finishes her reexamination with fulfillment. This fulfillment allows her to understand that she managed to reconstruct her personal story.

She perceives the history that she experienced as a common history with Engin because together, they rejected normative framework of the society:

"A history cannot not be written by two people, for sure. But we wrote our own history, if not the history of a country, with our own hands. I believe in that. We must continue to write to write this history as long as we live. Personal histories are not the beginning of anything, of any history. But now I believe that histories for two are a prologue" (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 198).

Finally, Aysel could manage to defeat the hand that constructs the history by writing her own history not only by herself but with Engin. Although Aysel is not yet capable to do it alone, she perceives this common history of two people as a significant challenge to the authority. Aysel's struggle to defeat the hand that constructs the

history can be considered as a process of “producing the knowledge of her own subjectivity” (Stanley, 1991: 11). By writing her own story, she produces the subjective experience of her existence through her autonomous point of view, rather than the knowledge that is propagated by the authority.

Against the existing political power and hegemony that “break individuals apart from their own histories and prevent them to see their own futures by subordinating and restricting the individuals”; Aysel uses her ability to remember (Alver, 2013: 10). In that sense, she uses her memory as a tool that will further her connection with her life and her optimistic self. However, she tries to preserve this tool, her act of remembrance that will connect herself to life in a social and political context of September 12th, where ideological opposition is on its highest level because of the ongoing effects of 1980 military coup. In that sense, Aysel instrumentalizes her memory, her act of remembrance, and her hope for the upcoming days by recalling her personal memory despite social and political oppression. Yet, there are gaps in Aysel’s personal story and narrative which indicates a liminality coming from previous generations’ women.

She perceives the personal histories of her previous, her mothers’ generation as a liminality between the republic and tradition:

“These people, whose previous knowledge has been declared invalid, and who have just been introduced to what they need to know in one day, Mr. Salim, Mrs. Fitnat, that is, our fathers and mothers, were squeezed and crumbled between the constitutionalism and the republic. This team, which is neither a civilian, nor a soldier, nor a bureaucrat, nor has wealth and poverty in its past, was left to oblivion at the last point of hope they were attached to.

... Mommy, don't die, you haven't lived yet” (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 48).

Aysel perceives the live of her mothers’ generation as a live that is not enough to use their potentials or to actualize themselves. They are the ones “emancipated but unliberated” because they do not have necessary skills to actualize themselves although they have rights and freedoms in the public sphere (Arat, 1989; Kandiyoti, 1987; Tekeli, 1995). For Aysel, her mother’s generation have not lived yet because they had to survive between the values of the republic and normativity of the tradition the ways in which limits their ability to actualize themselves autonomously. Because

of the gender oppression and liminality of their generation, Aysel thinks that they need to live more to experience life. Despite her mothers' generation, who are the first generation of republic, Aysel becomes satisfied with the memories that she collected. Because when compared to older generation, she could have achieved what she desired in her life.

Moreover, for Aysel, these people have been forgotten because nobody wrote the history of these people properly. Hence, her biggest aim becomes writing her own history in order not to be forgotten like these people and not to forget herself. Against the historical knowledge accumulation that excludes women's personal stories, she writes her own story in order to defeat this in-betweenness by saving herself from predetermined constructions. Against the historical knowledge, she produces her own feminist knowledge that refers to "actual women's realities in everyday world" (Smith, 1988: 107). By doing so, Aysel discovers the importance of narrations and memories while people embody their autonomous existences. On the contrary, she understands that a life that is not narrated or recalled will be lost as the time passes. After this realization, she starts to try to remember her past to construct her own story in accordance with her own truths. She tries to collect the details of her live but because of the gaps in her memory, she cannot completely remember every detail and she cannot be certain about the details that she recalls.

In one of the letters that she sends to her sister, she complains about the decrease in her imagination that she observes when she tries to remember:

"I think my imagination has weakened, or rather, I can hardly conceive of fresh, beautiful things, but I often imagine myself in my seventies, eighties, or even a hundred years old. I spend less and less time on the ever-moving, vibrant life, but more and more on understanding the causes and ways of death of intellectuals and intellectuals who have committed suicide" (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 29).

Aysel experiences difficulties while she tries to remember her past, but she can imagine herself in her older years. In that sense, she thinks about the future as a strategy that will decrease the negative effects of her lack of ability to remember her past. By thinking about the future, she owns her own story although there are gaps

and some memories that she does not want to remember in the past. Despite these gaps and uncertainties, Aysel manages to defeat liminalities of the previous generation by owning her story instead of an imposed historical construction that is composed of gender oppression.

While she wanders in time with her thoughts, an imaginary character follows Aysel along in her journey who is called Yenins. The main responsibility of Yenins is to accompany Aysel in these time travels through her personal history. This imaginary character's name is composed of new (yeni) and human (insan) the way in which highlights an idealized human being who tries to plant the seeds of hope. In the narration of *Hayır*, Yenins is depicted as “a hypothetical character as reflection of youth, future, resistance, and hope so that, it provides a bridge between the past and future for Aysel” (Arıkan and Aytan, 2021: 557). Furthermore, by accompanying Aysel while she tries to remember her past, Yenins highlights Aysel's hope that she has in her early ages. Since Aysel is not that hopeful as when she was younger, Yenins acts as a bridge that will gather young and old Aysel together. So that, it manages to sustain Aysel's optimism for the upcoming days. For Aysel, Yenins is always on the same age with a strong mental clarity: “Yenins. It is always twenty years old. Again, unspoiled clear eyes. Again, passion. Again, trust. Hope. Yenins never confounds” (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 8).

By representing a never-lasting passion and hope for the future, it reminds Aysel her youth and her faith during those years that are getting less and less during these days. Although there is no mention in the book that whether Yenins represents Aysel's youth specifically or not, it is more than clear that Yenins stands for youth, passion and hope, in general. Hence, Yenins provides the opportunity of recalling the past in order to re-construct the personal memory, which is the main tool of Aysel while she resists against gender oppression. In the absence of Yenins, Aysel tries hard to find her hope and joy in life. Because the existing Aysel that we observe throughout *Hayır* is far away from being hopeful and optimistic as a result of her memories which constituted from social and political oppression. According to her memories that she manages to recall, Aysel is a woman who always struggled to achieve something that she desired and to act in accordance with her autonomous, independent self. Because “women are excluded from access to power”, as one of the results of the patriarchal system (Walby, 1989: 224).

Although these years are the first ages that Aysel reaches the highest point of self-awareness, she struggles while acting autonomous in accordance with her own decisions and desires. She hardly expresses herself freely and acts independently from social expectations on herself: “Care will be taken to keep what is inside on the inside. Then something neat and tidy will be chosen and wear on, both warm and fit for a republican professor” (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 17). Because of the intersection of gender oppression and ideological opposition, Aysel is one of those who experience a profound social pressure. Even the clothes that she needs to choose to wear on the everyday basis are considered as signifiers of the role that she carries as the new ideal woman of Turkish Republic.

For Walby, there are several “patriarchal abstractions that together create patriarchal structure which includes patriarchal state”, too (1989: 220). Existing patriarchal state reproduces gender oppression by creating an idealized womanhood construction that should be followed by women if they want to be accepted in the society. However, the existing political power and authority after the military coup does not acknowledge position in the society as an ideal woman, in addition to Aysel’s objection for not fitting into this category. Aysel is both being forced to fit into new womanhood, and her identity as a woman intellectual is not approved at the same time.

Apart from Aysel’s gender identity and her way of manifesting womanhood, her professional identity as a researcher and a professor is still not approved by the existing political power, not surprisingly. Aysel, as a researcher who tries to understand the suicide as a fact through her career, is ready to finalize one of her research while she is slowly reaching to end of her career at the same time. This research’s aim is to understand and to analyze intellectuals’ suicides that results from existential and psychological reasons which is called “Intellectual Suicides and the Rebellion of the Future” (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 11)

Because of that, she turns into a researcher who is not wanted by the political power and authority whose work is not find valuable. Still, there is an institution called “Özerk Milli Kültür Kurumu Bilim Hizmet Dalı Değerlendirme Seçici Kurulu (Autonomous National Culture Institution Jury of Evaluation for Scientific Branch of

Service)” who appreciates Aysel’s work. This institution is another hypothetical existence in the novel created by the writer, whose aim is to support scientific research as one of the branches of the government. They find Aysel’s research worth for the research award so that, they arrange a ceremony for Aysel’s honor and her research despite the fact both the research itself and Aysel resist this institution’s authority.

However, Aysel does not like and approve the authority that this scientific institution has since it reflects government’s authority as a branch. Besides, Aysel generally rejects any authority in the society but she chooses to follow her autonomous ideas while deciding. Although her decisions are not fitted into the expectations of the society, she is dedicated enough to make them real. In that sense, “self-determination” should be considered as one of her characteristics that clarifies her autonomous existence in the society (Mackenzie, 2014: 17). So that, participating the ceremony becomes an experience that she is not willing to do. Actually, she believes that if she participates to the ceremony, she thinks that she will be criticized for her existence since she always experiences an outer criticism from the society. People often find her crazy because of her autonomous actions: “Our crazy is passing away, said someone while she crosses the road. I heard. That’s fine. Everyone’s little madness keeps them alive” (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 95). Despite the social criticism, she claims that by this little madness she holds, she feels more alive. By performing her little madness, she achieves to escape from “liminal existence” rather than fitting into stereotypical identity (Çayırıcıoğlu, 2022: 126-127). Yet, this criticism is coming to Aysel within every social context that she participates which results with her hesitation for joining this ceremony because of the dichotomy between her own story and the constructed reality composed of gender oppression.

Although Aysel has been researching this topic for a long time, people became aware of her after when this institution announces that they will be arranging a ceremony for Aysel. Before that, newspapers were covering Aysel by accusing her being a betrayer to the nation. But after the announcement of this ceremony, Aysel suddenly starts to be seen in the newspapers with her research. During this period, Aysel becomes disappointed with society’s hypocritical attention that builds preconditions on her to frame her as an ideal citizen. Because of this unwanted attention, she desires to become invisible: “The door is knocked. He is the doorman. He will be told that nothing is needed today. No, I didn’t want milk either. Thank you.

I wanted to be forgotten. I wanted myself to forget the past, this is what I wanted most” (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 104). However, the past that she wanted to remember was not her own story but the constructed history. Despite her hard days when she driven away from the university by accusation of being a betrayer, she is experiencing increasing attention which she wants to get rid of. Thus, she wants to change constructed history with her own memories by recalling them. This contradiction between her hard times and today’s positivity reminds her the hypocrisy of the society.

While the society and the existing attention on Aysel create the pressure of forgetting the past and her negative memories, she is trying to remember her past to make herself against this hypocrisy of the society. But at the same time, she is aware that her past and her negative experiences are parts of her identity the ways in which provide a basis for her own historical construction and turning points for her selfactualization. For her, an autonomous self-actualization can only be done by remembrance, owning one’s own personal history. According to Henke, shattered self can be healed through “autobiographical acts of narrative reformulation” (2005: 22). As Henke highlights, Aysel also recalls her past in order to reach a coherent self by liberating from her traumatic memories and imposed historical construction. In that sense, she conceptualizes remembrance as a signifier of being sane, as opposite to madness: “No, I did not go insane. Because I still remember” (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 155). The importance of remembrance is to make and to embody her autonomous existence against gender oppression for Aysel. By remembering her past, she achieves to a state which she is aware of herself with her autonomous decision whether they are right or wrong, instead of the ones that are predetermined by the normative framework of the society.

Yet, by this increasing attention, she finally could find a medium to explain herself and her studies. As she talks for a newspaper, she explains the results of her research: “It seems to me that as the human consciousness develops, the rate of questioning existence, rebelling against the attacks on identities, and choosing infinite freedom also increase” (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 13). As a summary, through her research Aysel finds out that intellectuals commit to suicide as a result of political oppression and restrictions through limitation of freedom to reject. Besides, she understands that

as much as people become aware, they will be more likely to choose freedom. Actually, her consciousness on the basis of actualizing herself transforms parallel with her research. By continuing to dive deeply to the issue of correlation between consciousness and freedom, she also explores herself through her own experiences.

Yenins, the hypothetical character who reminds Aysel hope and optimism also reminds Aysel's decisions which sometimes she may forget because of the existing gender oppression. The day which Aysel is getting ready for the ceremony, Yenins warns her for not to forget her earrings:

“Yenins: Why didn't you wear your coral earrings today?

Aysel (shy): I don't know. I forgot it, somehow.

Yenins: If it is you for real, you need to have your coral earrings, for sure.

Aysel (pleasant): All right.

She puts on her earring. Even before drinking her coffee in the morning”
(Ağaoğlu, 2021: 18).

Yenins does not only reminds Aysel hope and optimism but at the same time, it motivates Aysel to be herself by manifesting her identity through resisting the expectations of society that will lead to stereotypical construction of womanhood. Through Aysel's struggle, we observe the burdens and pressures of this specific historical period that she resists against. Aysel is defined by “her internal nonacceptance of the new order” (Alver, 2013: 10). In that sense, by following her resistance and non-acceptance towards the new order, the patterns that creates obstacles to the agency of an individual can be understood.

Aysel as an individual who is against the state's authority and gender oppression in the society, locates the act of remembrance to a place where it can help her while she struggles against the intersection of ongoing socio-political crisis in the society and her psychological crisis on the individual level. As a resisting woman intellectual, Aysel experiences this societal crisis through its emphasis on her gender identity and gendered expectations that she is not willing to undertake. Despite ongoing social expectations from her, she struggles to remember her past in order to make connections with the future with a hopeful attitude. In that sense, “a resistance against forgetting collective past” is observed through Aysel within the context of memory (Arıkan and Aytan, 2021: 555).

Against the social and political structure that constantly produces pressures and oppressions, Aysel seeks to find ways of coping with gender oppression. In patriarchal society, she struggles to implement her own decisions without the hesitation of being excluded and marginalized. In that sense, Aysel can be considered as a reflection of womanhood that belongs to her era. Because during these years, political opposition and gender oppression left women nothing but a struggle to implement their own decisions instead of practicing the idealized new womanhood that is constructed by the intersection of nationalistic ideology and patriarchal hegemony in the society. In that sense, it should be noted that the struggle which Aysel experiences while she tries to embody her autonomy is one of the components of women's everyday experience in patriarchal society.

Indeed, within the historical period which Aysel questions dichotomies resulted by state feminism in the public sphere and patriarchal hegemony on the private sphere, "women's movement in Turkey started to struggle for radical transformations after 1980's through an emphasis on dichotomies of the public and private spheres" (Savran, 2002: 255). Besides, Aysel's questioning also results from the intersection of "public and private patriarchy" that is defined by Walby as two main types of patriarchy including "relative exclusion of women from arenas of social life" as in the form of private patriarchy, and "subordination of women from social spheres" as in the form of public patriarchy on the other hand (Walby, 1989: 228).

Yet, not all women are courageous enough to question their existences in the society and capable to challenge normative framework of the society in order to act through their own desires and objectives, as Aysel is capable to do so. What differentiates Aysel's story from the common reality is her dare to question gender inequality and challenge patriarchal hegemony, at least within the framework of her own experiences in her daily life. By challenging gender inequalities and patriarchal hegemony in the society in her own way, Aysel provides an alternative to subordinated womanhood since she portrays how a woman can free herself from constructed reality in accordance with her autonomous decisions and independent from societal expectations.

However, it should not be forgotten that Aysel is one of the women who tries to be herself rather than performing the pre-determined role of womanhood that is constructed by “the hand that constructs the history”. After her interpretation of her own memory that she recalled, she decides not to be a part of the system that oppress her. As Aysel recalls her memories from her past, she understands that she does not want to be part of the system that oppress her. Hence, she decides not to participate to the ceremony. Aysel’s escape from the ceremony reflects the realities of those who experience challenges while being themselves: “Maybe many people had to put everyone aside and face themselves as a result of the crises experienced one after another” (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 289). Aysel performs an authentic intellectual attitude by not submitting to the institutions which are not in the same line with her the ways in which shows her identity and political attitude. Hence, she runs away from being constructed by the society through performing the idealized role of being a woman intellectual who holds the responsibility of education of the youth of Turkey.

When Aysel does not show up in the ceremony, her friends try to find them and seek for clues that will help them to understand the reason behind Aysel’s absence. They cannot find any evidence that clarifies Aysel’s absence in the ceremony, but they find a text in Aysel’s writing machine that can be described as a summary of Aysel’s social and political standing which says: “In any case, maintaining our freedom depends on one and only final word that can be said by the action: No...” (Ağaoğlu, 2021: 293).

Text in her typewriter is another signifier of her political standing and ideological identity both as a woman and as an intellectual living in an oppressive political climate. Apart from Aysel’s experience in the patriarchal society and her ways to cope with gender oppressions in the society, Aysel’s text that is found in her typewriter also reflects Adalet Ağaoğlu’s political standing as a result of novel’s autobiographical essence. For Nocklin, “art is a process that individuals are affected by outer realities” (1971: 135-136). The issues that Aysel resists and strongly objects are resulting from outer realities of the society that she lives in. Thus, Adalet Ağaoğlu contextualizes Aysel’s story as in relation to the issues and realities of the society. So that the writer as a knowledge producer, becomes able to reflect these issues from her own standpoint, as in relation to reality of the society and experience of womanhood.

Aysel's rejection of authority and choosing her own story instead of the constructed history results from her dare to remember her past. By remembering her past, she realizes the womanhood construction that is imposed on herself and other women in her generation. When she remembers her past through her own memories, she holds power and agency to reconstruct her own story. Reconstructing her own story is significant in terms of coping with the gender oppression that she experiences. Because she re-creates her own personal history by transforming the narration of constructed history when she remembers her entire life. Through her memories, she focuses on her agency and autonomy instead of the gender oppression that shapes women's actions, decisions and social roles. By doing so, Aysel's act of remembrance results with her reconstruction of her own story, which becomes one of her strategies to cope with gender oppression that she experiences.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Throughout the thesis, Aysel's story of embodying her autonomous identity is analyzed within the context of Adalet Ağaoğlu's *Dar Zamanlar* (*Narrow Times*) trilogy. In this thesis, feminist criticism is used as the main methodology since it allows to analyze women's experiences in patriarchal society and ways to cope with gender oppression through a feminist paradigm, from women's perspective. In order to contextualize Aysel's experiences as in parallel with common experience of women in Turkey, the reasons behind gender inequality, outcomes of gender oppression on women, patterns of patriarchal hegemony and most importantly, development of women's movement in Turkey are analyzed in addition to gender issues in Turkey, specifically.

Aysel's personal strategies and methods while dealing with gender oppression are essential to be analyzed within the framework of gender and women's studies since her personal narration of making herself furthers "the emergence of a counter public sphere that reflects feminist subjectivities" (Felski, 1979: 44). Analysis of her personal narrative of liberation from the patriarchal normativity and understanding the patterns behind her struggle of gaining her autonomous self will promote the production of feminist knowledge accumulation. Within this framework, the ways in which Aysel deals with gender oppression are analyzed through the narration of selected three novels of *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy.

As a result of this analysis, it has been determined that Aysel practices diverse strategies to embody her autonomous self against the patriarchal society that oppresses her and reduces her identity as a woman, to a predetermined construction of womanhood. Aysel's strategies of coping with gender oppression differentiate through the context that she is embedded and the issues that she is struggling with.

Thus, she uses different methods of struggling with society's patriarchal normativity that oppress women although her main challenges do not change through books or contexts which are patriarchal hegemony and gender oppression.

Starting from the first book *Ölmeye Yatmak (Lying Down to Die)*, Aysel seeks ways of embodying autonomy despite ongoing pressure of gender oppression in the society. Although the book only covers Aysel's experience in the hotel room that consists of one and a half hour, it provides a detailed account on the experiences of Aysel's generation through her memories. While resisting against patriarchal hegemony in the society, Aysel tries to control her own life by taking and implementing the choices that will influence her life. As she tries to free herself from the chains of gender oppression and patriarchal hegemony, she comes into a conclusion that she cannot liberate herself alone since liberation cannot be done by herself. Thus, she starts to question the values that are given to her generation by the republican ideology the ways in which creates the illusion that educated women can save themselves from oppression.

In fact, in this hotel room, she does not commit to suicide but instead she questions the ascribed role of women from the early republican era to her adulthood through her childhood memories. By doing so, Aysel provides a perspective on republic's history through a feminist gaze which questions the "new woman" who has the responsibility of being an asexualized identity in the public, being a loving mother and a wife in the private, and role of educating the younger generations of Turkey. Although this idealization is the reason behind Aysel's emancipation, she does not feel liberated because of the pressure of fitting into these roles. In the hotel room where she is waiting to die, she investigates constructed history of womanhood in order to understand her own choices and the one that are resulting from gender oppression.

After one and a half hour that she spends in the hotel room, she becomes aware of her autonomous self, which she will proceed to carry in order to protect herself from the patriarchal brutality that she lives in. Furthermore, it should also be noted that

Aysel's experience of resisting to gender oppression has similarities with the experience of her generation's woman. In that sense, while Aysel recalls her childhood memories, she narrates the story of her generation which is the second generation after the formation of Turkish republic.

In the second book of the trilogy, *Bir Düğün Gecesi (A Wedding Night)*, the main issue becomes Aysel's absence in a wedding ceremony which she is expected to participate. In Aysel's absence throughout the wedding night, her sister Tezel and her husband Ömer spend their time escaping from people who are trying to talk with them.

Aysel does not participate to the wedding of her brother İlhan's sister because she believes that this wedding is not done by nobody's free will but instead, by families' pressure on the bride and the groom. Since modernization project provides a predetermined path to be followed by individuals, Aysel criticizes these ascribed roles.

Although her decision of not participating to the ceremony furthers her marginalization both from her family and the society, she does not turn back from standing in accordance with her beliefs by being absent in the wedding. Thus, she resists to fit into pre-determined constructions of womanhood by acting through her own desires. Hence, Aysel shows that she is capable to act through her autonomous self instead of following the normativity as an acceptable daughter who needs to participate a family event that she does not approve.

In the end of the novel, Aysel considers this wedding night as a poor-quality novel because everyone has their roles to play and responsibilities to fulfill in this wedding night, including Aysel. These roles and responsibilities are predetermined the ways in which correlates with the ideology of modernization project that is operated by the regime of republic. At the end of the novel, Aysel shows that she has power to take her own decisions and to reject the gender roles. Accordingly, this wedding night which focuses on a few hours shows how women are affected by the pressures that result from both the political oppositions and gender oppressions.

In the last book of the trilogy *Hayır (No)*, we find Aysel as an old woman who is still in a state of resistance against the patriarchal normativity of the society within diverse spheres of her life. Because of the existing oppressive political climate in the society, Aysel starts to experience issues as an intellectual woman who is in

opposition with the existing political power. Although Aysel is determined to challenge gender inequalities and patriarchal hegemony in the society, she continues to experience struggle while rejecting the identity of “new woman” in order to embody her authentic identity because of the gender oppression.

In *Hayır*, Aysel tries to face with her past by recalling her own memories in order to re-structure her story against the pre-determined historical construction of the political authorities. Since Aysel is forced to forget her own story, it is not easy for her to recall all her memories back against the political and ideological system that oppress her. The main issue of the book is Aysel’s experience of getting ready for a ceremony that she will be given an honor award for her scientific studies. However, she does not feel completely comfortable with participating this ceremony. Aysel’s political standing and ideological existence do not align with the values of the institution that organizes this ceremony. Hence, Aysel takes her entire day by questioning her participation for this ceremony.

In order to act through her own values, Aysel once again chooses to become absent in this ceremony although she takes her time by getting ready for the ceremony through her entire day that the book covers. She does not only choose to be absent in the ceremony that reflects political authority but also, she chooses her own autonomous standing instead of her ascribed status as an intellectual woman of the republican regime.

Aysel does not feel the necessity of owing an explanation to her friends because of her absence in the ceremony. However, she leaves a text on her typewriter which summarizes her personal standing against the authority and oppression. This text in her typewriter can also be considered as her personal manifesto of maintaining her freedom despite the ongoing pressure on women and intellectuals of the social context that she is embedded. Furthermore, this text that manifests Aysel’s ideological standing also reflects Adalet Ağaoğlu’s perspective by saying no to women’s oppression and political pressures. Nocklin emphasizes that “individuals are affected by outer realities within the sphere of art” (1971: 135-136). In that sense, this trilogy can be considered as a reflection of social realities through the perspective of the writer, as a feminist knowledge producer.

Aysel's tools of rejecting the patriarchal hegemony and coping with gender oppression throughout her entire life that is narrated by the trilogy can be summarized in four main themes but not limited to them including reexamination of womanhood, being able to take her decisions and actions, resisting against the authority, and reconstructing her own story.

Firstly, when she reexamines the womanhood, she realizes the burden and weight that she carries. This burden and weight do not result from her independent choices but social construction of womanhood. By questioning the womanhood construction, she also discovers the ways in which women are oppressed. In that sense, this reexamination provides one of her first steps of awakening. As she finds out that she is not the only one who is oppressed by the gender regime of the patriarchal society, she starts to seek ways to cope with the gender oppression that she experiences as well as other woman in her generation.

At first, she starts by criticizing her responsibilities and traditional gender roles as a woman in the patriarchal society. Then, she acknowledges that these responsibilities and roles are resulting from the womanhood construction of the society the way in which shaped through gender regime of the patriarchal society. Hence, Aysel finds out that her burden and weight are resulting from gender oppression. In that sense, her reexamination of womanhood constitutes one of her strategies to cope with gender oppression because of the awareness that it gathers.

Secondly, as Aysel finishes her reexamination of womanhood, she discovers that despite the gender regime that she is embedded, there are still certain spheres in her life that she can embody her autonomy and agency. Thus, she learns that she is able to take her decisions and actions. In fact, the decision that lying down to die was her first decision that she takes for herself and by herself, consciously. As a result of this first step, she becomes aware of the fact that throughout her life until this moment, most of her decisions that resulted with criticism towards Aysel were actually her autonomous decisions.

After this point, she embodies her autonomy to take her own decisions instead of the ones that are predetermined by the society in accordance with traditional gender roles of women. As Aysel becomes able to take her decisions and actions, she can resist gender oppression that she experiences. Because embodying her own autonomous standing within the turning points in her life gives her the necessary

strength to cope with the systems of oppression in the patriarchal society. By taking her decisions and action, she rejects the constructed reality predetermined for women.

Thirdly, Aysel resists against the authority as one of her ways to deal with gender oppression. As an individual, Aysel has an attitude which does not submit to any authority including the normative framework of the society. Hence, although she does not resist against the authority directly every time that she practices this resistance, she always questions and rejects the structures that limits herself. In order to do this, she acts through her own autonomous objectives and desires instead of fitting into the ideal womanhood.

As Aysel realizes the gender oppression which prevents her to embody her autonomous standing, she does not hesitate to break the normative framework that is constituted from gender regime which legitimizes the subordination of women. Thus, she rejects her responsibilities that results from traditional gender identities, both within the society and her family. By doing so, she does not only resist against the authority but at the same time, she finds another way to deal with gender oppression by choosing her autonomous standing against the normative structure of the society that reproduces gender oppression in multiple levels.

Lastly, Aysel reconstructs her own story against the constructed history. Against the constructed historical narration which excludes women's own experiences, Aysel tries to recall her own memories that she collected throughout her entire life. By doing so, she becomes able to acknowledge her own personal story. In that sense, she uses remembrance as a way to cope with gender oppression that she experiences throughout her entire life. Because the system oppresses Aysel and other women in her generation by creating a constructed reality which makes them to forget their own narrations.

Although remembering her story becomes hard for her since she is forced to forget her own ways to deal with gender issues in the society, she manages to gather her own narration which will help her to reconstruct her identity. As a result, she realizes that she became fulfilled with what she has done throughout her entire life. Against the constructed narration of history that oppress women, she uses her own memories to re-create her story. In that sense, she reconstructs her own story as a way

to deal with gender oppressions in the society since claiming her own truths and realities provides her agency and autonomy.

Aysel's own coping strategies while dealing with gender oppression is crucial in terms of understanding the ways in which woman may autonomously act against the gender oppression. Understanding Aysel's personal narration and own strategies may further our perception based on women's struggles while dealing with gender oppression. Thus, these strategies may help us to broaden our perspectives while considering women's own ways to cope with gender oppression that they experience. Focusing on these strategies allow us to understand how Aysel is oppressed as a woman in a patriarchal society, how she deals with the oppression that she experiences by using her own methods and strategies, and what are the common points that connect Aysel's story to women's common experience with gender oppression and their ways to deal with this oppression.

Despite passing years, *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy is still read by many people because of several reasons. First of all, the gender oppression that Aysel both experience and tries to struggle with is still existent in today's world. Women still suffer from different dimensions of gender oppression and tries to find their own ways to cope with them. In that sense, the main issues of these novels are still present in today's society since patriarchy is still existent.

Secondly, it should be highlighted that Aysel's own methods and strategies while she is dealing with gender oppression includes multiple variations in accordance with the social context that she is embedded and the issues that she is struggling with. Although these themes are analyzed as reexamination of womanhood, being able to take decisions and actions, resisting against the authority, and constructing her own story within this thesis; other readers may find different patterns of coping with gender oppression. Hence, it allows individuals to connect Aysel's story with their own personal experiences.

Lastly, Aysel's narration of her own reality is crucial in terms of feminist knowledge production since it includes a woman's own ways of experiencing patriarchal oppression and gender inequalities. Aysel's own ways of struggling with the patriarchal structure of the society has potential to influence other types of resistances and to understand diverse ways of dealing with the oppressive structures both within the real life and within the sphere of literature. In that sense, it encourages

its readers to develop their own strategies to cope with gender oppression within their own lives.

In addition to these findings, it should be stated that Adalet Ağaoğlu's works have been considered as narrations of military coup, political oppression, and social transformations. Thus, themes of women's agency and autonomy have been undermined for a long time. Yet, it is not surprising that these themes are undermined since literature as a social institution also reflects and reproduces gender oppression the ways in which influences the main focuses on literary studies and the materials that are subjected to research.

Today, thanks to feminist scholars both within the areas of literary studies and gender studies, Adalet Ağaoğlu's works' importance in terms of feminist knowledge production has been claimed. Further research on Adalet Ağaoğlu and/or her works may examine the connection between gender oppression within the sphere of literature and the reasons behind existing conceptualization of these texts as narrations of political issues by excluding women's agency and autonomy.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

WOMEN’S COPING STRATEGIES AGAINST GENDER OPPRESSION: EXAMPLE OF ADALET AĖAOĖLU’S *DAR ZAMANLAR* (NARROW TIMES)

TRILOGY

BLM 1

GİRİŞ

1.1 alıřmanın Amacı

alıřmanın amacı kadınların patriyarkal toplum yapısında toplumsal cinsiyet eřitsizliĖine baĖlı olarak deneyimlediĖi meseleleri ve bu meselelerle mcadele ederken geliřtirdikleri stratejileri edebiyat baĖlamında incelemektir. Bu tez Adalet AĖaoĖlu’nun *lmeye Yatmak* (1973), *Bir DĖn Gecesi* (1979) ve *Hayır* (1987) romanlarından oluřan *Dar Zamanlar* çlemesini odaĖına almaktadır. *Dar Zamanlar* çlemesi bařkarakteri Aysel aracılıĖıyla Trkiye baĖlamında, romanların konu edildiĖi tarihsel aralıkta kadınların deneyimlemekte olduĖu meseleler hakkında bilgi verir. Romanlar cumhuriyetin ikinci kuřaĖının ocukluk yıllarından bařlayarak 1980 darbesinden sonraki dneme kadar gider. Adalet AĖaoĖlu çleme boyunca anlatı tekniĖinde kullandıĖı geriye dnřlerle bu tarihsel sre ierisinde deneyimlenen

otoriter siyasi rejimi ve bireylere uygulanan baskıyı devamlı hatırlatır. Siyasi iktidarın tıpkı tarihi şekillendirdiği gibi bireyleri de kendi çıkarları doğrultusunda araçsallaştırıp şekillendirdiğini bu şekilde vurgulamış olur.

Üçlemedeki romanlar toplumcu gerçekçi metinlerin özelliklerini göstererek toplumda yaşanmakta olan gerçeklikleri yalnızca belirli bir gruba değil, toplumun tümüne odaklanarak okuyucuya ulaştırır. Böylece konu edinen tarihsel aralıkta toplumun farklı kesimlerinden farklı kimliklere sahip bireylerin yaşadığı deneyimler de açığa çıkmış olur. Bununla beraber üçlemenin ana karakterinin kadın olmasından gelen arka plan sayesinde kadınların yaşadığı toplumsal deneyim yine kadın kimliğine sahip bir yazar tarafından aktarılır. Bu tarihsel süreçte kadınların deneyimledikleri meseleler toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizlikleriyle ve ataerkil güç ilişkileriyle şekillenmiştir. Kadınların gündelik hayatta deneyimlediği cinsiyete dayalı ayrımcılık, ataerkil baskı, toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin getirdiği sorumluluklar gibi meseleler her kadın tarafından farklı biçimde deneyimlense hepsinin kökeni toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerine ve ataerkil güç ilişkilerine dayanır. Kadınların toplumsal cinsiyet kimliklerini önceleyerek yaşadıkları deneyimleri onların bakış açısından incelemek ataerkinin kadınlar üzerinde yarattığı etkiyi ve etkileme biçimlerini anlamamıza olanak verir.

Bu tezde incelenen romanların *Dar Zamanlar* üçlemesinden hareketle seçilmesinin nedeni romanların bir kadının yaşadığı bireysel deneyimleri odağına alarak toplumda yaşanan sosyal, kültürel ve politik meseleler hakkında bilgi veriyor oluşudur. Romanlar bu meseleler hakkında bilgi verirken aynı zamanda başkarakterin kadın olmasından kaynaklı olarak yaşanmakta olan toplumsal cinsiyet deneyimine de dikkat çekmiş olur. Aysel'in bir kadın olarak toplumda yaşadığı deneyim başlangıçta bireysel ve öznel bir deneyim gibi görünmesine karşın toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğine dayalı gerçekliklerle şekillenir. Dolayısıyla Aysel'in deneyimi kadınların yaşadığı ortak meseleler ile bağ kurarak politik ve toplumsal gerçeklikleri aktaran bir anlatı haline gelir. Aysel'in ataerkil toplum yapısı içerisinde yaşadığı deneyim onun deneyimlediği toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizlikleriyle mücadele etmesine ve bu baskıya karşı geliştirdiği karşı çıkış biçimleriyle bu eşitsizliklerle mücadele etmesine alan açar.

Dolayısıyla incelenen romanlarda Aysel'in yaşadığı deneyim yalnızca kadınların onları baskılayan ataerkil güç eşitsizlikleriyle şekillenmiş toplumsal düzende neleri

deneyimlediğini açıklamakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda kadınların bu eşitsizliklerle kendi imkanlarını kullanarak nasıl mücadele ettikleri hakkında da bilgi verir.

1.2 Çalışmanın Önemi

Aysel farklılaşan ve dönüşen bağlam içerisinde kendi döneminin ve coğrafyasının kolektif deneyimini aktarır. Dolayısıyla Aysel'in deneyimini onun bakış açısından anlamak, Aysel'in kuşağındaki diğer kadınların da üzerinde konuşulmamış kişisel geçmişlerini sorgulamaya açmayı sağlayacaktır. Aysel'in kendi hayatının farklı dönemlerine bakıldığında dahi kadınların erkek egemen toplum yapısı içerisindeki deneyimlerinin ve mücadele ettikleri konuların dönüştüğünü söylemek mümkündür.

Türkiye'de Tanzimat döneminde başlayan kadın hareketi, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşu ile beraber kadınların hukuki kazanımlarıyla sonuçlansa da kadınların erkek egemen toplum yapısı karşısında verdiği mücadele dönüşerek ve büyüyerek devam etmektedir.

Nitekim kadınların verdiği tek mücadele toplumsal hayatta başkalarından bağımsız olarak birey olma mücadelesi ile sınırlı değildir. Aysel toplumda kendisini var etme mücadelesine ek olarak dönemin politik atmosferinden de etkilenir. Aysel toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinden kaynaklı olarak yaşadığı ayrımcılığa ek olarak sahip olduğu politik kimlikten dolayı yalnızlaşır ve dışlanır. Aysel darbe döneminde toplumda var olmaya çalışan bir kadın akademisyen olarak birtakım baskıları toplumdaki erkeklerden daha yoğun biçimde deneyimler. Bundan dolayı, Aysel'in bu meseleler ile mücadele ederken kullandığı yöntemler hem kadın olmanın getirdiği toplumsal cinsiyet deneyimi hem de sahip olduğu bakış açısı etrafında şekillenir.

Aysel üçlemede sadece deneyimlediği kişisel problemler ve toplumsal meseleler aracılığıyla değil, aynı zamanda hatırladığı kişisel geçmişi üzerinden de cumhuriyet ile beraber gelişen “yeni kadınlık” kimliğini ameliyat masasına yatırır. Bu sayede kadın özgürleşmesinin sınırlarını analiz ederek beraberinde getirdiği kısıtlılıklarını göstermiş olur. Aysel bu sorgulamaya cumhuriyetin kuruluş yıllarını hatırladığı çocukluk anılarından başlar ve 1980 darbesi sonrasındaki yaşlı haline

kadar devam eder. Aysel cumhuriyetin ikinci kuşak kadınlarından ve bir önceki kuşağın, bir başka deyişle annelerinin kuşağının geleneksel değerler ile cumhuriyetin modernleşmesi arasında sıkışıp kalmışlıklarını eleştirir. Bu arada kalmışlık yalnızca bir önceki kuşağın kadınlara özgü değildir; cumhuriyet değerlerinin kadınların üzerine yüklediği görev ve sorumluluk kadınların kendilerini kendi değer yargıları doğrultusunda gerçekleştirmesine engel olur.

1.3 Çalışmanın Arka Planı

Aysel'in *Dar Zamanlar* üçlemesinde yaşadığı kadınlık deneyimi, toplumla ve ataerkiyle yaşadığı çatışmalar halinde özetlenebilir. Aysel onu baskılayan belirli bir kimliğe hapsedmeye çalışan toplumsal cinsiyet rejimi içerisinde kendi olma mücadelesi verir. Fakat aynı zamanda bu üçlemenin kapsadığı zaman diliminde, yani çocukluğundan yaşlılığına kadar kadın olmanın getirdiği yükümlülükleri taşımak zorunda kalır. Zira Aysel'in toplumdaki yeri ve görevleri kadın olma kimliği etrafında şekillenmiştir. Toplumda makbul bir kadın olarak kabul görebilmek için bu görevleri ve sorumlulukları yerine getirmek, kendisi için belirlenmiş sınırlara uymak zorundadır. Dolayısıyla Aysel'in bu kimliğin gerekliliklerini yerine getirirken aynı zamanda içinde bulunduğu ortamın koşullarına uyum sağlaması da beklenir. Akademisyen olan Aysel'in çalıştığı üniversitedeki öğrencilerine karşı, ailesindeki aile büyüklerine karşı ve kocasına karşı farklı sorumlulukları bulunmaktadır. Aysel'in farklı ortamlarda farklı kimliklerinin ve görevlerinin oluşu kadınların sahip olduğu kimliklerin kesişimselliğini vurgular. Erkek egemen toplum yapısı içerisinde kadınlar kendilerine yüklenmiş bu rolleri aynı anda taşımak zorundadır.

Bu kimliklerin aynı anda kadınların omuzlarına yüklenmesi kadınları kendi gerçekleştirmek istedikleri şeyleri yapmaktan alıkoyar. Aysel de başka birçok kadın gibi toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerinin neden olduğu baskıdan dolayı gerçekleştirmeyi arzu ettiği şeyleri yaparken zorlanır, hatta ne yapmak istediğine karar verirken bile toplumun kadınların üzerinde kurduğu baskıyı deneyimlemeye devam eder. Oldukça uzun bir süre aslında kendi kararlarını alma konusunda yetkin olduğu gerçeğini fark edemez ve kendisini hapsedildiği bu rollerin içerisinde hayatı deneyimlemeye devam etmeye zorlar. Aysel'in üzerine yüklenen tüm yükler ve hapsedildiği kimlikler kendi kuşağının araçsallaştırılmasından kaynaklanır.

Dolayısıyla Aysel cumhuriyet ideolojisinin şekillendirdiği bir prototip olarak kendi hikayesinde ait olduğu kuşağa ait toplumsal gerçeklikler barındırır. Bu kolektif gerçeklikler toplumsal bağlamla etkileşim halinde olduğundan ataerkil baskı, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliği ve politik kutuplaşma gibi deneyimler hakkında bilgi verir. Aysel'in toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinden ve ataerkil baskılardan kaynaklı olarak deneyimlediği meseleler ve bunlarla mücadele ederken kullandıkları yöntemler Aysel dışında birçok başka kadının daha gündelik hayat deneyimini yansıtır.

Bu tez kapsamında Aysel'in ataerkil toplumla mücadele ederken kullandığı stratejiler ve kendisini toplumsal alanda bir özne olarak inşa ederken kullandığı yöntemler feminist eleştiri yöntemi kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Tezde metodoloji olarak feminist eleştirinin kullanma sebebi kadınların toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerinden ve ataerkil baskılardan dolayı toplumda deneyimledikleri meseleleri anlamayı kolaylaştırmasıdır. Feminist eleştiri yöntemi kadınların deneyimlerine öncelik vererek toplumsal olanı kadınların bakış açısından analiz etmeye çalışır. Bu sayede kadınların kendi hayatlarına dair bilgi, yine kadınların perspektifinden üretilmiş olur. Ayrıca, Aysel'in hikayesinden yola çıkan ve kolektif kadınlık deneyimi ile sıkı bir bağ içinde olan toplumsal gerçekliklerin analiz edilmesi sonucu feminist bilgi birikimine katkı sağlanmış olur.

BÖLÜM 2

TEORİK ÇERÇEVE

2.1 Gündelik Hayatta Toplumsal Cinsiyet Deneyimleri

Geçmişten günümüze gelen toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizlikleri kadınları kamusal alandan mahrum bırakarak kadınları ev içi alana ve domestik rollere indirger.

Kadınlar Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşu ile beraber elde ettikleri yasak haklarla ve yapılan toplumsal düzenlemelerle kamusal alana kabul edilmiş olsalar da kadınların kamusal alandaki varlığının belirli koşullara bağlı olduğu unutulmamalıdır. Kadınların kamusal görünürlüğü onlar için belirlenmiş ve “makbul” kabul edilen rolleri sergilemelerine bağlıdır. Bu roller yine kadınlara atfedilen geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinden kaynaklanır. Kadınları “ulusun anneleri” olarak gören devlet feminizmi modeli, cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarından itibaren kadınlara ulusun devamlılığını sağlama görevi verdiğinden, tüm kadınlar gibi Aysel de kendisini ülkeye faydalı olmak amacıyla kadınlara yüklenen “öğretmen” kimliği ile kamusal hayata karışmış olarak bulur. Eğitimini tamamladıktan sonra akademisyen olarak çalışmaya başlaması sahip olduğu ekonomik özgürlük ve toplumsal statü sebebiyle onu toplumda birçok kadından daha avantajlı bir konuma getirmiş olsa da Aysel hala tüm kadınları baskılayan erkek egemen sistemin normlarından etkilenmeye devam etmektedir.

Aysel tüm bunları deneyimlerken aynı zamanda kendisini gerçekleştirmek ve toplumda bağımsız bir birey olabilmek için mücadele verir. *Dar Zamanlar* üçlemesi boyunca Aysel'in kendisi olma ve otonom kimliğine sahip çıkma mücadelesi incelendiğinde aynı zamanda bir kadının ataerkil toplum yapısında hayatta kalabilmek için verdiği feminist mücadele de anlaşılmış olur. Aysel kendi bağımsız tercihlerini yapabilmeye başlayana dek öncelikle kendisini hayatı boyunca ona empoze edilmiş değerlerden kurtarmaya çalışır. Bu değerler cumhuriyetin kadınlara yüklediği rollerle paralel olarak ilerler ve kadınları ulusun gelişmesini sağlayacak rollerde konumlandırır. Aysel de devlet feminizmi ile araçsallaştırılan kadınlardan biri olarak toplumda toplumdaki konumunun beraberinde getirdiği sorumluluklar Aysel'in omzunda yük oluşturmaya devam etmektedir. Aysel bunları fark edip ona yüklenen rolü sergilemek yerine kendi kararlarını alabilecek yeterliliğe sahip olana dek bu yükleri taşımaya devam eder.

2.1.1 Kadınların Deneyimledikleri Sosyal ve Tarihsel Gerçeklikler

Kadınların gündelik hayat deneyimlerinin bir parçası olan toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizlikleri ve ataerkil baskılar belirli bir döneme ya da mekâna özgü değildir. Patriarkal toplum yapısında deneyimlenen tarihsel ve toplumsal süreçler, geçmişten

bugüne kadınların kamusal alandan dışlanmasıyla birlikte hali hazırda var olan toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerini yeniden üretilir. Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizlikleri kadınların kendilerini gerçekleştirebilmesini ve toplumda bağımsız olarak var olabilmesi için gerekli kaynaklara erişimini kısıtlamaktadır. Toplumda kendisini gösteren patriarkal güç eşitsizlikleri farklı tarihsel süreçlerde ve mekânlarda bağlamsal olarak farklılaşır, yeniden üretilir ve dönüşür. Dolayısıyla farklı bağlamlardaki toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizlikleri ve bu eşitsizlikten kaynaklanan meseleler farklılaşır. Buna ek olarak, belirli tarihsel süreçlerde ve bağlamlarda da farklı insanlar tarafından deneyimlenen toplumsal cinsiyet kimliklerinin dönemin koşullarıyla şekillenmiş ortak özelliklerinin olduğu akılda tutulmalıdır.

Aysel içinde bulunduğu patriyarkal toplum yapısında kendisini gerçekleştirebilmek için mücadele ederken aynı zamanda geçmişten günümüze yeniden üretilen toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerine meydan okumaya çalışır. Bu eşitsizlikler tüm patriyarkal toplumlarda görülen kadınları baskılayan toplumsal cinsiyet rejiminden, Aysel'in kuşağının aydın kesiminin etkilendiği siyasi baskılara kadar uzanır. Aysel'in toplumda var olan birçok farklı problemten herkesten farklı biçimde etkilenmesinin arkasından kadın olmaktan gelen toplumsal cinsiyet kimliği yatar.

Aysel'in politik kutuplaşmadan kaynaklı siyasi baskıların ve toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinden kaynaklanan ataerkil baskıların yoğun olarak yaşandığı toplumda hayatta kalabilmek, kendisini gerçekleştirebilmek, kendi otonom kimliğini kurabilmek için kullandığı yöntemler bu tez bağlamında feminist stratejiler olarak ele alınmıştır. “Feminist strateji” kavramsallaştırması Aysel'in kendisini feminist kimlik etrafında tanımlayıp tanımlamamasından bağımsız olarak, bu stratejilerin erkek egemen toplum yapısına karşı çıkmak amacıyla geliştirilmiş olduğundan hareketle kullanılmıştır. Bu stratejileri daha iyi kavrayabilmek adına Aysel'in yaşadığı dönemin toplumsal ve politik gerçekliklerinin feminist bilgi birikimi odağında, kadınların gündelik hayat deneyimi önceleyen biçimde yeniden ele almak gereklidir. Böylelikle başlangıçta Aysel'in öznel gerçekliği gibi görünen kişisel tarihinin, dönemin toplumsal ve politik atmosferi bağlamında şekillenen kolektif kadınlık deneyimini yansıttığı anlaşılmış olacaktır.

2.1.2 Türkiye’de Kadın Hareketinin Gelişimi

Aysel farklılaşan ve dönüşen bağlam içerisinde kendi döneminin ve coğrafyasının kolektif deneyimini aktarır. Aysel’in kendi hayatının farklı dönemlerine bakıldığında dahi kadınların erkek egemen toplum yapısı içerisindeki deneyimlerinin ve mücadele ettikleri konuların dönüştüğünü söylemek mümkündür. Türkiye’de Tanzimat döneminde başlayan kadın hareketi, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin kuruluşu ile beraber kadınların hukuki kazanımlarıyla sonuçlansa da kadınların erkek egemen toplum yapısı karşısında verdiği mücadele dönüşerek ve büyüyerek devam etmektedir. Nitekim kadınların verdiği tek mücadele toplumsal hayatta başkalarından bağımsız olarak birey olma mücadelesi ile sınırlı değildir. Aysel toplumda kendisini var etme mücadelesine ek olarak dönemin politik atmosferinden de etkilenir. Aysel toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinden kaynaklı olarak yaşadığı ayrımcılığa ek olarak sahip olduğu politik kimlikten dolayı yalnızlaşır ve dışlanır. Aysel darbe döneminde toplumda var olmaya çalışan bir kadın akademisyen olarak birtakım baskıları toplumdaki erkeklerden daha yoğun biçimde deneyimler. Bundan dolayı, Aysel’in bu meseleler ile mücadele ederken kullandığı yöntemler hem kadın olmanın getirdiği toplumsal cinsiyet deneyimi hem de sahip olduğu bakış açısı etrafında şekillenir.

Aysel’in politik kutuplaşmadan kaynaklı siyasi baskıların ve toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinden kaynaklanan ataerkil baskıların yoğun olarak yaşandığı toplumda hayatta kalabilmek, kendisini gerçekleştirebilmek, kendi otonom kimliğini kurabilmek için kullandığı yöntemler bu tez bağlamında feminist stratejiler olarak ele alınmıştır. “Feminist strateji” kavramsallaştırması Aysel’in kendisini feminist kimlik etrafında tanımlayıp tanımlamamasından bağımsız olarak, bu stratejilerin erkek egemen toplum yapısına karşı çıkmak amacıyla geliştirilmiş olduğundan hareketle kullanılmıştır. Bu stratejileri daha iyi kavrayabilmek adına Aysel’in yaşadığı dönemin toplumsal ve politik gerçekliklerinin feminist bilgi birikimi odağında, kadınların gündelik hayat deneyimi önceleyen biçimde yeniden ele almak gereklidir. Böylelikle başlangıçta Aysel’in öznel gerçekliği gibi görünen kişisel tarihinin, dönemin toplumsal ve politik atmosferi bağlamında şekillenen kolektif kadınlık deneyimini yansıttığı anlaşılmış olacaktır.

BÖLÜM 3

BULGULAR VE TARTIŞMA

3.1 Toplumsal Cinsiyete Dayalı Baskı ve Kadınların Otonomisi

Ana karakter olan Aysel'i çocukluğundan yaşlılığa kadar toplumsal meseleler ile iç içe inceleyebildiğimiz *Dar Zamanlar* üçlemesinde vurgulanan temaların arasında toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı baskılar ve kadınların otonomisi yok sayan toplumsal cinsiyet rejimi bulunur. Ne kurgusal bir kitap karakteri olan Aysel ne de bir yazar olarak Adalet Ağaoğlu kendilerini feminist olarak tanımlamıyor olsalar da hem Aysel'in incelenen üç roman boyunca verdiği mücadele hem de Ağaoğlu'nun Aysel'i ele alırken ataerkil toplumla yaşadığı çatışmaya odaklanması Aysel'in deneyiminin feminist bir mücadele olarak kavramsallaştırılmasının önünü açmış olur. Zira Aysel bu mücadeleyi kendi otonomisi sağlayabilmek ve kadınları baskılayan bir toplumda kendisini gerçekleştirebilmek için verir. Aysel'in feminist mücadelesi incelenen üç kitapta da kendi içinde ufak değişiklikler gösterir ve farklı stratejiler izler.

Aysel üçlemede sadece deneyimlediği kişisel problemler ve toplumsal meseleler aracılığıyla değil, aynı zamanda hatırladığı kişisel geçmişi üzerinden de cumhuriyet ile beraber gelişen “yeni kadınlık” kimliğini ameliyat masasına yatırır. Bu sayede kadın özgürleşmesinin sınırlarını analiz ederek beraberinde getirdiği kısıtlılıklarını göstermiş olur. Aysel bu sorgulamaya cumhuriyetin kuruluş yıllarını hatırladığı çocukluk anılarından başlar ve 1980 darbesi sonrasındaki yaşlı haline kadar devam eder. Aysel cumhuriyetin ikinci kuşak kadınlarından ve bir önceki kuşağın, bir başka deyişle annelerinin kuşağının geleneksel değerler ile cumhuriyetin modernleşmesi arasında sıkışıp kalmışlıklarını eleştirir. Bu arada kalmışlık yalnızca bir önceki kuşağın kadınlarına özgü değildir; cumhuriyet değerlerinin kadınların

üzerine yüklediği görev ve sorumluluk kadınların kendilerini kendi değer yargıları doğrultusunda gerçekleştirmesine engel olur.

Aysel ilk romandan başlayarak son romana dek bu değerlerin ve yeni kadınlık değerlerine uyma zorunluluğun kendi üzerinde yarattığı baskıyı ve kendi olamama meselesini sorgular. Ona yüklenen yeni kadınlık değerleri kamusal alanda asexual bir kadın imgesi çizerek kuşağının tüm kadınlarının da deneyimlediği gibi Aysel'i tüm cinsiyet kimliğinden arındırır. Bireysel ve otonom bir kimliğe sahip olmak, topluma fayda sağlamanın karşılığı olarak konumlandırıldığından Aysel'in kendi otonom kimliğini inşa etme çabası onu makul bir kadın olmaktan uzaklaştırır. Kamusal alanda cinsiyet kimliğinden ayrılmış cumhuriyetin yeni kadınları özel alanda aileleri için bakım sağlarken bir yandan da yeni nesli eğitecek, onlara cumhuriyetin değerlerini aktaracak değişim elçileri olarak kavramsallaştırılır. Mesleği akademisyenlik olan Aysel'in toplumda kabul görebilmesi için kendi mesleğini icra etmesine ek olarak tüm kadınlık görevlerini de yerine getirmesi beklenir. Tüm bu baskılar Aysel'in kendisini gerçekleştirebilmesini ve kendi otonom kimliğini açığa vurmasını zorlaştırır.

Aysel sahip olduğu entelektüel kimliğiyle ve bir akademisyen olarak cumhuriyetin yeni değerlerini bir sonraki kuşağa aktarma misyonunu üstlendiğinden kamusal alanda meşru bir şekilde var olabiliyor olsa da cinselliği baskılanan, varoluşu kalıplara sığdırılan, farklı ortamlarda farklı sorumlulukları olan kadınlardan yalnızca bir tanesidir. Aysel'in üzerinde kurulan bu toplumsal baskı, dönemin kadınlarının ataerkil normlara ve toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerine dayalı olarak deneyimlediği baskılarla ortak özelliklere sahiptir. Dolayısıyla Aysel'in deneyimledikleri anlatılmamış bir kadınlık tarihinin taşıyıcısı olarak değerlendirilebilir. Ayrıca Aysel'in kendisini gerçekleştirmeye çalışırken ataerkil toplum ile yaşadığı çatışma, kolektif gerçekliği yansıttığından kadınların gündelik hayat gerçekliğini anlamaya yardımcı olmaktadır.

Aysel tüm kitaplarda hayatının farklı evrelerindedir, bu esnada içinde bulunduğu toplumdaki tarihsel ve politik bağlam da sabit kalmaz. Deneyimlenmekte olan sosyal gerçekliklerin farklılaşmasıyla beraber bireylerin toplumda mücadele ettiği meseleler de değişir. Bunun sonucunda Aysel'in kendisini gerçekleştirmek amacıyla mücadele etmek zorunda kaldığı meseleler dönüşür. Dolayısıyla Aysel tüm

kitaplarda içinde bulunduđu kořullara ve deneyimlemekte olduđu toplumsal meselelere karřı farklı m¼cadele stratejileri kullanmaktadır.

3.1.1 Kadınlık Deęerlerinin Yeniden Sorgulanması

Aysel'in kadınlık deęerlerini yeniden sorgulamaya başlaması ölmeye yatmak üzere gittięi otel odasında başlar. Aysel yataęa yatıp geęmiřte yaptıklarını hatırlamaya başlayarak kendisine yüklenen sorumlulukların farkına varır. Aysel'in hayatı boyunca üstlendięi görevler ve sorumluluklar, kadın olmaktan gelen geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rolleriyle ve toplumsal baskı ile şekillenmiştir. Aysel bu yükleri ve sorumlulukları taşıyan tek kadın deęildir.

Aysel tek başına metaforik olarak ölmeye yattığı bu otel odasında Cumhuriyet ideolojisinin ona yükledięi toplumsal cinsiyet deęerlerini, okulda kendisine ve dięer kız çocuklarına dayatılan kuralları, toplumsal alanda nasıl davranması gerektięine dair kalıp yargıları tek tek sorgulamaya açar. Bu bakımdan Aysel cumhuriyetin ikinci kuřak kadını olarak Cumhuriyet tarafından kurtarıldığını ancak özgürleşmediğini anlamış olur. Nitekim Aysel eğitim alıp ülkenin gelişimi için çaba sarf edecek bir mesleki donanıma sahip olsa da kendi kararlarını alacak donanımdan yoksundur; toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı baskıdan kaynaklı olarak kendi isteklerini gerçekleřtirmek üzere hareket ettięinde ailesi ve toplum tarafından yargılanır.

Bu kapsamda, Aysel'in sorguladığı tüm meseleler yalnızca kendi hayatına ilişkin gerçeklikleri deęil, aynı zamanda kendi kuřaęının kadınlarının da gündelik hayat gerçekliğini oluřturan kořulları yansıtır.

3.1.2 Kendi Kararlarını Alabilme

Aysel kendisine empoze edilen deęerleri sorguladıktan sonra aslında başından beri kendi kararlarını almaya yetecek bir güce ve donanıma sahip olduğunu fark eder. Bu bağlamda ölmeye yatmak, Aysel'in kendisini gerçekleřtirmek için aldıęı ilk karardır. Aysel bu kararı ona bu şekilde öğretildięi için deęil, kendisi için alır.

Sonrasında, hayatında Aysel'i Aysel yapan diğer kararları da düşünür. Bu kararlar Aysel'in kendisini gerçekleştirme ve kendi otonom kimliğine sahip çıkma yolundaki dönüm noktaları olarak düşünülebilir.

Aysel kendi kararlarını aldıkça ona uygulanan toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı baskı ile mücadele edebilmeye başlar. Zira kendi kararlarını alabilmesi aynı zamanda ona dayatılan kimlikleri reddetmesi anlamına gelir. Böylece kadınlara yüklenen geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine ve ataerkil normlar doğrultusunda kadınlara yüklenen sorumluluklardan özgürleşmiş olur. Bunların aksine, kendi isteklerini ve hedeflerini gerçekleştirebilmek için çalışır.

3.1.3. Otoriteye Karşı Çıkma

Aysel kendisini gerçekleştirme yolunda adımlar atarken kendisini baskılayan sisteme karşı çıkar. Bu sistem toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı baskıyı yeniden üreten ve kadınları kalıplaşmış kimliklere hapseden sistemdir. Aysel kendi kararlarını alarak yapmak istediği ve yapmak istemediği şeyleri ayırt eder. Yapmak istemediği birçok şeyin toplumsal baskılar tarafından kadınlara dayatılan kalıplar olduğunu anlamasıyla beraber bu kalıpların dışına çıkıp kendisini kendi isteklerine göre yeniden inşa etmeyi öğrenir.

Toplumdan dışlanmayı ve toplum tarafından eleştirilmeyi göze alarak kendisinden beklenen sorumlulukları reddeder. Bu sorumluluklar onun hem ailesinin içindeki konumundan hem de sahip olduğu sosyal pozisyondan kaynaklanan sorumluluklardır. Aysel hayattaki tüm otoritelere karşı çıkarak katılması gereken davetlere katılmaz, aile içerisindeki geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet kimliğinin getirdiği sorumlulukları yerine getirmez. Buna ek olarak, Aysel'in hayattaki genel tavrı da otoriteye karşı çıkan ve otoriteyi yeniden üreten sistemlerin bir parçası olmayı reddeden bir tavidir. Bu kapsamda Aysel kendisine yöneltilen iltifatları bile bir otoriteden geldiği için almak istemez. Tüm bunların sonucunda kendisine uygulanan toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı baskı ile mücadele etmenin yolunu bulmuş olur.

3.1.4 Kendi Hikâyesini Yeniden İnşa Etme

Aysel içinde bulunduđu erkek egemen toplum yapısının kadınların hayatı üzerindeki etkisini anladıktan sonra, kadınların gerçekliğinin de toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı baskılarla şekillendirildiğini fark eder. Dayatılan gerçeklik aynı zamanda geçmişe yönelik tarihsel anlatıyı da beraberinde getirir. Söylemsel düzeyde dolaşımda olan tarihsel ve sosyal olaylar yine toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı baskı tarafından ve kadınlara dayatılan geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri tarafından şekillendirilmiştir. Bundan dolayı, Aysel'in geçmişı düşündüğünde aklına gelen ilk şeyler de sistemin yarattığı ve dayattığı gerçeklikleri yansıtır.

Aysel kendisini hatırlamaya zorlayarak geçmişteki deneyimlerini, aldığı kararları, mücadele ettiği şeyleri ve karşı çıktığı değerleri düşünür. Ona hatırlatılan tarih erkek egemen toplumun tarihidir ve Aysel'in kendi hikayesinin bu tarihsel anlatıda yeri yoktur. Bundan dolayı Aysel kendi geçmişini yeniden hatırlayarak kendi hikayesini yeniden inşa eder. Bunun sonucunda kendi hayatının hesabını yapmış ve şimdiye dek gerçekleştirdiğı şeylerle gurur duymuş olur. Kendi hikayesini hatırlayarak kendi kimliğini yeniden inşa etmek Aysel'in içinde bulunduğu arada kalmışlıktan kurtularak kendi otonomisini sağlamasını sağlar.

BÖLÜM 4

SONUÇ

Aysel'in ataerkil toplumla yaşadığı çatışmayı gözler önüne seren romanların incelenmesi sonucunda kadınların ataerkil güç eşitsizlikleriyle şekillenmiş bir dünyada yaşamaya çalıştığı anlaşılır. Kadınlar onları baskılayan ve kamusal alandan dışlayan bu güç eşitsizlikleriyle mücadele ederken ataerkil toplum yapısı tarafından baskılanmaya devam ederler. Toplumda var olan cinsiyet rejimi içerisinde kadınların takip etmesi gereken belirli kurallar ve sorumluluklar vardır. Özellikle kadınlar

kamusal alanda kabul görmek istiyorsa takip etmeleri gereken normatif kodlar bulunur ve bu normatif kodların dışına çıkan kadınlar toplumda dışlanmaya ve marjinalleştirilmeye maruz kalır. Aysel kendisi için belirlenmiş sınırları ve kalıpları aşındırma cesareti gösterir ancak o da kendisi için belirlenmiş kadınlık rolünün dışına çıktığı için hem eleştirilir hem de dışlanmaya maruz kalır.

Aysel toplumda kendisini kendi otonom kimliği ile var etmeye çalışmanın yanı sıra aynı zamanda geleneksellik ve modernitenin arasında kalmış olmanın yükünü de taşır. Bir yandan sahip olduğu entelektüel kadın kimliği ile aydınlanmanın öncüsü olmanın baskısını hisseder, bir yandan da kendisine yüklenen kadınlık rolleri sebebiyle gelenekselliğin baskısından sıyrılma konusunda çok zorlanır. Aysel yaşadığı bu baskıdan kendisini özgürleştirebilmek için hayatı boyunca ona yüklenen rolleri sorgular. Bu sorgulamayı tamamladıktan sonra kendi kararlarını alabileceğine inanarak ona yüklenen rollerden ve sorumluluklardan kendisini özgürleştirmeyi başarır. Aysel'in bir yandan kendisini gerçekleştirmeye çalışırken bir yandan da içinde bulunduğu arada kalmışlıktan sıyrılmaya çalışması kadınların toplumda kendi otonom kimlikleriyle var olmaya çalışırken karşılarına çıkan güçlüklerle örnek oluşturur. Zira kadınlara toplumsal düzlemde yüklenen roller ve sorumluluklar o kadar fazladır ki pek çok kadın toplumda kabul görebilmek için bu normatif kalıplara uymaya çalışırken kendisini ve kendi isteklerini gerçekleştirme konusunda büyük mücadeleler verir.

Bu çalışma sonucunda Adalet Ağaoğlu'nun *Dar Zamanlar* üçlemesi boyunca kendisini gösteren Aysel'in bireysel deneyimlerinin dönemsel ve bağlamsal olarak kolektif kadınlık deneyimi ile benzer özellikler taşıdığı tespit edilmiştir. Buna ek olarak, Aysel'in ataerkil toplumda yaşadığı çatışma Aysel'in kuşağındaki diğer kadınların meseleleriyle ortaklaştığından, Aysel'in kendisini gerçekleştirmek ve onu baskılayan toplumsal yapıya rağmen kendisi olup otonom kimliğini koruyabilmek için uyguladığı stratejiler hem diğer kadınların uyguladığı feminist stratejilerle hem de dönemin hali hazırda var olan kadın hareketi ile paralellikler gösterir. Bu tezde Aysel'in içinde bulunduğu ataerkil hegemonyaya ve politik baskılara karşı uyguladığı feminist direniş analiz edilmiştir. Aysel'in kendisini gerçekleştirebilmek ve kendi otonom kimliğine sahip çıkabilmek için uyguladığı stratejileri anlamak kadınların ataerkil toplum yapısının içinde kadın olmaktan kaynaklı olarak deneyimledikleri meseleleri önceleyen bir feminist bilgi birikime katkı sağlar. Son olarak, dönemin

sosyal ve politik koşulları bağlamında şekillenen bu feminist var oluş öyküsü gittikçe güçlenen kadın hareketine de ilham vererek farklı direniş tahayyüllerine alan açar.



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