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Angels or Demons: A Comparative Analysis of Motherhood Concept in World Literature

Melekler veya Şeytanlar: Dünya Edebiyatında Annelik Olgusu Üzerine Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analiz

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Abstract

From the beginning of the history of humanity, motherhood has been considered as the most sacred and constant attribute in many cultures. During periods, although women's roles and responsibilities have changed due to the social, politic and economic events, the main responsibility of a woman has always been accepted as "motherhood". With the modern era, as women participated in social spheres, mothering has been shaped in terms of expectations and prejudices. Motherhood has evolved through ages, yet, the expected notions of mothers mirror and recall similar attributes in almost all cultures: patience, self-sacrifice, compassion, charity and unconditional love towards children. There are various conducted studies based on the concept of "motherhood" in psychology, anthropology and literature. However, for this study, in order to exemplify the concept of "motherhood" defined by Adrienne Rich in her work Of Woman Born (1976), certain mother figures from the literary texts of world literature were chosen and comparatively analyzed. The aim of this study was not to generalize the concept of "motherhood" for every culture in world literature, yet, based on the findings of the analysis, it was observed that the perception of "motherhood" has been reflected in similar ways in many literary works of different cultures. Therefore, this study is exemplarily for further comparative literary studies based on motherhood and mothering in world literatures.

Keywords: Motherhood, Of Woman Born, world literature, comparative analysis

Öz

İnsanlığın başlangıcından bu yana, birçok kültürde değişmeyen ve saygınlığını yitirmeyen en kutsal özellik anneliktir. Çağlar boyunca, kadın rolleri ve sorumlulukları sosyal, politik ve ekonomik olaylardan dolayı değişmiş olsa da, kadının en önemli sorumluluğu her zaman "annelik" olarak kabul edilmiştir. Kadınlar sosyal hayatta yer aldıkları modern dönem ile birlikte, annelik, beklentiler ve önyargılara göre şekillenmiştir. Annelik, dönemler boyunca farklılık göstermiştir, ancak, beklenen annelik kalıpları, farklı kültürlerde benzer özellikleri yansıtır ve çağrıştırır: sabır, fedakârlık, merhamet, şefkat ve çocuklara karşılıksız sevgi. "Annelik" kavramı üzerine psikoloji, antropoloji ve edebiyat alanlarında çeşitli çalışmalar yapılmıştır. Ancak, bu çalışma için, Adrienne Rich'in Of Woman Born (1976) kitabında ele aldığı "annelik" olgusunu örneklendirmek adına dünya edebiyatındaki edebi eserlerden seçilen bazı anne figürleri seçilmiş ve karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, "annelik" kavramını dünya edebiyatındaki her kültür için genellemek değildir, ancak, çalışmanın analiz bulgularına bağlı olarak, "annelik" algısının yüzyıllardır değişmediği ve farklı kültürlerde bile edebi eserlerde benzer şekilde yansıtıldığı gözlemlenmiştir. Bu sebeple, bu çalışma, dünya edebiyatlarındaki annelik ve anne olguları üzerine yapılacak diğer karşılaştırmalı edebi incelemelere katkı sağlayabilecek içeriktedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Annelik, Of Woman Born, dünya edebiyatı, karşılaştırmalı analiz*

Introduction

The politics of motherhood is one of the most controversial issues, explored for ages in literature. From the beginning of the history of humanity, motherhood has been considered as the most sacred and constant attribute in many cultures. During periods, although women's roles and responsibilities have changed due to the social, politic and economic events, the main responsibility of a woman has always been accepted as "motherhood". Based on the researches and analyses on the issue of motherhood, in many patriarchal societies, women have been considered as "the main care-givers and womanhood has been associated with motherhood" (McMahon 1995; Arendell 2000). During Industrial Revolution, women were imprisoned at home for child-care (Eyer 1996: 37) and chores although motherhood was accepted as a dignified and essential duty of women who were expected to be "virtuous, gentle, devoted, asexual, limited in interests to creating a proper refuge for her family and to tenderly guiding her children along appointed ways" (Thurer 1994: 183). With modern era, as women participated in social spheres, mothering has been shaped in terms of expectations and prejudices. Motherhood has evolved through ages, yet, the expected notions of mothers mirror and recall similar attributes in almost all cultures: patience, self-sacrifice, compassion, charity and unconditional love towards children.

The primary missions of mothers can be defined as nurturing the child, taking care of children's social, economic, emotional and intellectual needs with the feelings of joy and fulfillment, a deep pleasure and pride, a personal satisfaction, love and joy (Arendell 2000). Also, motherhood is synonymous with source of power against oppression (Collins 1994) or a challenge against political order (Ruddick 1989) since the social status of women advances. In 1953, British paediatrician and child psychoanalyst Donald Woods Winnicott (1896-1971) states that motherhood involves physical care, love and emotional affection with a motherly intuition; however, according to Arendell, "mothering is neither a unitory experience for individual women nor experienced similiarly by all women" (2000: 1196).

For many feminist scholars, mothering causes two changes: biological change due to pregnancy and social changes due to restrictions of domesticity. For instance, Dally (1982) argues that motherhood is restrictive because there are many expectations of society on women maintaining particular behaviors. However, as stated by Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), when women become mothers, they are considered to take the place of God (2010: 597) as they are accepted as closer to God's power of giving life (Gray 1994: 26). Mothering does not only involve giving birth to a child but also in raising and nurturing, and therefore, mothers ethically and morally contribute to the societies: "Care and its related concerns of trust and mutual consideration seem to me to form and to uphold the wider network of relations within which issues of rights and justice, utility, and the virtues should be raised" (Held 2006: 102).

Motherhood has been widely adopted in the field of literature; however, only a few studies have yielded on the comparison of mother figures in world literature. Therefore, this research constitutes a broader area depicting motherhood based on the theories of Adrienne Rich in her book *Of Woman Born*. To illuminate this uncharted area, it would be of special interest to compare and contrast the mother figures in world literature to conclude how mothering is similarly reflected in different cultures.

Motherhood in World Literature

Since the mid-1980s, feminists discussed and analyzed the concept of "motherhood" and "mothers" as oppressed victims (Fromm 2004: 27) in patriarchal societies. As a canonical text within the fields of women's studies, Adrienne Rich's book *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976) is a groundbreaking work that involves both the examination of the author on motherhood as an "institution" and her personal reflection of maternal experience. Being a well-read female poet, a lecturer, an activist, a feminist and a mother, Rich attempted to place motherhood within a social context operated inside a patriarchal framework as she describes in "Foreword" of her book: "all women shall remain under the male control" (Rich 1995: 3).

Although mothering contributes to the status of women in society, many feminist scholars believe that motherhood imprisons women in domestic life and destroys the potentiality of females due to the greatest sacrifice in life (Firestone 1993: 68). In "Anger and Tenderness" chapter in *Of Woman Born*, Rich underscores that men determine the roles of women by manipulating and controlling motherhood and "patriarchal thought has limited female identity to its own narrow biological specifications" (1995: 27); and thus, women lose power and autonomy in their lives. Also, Rich, in "Scared Calling" adds that motherhood descends the female as a biological identity by dismissing the female individual potentials and mothering is institutionalized in such a way that "demands of women's maternal instinct rather than intelligence, selflessness rather than self-realization, relation to the others rather than the creation of self (Rich 1995: 3). In other words, this responsibility, without power, and the imprisonment of women, as idealized beings, restrict women's potentiality. Therefore, while motherhood fuses the extreme love of a child and the feeling of fulfilment, it causes loss of liberty and feelings of shame, depression, frustration and guilt.

Similar to Rich's idea of institutionalized motherhood, Sara Ruddick (1935-2011) puts it: "Under the gaze of others, mothers relinquish authority to others [and] lose confidence in their own values …Teachers, grandparents, mates, friends, employers, even an anonymous passerby' (1989: 111-112). In other words, when women become mothers, they are controlled, directed and shaped rather than being guided, supported and praised by the environment which respect a woman through and despite motherhood. Therefore, it would not be wrong to state that women gain an undeniable

power and a higher status when they become mothers, but, at the same time, they become powerless due to the expectations and rules imposed upon them by patriarchy and society in which "as mothers, women have been idealized and exploited" (Rich 1995: Introduction: 17). As a result of this patriarchal oppression and due to biological changes, mothers might have psychological changes as explained in "The Kingdom of Fathers": "Powerlessness can lead to lassitude, self-negation, guilt and depression" (Rich 1995: 13).

In "Violence: The Heart of Maternal Darkness", Adrienne Rich explains the limitation of female potentiality as: "We do not think of the power stolen from us and the power withheld from us in the name of the institution of motherhood" (1995: 25). Related to this issue, in Susan Rawlings in "To Room Nineteen" (1965), as readers, we observe the failure of intelligence of a woman. Rawlings has become a dutiful housewife after mothering which has limited her potentiality as a publicist. As she gets married and has children, she quits her job and trapped in domestic spheres; however, in her inner quest, she believes that there is a huge gap between the dominant patriarchal ideology based on women's roles and her self-identity (Quawas 2007: 113). When she decides to rent a hotel room where she can find her real identity, she questions her life, decisions and marriage. Room 19 is the only place she can escape from her other roles:

> She was no longer Susan Rawlings, mother of four, wife of Matthew, employer of Mrs. Parkers and of Sophie Traub, with these and those relations with friends, schoolteachers, and tradesman. She no longer was the mistress of the big white house and garden, owning clothes suitable for this and that activity or occasion. She was Mrs. Jones, and she was alone, and she had no past and no future (Lessing 1965: 278).

Another mother figure oppressed by the society and her family is Harriet in Doris Lessing's outstanding novel, *The Fifth Child* (1988). Harriet, the mother of five children, sacrifices her career for her family that lives in a small village outside London in the late 1970s. Her youngest child, Ben is an ill-natured and an irritating child. Struggling between both her family and Ben, Harriet becomes the scapegoat and wrongdoer the society expects her to raise the children as accepted "normal" in manners and attitudes, yet, Ben is not a normal child. Both the society and her husband blame Harriet who "fails" in child rearing. When Harriet consults Dr Gilly to solve Ben's problems, she also receives the doctor's blames as: "I'm going to come straight to the point, Mrs Lovatt. The problem is not with Ben, but with you. You don't like him very much" (2001: 124). Also, when Harriet brings Ben back from the hospital, the family accuses her of destroying the family union and accused of being "irresponsible", "selfish" and "crazy" (2001: 140). The clash between her role as a mother and the expectations of the patriarchal society causes the tragedy of both the family and herself.

For Rich, women can never have the full control of their own lives because society manipulates women about their choices including mothering: "Experience shapes us; randomness shapes us, the stars and weather, our own accomodations and rebellions, above all the society around us" (Rich 1995: Introduction: 8-9). It would be proper to state that women, as they become mothers, make choices and decide about their life in terms of the expectations of society, particularly of patriarchy. To exemplify this idea, Rich states, in "Foreword", that many women suffer from post-partum depression caused by the conflicts of mothering: "as her body has undergone irreversible changes, her mind will never be the same, her future as a woman has been shaped by the event" (Rich 1995: 2). In American writer, Charlotte Perkin Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), the protagonist (the narrator), is an intellectual woman who suffers from post-partum depression after the birth of her first child. Taken to a rented summer house for the rest-cure theraphy of Dr Mitchell, she is forbidden to write, read or interact socially. The writer criticizes how women, suffering from hysteria or depression, were trapped in mental hospitals and controlled by the patriarchy (husbnds, fathers or doctors) during Victorian period. As a result of the constraints imposed on her, the protagonist is manipulated, controlled and oppressed by her husband.

Similar to Victorian Period, in ancient Turkish culture, women were wives, daughters, mothers and care-takers of the family. Bearing and educating children were the main responsibilities of women and good mothering depended on chastity, sacrifice, loyalty and love (Yeşilyurt Gündüz 2004; Müftüler-Bac 1999) and the privilege of mothers was equated to the privilege of God (Bars 2014: 97). After the acceptance of Islam and the beginning of settled life, women were isolated from social life and decreased to domestic life (Aydın 1995: 4). During Tanzimat Reform Era (1839-1876), parallel with modernism in Ottoman, due to the changes in society, the roles and responsibilities of all family members changed. Although women became subordinate figure imprisoned in domestic spheres, they had the most essential responsibility: raising future generations in Turkish culture (Sayar 2012: 1). In literary works of Tanzimat period, it was a cultural fact that fathers were the dominant decision-makers and the strongest figure in the family and mothers were the submissive figures (Parla 2008: 54).

Fathers, in Turkish families, are the educators, guides and controllers in the family and their decisions are indisputable. Although the literature of Tanzimat period portrays mothers as sacrificing, loyal, caring and submissive, there was a conflict between the societial oppressions and women's desire of freedom due to the attempts of westernization. When fathers die, mothers feel the desire to fulfill all the wishes of their orphans (Gürbilek 2004: 62-63), and thus, they lose the control over their children who turn out to be spoiled, selfish and ungrateful as is seen in the first realist Turkish novel *İntibah* (1874) by Namık Kemal. In the novel, Ali's life and education were controlled his father, an authoritative leader of the family since the mother,

Fatma is an uneducated and sensitive woman. After the death of the father, Fatma tries to substitute the father, yet, fails to fulfil the gap (Argunşah 2016: 49). Throughout the end of the novel, the reader observes Ali as a spoiled, ungrateful and illogical man (Gürbilek 2004: 58). The clash between the son and mother leads to the tragedy of his son whose life is ruined by a prostitute.

Another mother, manipulated and controlled by patriarchy, is Bihruz Bey's mother in Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem's novel *Araba Sevdası* (1898). Bihruz is the son of a pasha and could not have a regular education until he is 16. Since his mother is not educated enough, the father preferred private tutors for his son. The only connection with the mother, whose name is never indicated, and son is based on nannies and tutors because the mother is criticized for being a weak-willed, naive and passive character who misdirects her son. As a clash between the mother and son leads to the loss of the father's heritage and tragedies of both characters.

Similar to the two Turkish mother figures, Bertha Young in Katherine Mansfield's short story, "Bliss" (1918) has no control over her own child. Although Bertha is a happy woman, leading a conventional marriage, she has neither been a real wife nor a devoted mother. Brought up by a nanny, Bertha, as an outsider, cannot touch or hold the baby without the consent of the nanny: "How absurd it was. Why have a baby if it has to be kept – not in a case like a rare, rare fiddle – but in another woman's arms?" (Mansfield 1983: 131).

In Turkish culture, initiated from Ottoman Empire, having a son consolidates the woman's status in the family (Yörükoğlu 1989: 30). The woman could only have a place in the family and society if she bore a son rather than a daughter. In Kemalettin Tuğcu's story "Kız Evlat" (1942), the story evolves around the life of a girl, Cahit. Her name has already been decided before the birth since the father expected a son rather than a girl. As Cahit's father leaves the family, the mother blames her about the divorce and tortures the little girl physically and emotionally. The story is a perfect depiction of patriarchal society and its oppression on women who are alienated, isolated and accused of failures as mothers and daughters. In other words, as explained in the above examples, women's freewill is replaced by the patriarchy's assertion.

Although in many societies women are expected to get married, have children and raise them to become proper citizens, for Arendell, "mothering is neither a unitory experience for individual women nor experienced similiarly by all women" (2000: 1196). In other words, motherhood refers to various concepts, manners and feelings which might vary in terms of personality of the women, cultural changes, social expectations and circumstances of the societies. Therefore, it would not be wrong to state that there is no definite and finite definition of "motherhood".

In *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1941), Bertolt Brecht portrayed a mother who has lost her three children during the Thirty Years' War in Europe in the 17th

century. Anna Fierling is the mother of two sons, Swiss Cheese and Eilif and a mute daughter, Kattrin. Following the nearest army, she pulls a mobile canteen full of food, loaves of bread, wares and goods for soldiers. Mother Courage, due to the economical benefits, desires the war continue and in many occasions, her business becomes more important than her children. In the play, there are various astonishing samples of her bizarre motherhood. Since she needs the help of her sons, she tries to avoid having her sons recruited for the war. When Swiss Cheese is captured, she offers a low payment and bargains about the price in exchange for his freedom, which causes the execution of Swiss. Also, she does not visit Eilif as she is dealing with her business and is unable to protect her mute daughter who sacrifices herself to save innocent townspeople. Although many critics claim that Mother Courage is a selfish, inconsiderate and a cruel mother, some consider her attitutes based on the circumstances of war. As a single mother and the breadwinner of the family, she plays the roles of both parents for survival.

Like Mother Courage, Gertrude in William Shakespeare's great tragedy *Hamlet* (1609) is viewed as an ignorant, uncaring and a selfish mother. By marrying the dead of her husband, after less than two months after, she has remarried Hamlet's uncle and causes the grief of her son who laments over his "poor father's body" (Shakespeare 1967: 43). Accused by Hamlet with adultery and lust, she ignores his son's feelings and sleeps with the uncle "with such dexterity to incestuous sheets!" (Shakespeare 1967: 44).

Based on the circumstances of traditions of a patriarchal society, Gertrude is expected to act as an obedient queen for the welfare of the society. However, in some parts of the play, her motherhood appears when she tries to persuade Claudius about the insanity of Hamlet to protect her son from the wrath of Claudius and Polonius: "His father's death, and our [Gertrude and Claudius] o'erhasty marriage" (Shakespeare 1967: 69). Also, by drinking the poison prepared for Hamlet, she sacrifices her life. Although she does not intentionally and willingly harm Hamlet, as Orah Rosenblatt in her *Gertrude in Hamlet, Critical Analysis Essays* (1992) explains, Gertrude is the reason of the terrible events that occur in the play.

In the chapter in her book *Of Woman Born* titled as "Violence: The Heart of Maternal Darkness", Rich explains that many women have become mothers "without autonomy, without choice… [and] is one of the quickest roads to a sense of having lost control" (1995: 12). For her, motherhood is oppressive which gives rise to violent behaviour caused by anger (1995: 32). Also, the responsibility imposed on mothers under the patriarchy might result in child abuse, neglect, violence, murder or even suicide of the mother.

Medea is a great example of maternal violence caused by the restricted womanhood in a patriarchal society, Athens. Produced in 431 B.C. in Athens, the play revolves around the crime of a woman, Medea who kills her sons to take revenge from

her husband Jason after he has abandoned her to marry Glauce, the daughter of King Creon. Since Medea's happiness depends on her husband rather than children, she loses her control as she learns about the wedding of her husband:

> MEDEA: Children of a hateful mother. I curse you
> And your father. Let the whole house crash (Euripides 1993: 5).

For Medea, motherhood is a painful labor, performed for the sake of a marriage and when she loses the sacred bond with her husband, "she has turned from the children and does not like to see them" (Euripides 1993: 2). It is undoubtedly astonishing her unconventional, ignorant and hateful woman who describes motherhood as: "… I would very much rather stand t[T]hree times in the front of battle than bear one child" (Euripides 1993: 9). It is apparent that Medea does not hesitate to send the poisoned robes to the princess with her own children as the gift-bearers to hurt Jason. Therefore, she is a "mother" who considers her children as a weapon to gain the strength and dominance in a patriarchal society:

> JASON: Oh, children I loved!
> MEDEA: I loved them, you did not.
> JASON: You loved them, and killed them.
> MEDEA: To make you feel pain. (Euripides 1993: 46).

A century later, the African-American writer, Toni Morrison depicted the story of an infanticide in her outstanding novel *Beloved* (1987). Similar to Medea, Sethe, in *Beloved* (1987), kills her two year old baby girl; however, for another reason: to protect her from slavery and the sadistic slave-master: "I couldn't let her nor any of em live under schoolteacher" (1997: 163). The story involves Sethe's memories when she ran to a shed to escape from the slave owner and cut the throat of her daughter with a handsaw in the shed. Since slavery ruins the parental love and belongings, Sethe has lacked the maternal love, which initiated her desire to protect her children from what she has been through as a slave woman. The love she gives to her children is the love she has lacked from her own mother: "it was risky, thought Paul D, very risky. For a used-to-be-slave woman to love anything that much was dangerous, especially if it was her children she had settled on to love" (Morrison 1997: 45).

For some readers and critics, this infanticide is intrepreted as "excessive mother love" (Raynaud 2007: 46) and her desire to protect her children from the slavery while many readers consider Sethe as a selfish and cruel mother, yet, she gives her baby the freedom she has never had: "we may have still greater pity if we imagine [Sethe] to lack the capacities to act appropriately in response to the fear and the [moral] principles" (Hogan 2011: 280). In the novel, the maternal love is shaped by the context and society: "the slave mother is interpellated first and primarily into the institution of slavery" (Hirsch 1994: 95). Killing her nameless child is the only alternative by the slave mother as explained by Nussbaum (1997:95): "seeing the delicate interplay between common human goals and the foreigness that can be created by

circumstances". Rich's idea of power of patriarchy and powerlessness of a slave mother is apparent as Sethe both tries to protect her child from slavery and desires to "outhurt the hurter" (Fultz 2003: 69).

Another tortured child in Morrison's work is a young girl, neglected by her parents due to her blue-black skin in *God Help the Child* (2015): "I thought I was going crazy when she turned blue-black right before my eyes. I know I went crazy for a minute because once- just for a few seconds – I held a blanket over her face and pressed" (Morrison 2015: 5). The mother, Sweetness, blames Lula Ann (Bride) about her color and emotionally and physically ignores the baby: "All I know is that for me, nursing her was like having a pickaninny sucking my teat. I went to bottle-feeding soon as I got home (Morrison 2015: 5). Accusing the daughter about her broken marriage, Sweetness becomes one of the cruelest mother figures in literature: "It broke our marriage to pieces. We had three good years together but when she was born she blamed me and treated Luna Ann like she was a stranger- more than that, an enemy" (Morrison 2015: 5). The novel begins with the declarations of Sweetness about her motherhood that has turned out to be the cause of Bride's lifelong tragedy:

> I wasn't a bad mother, you have to know that, but I may have done some hurtful things to my only child because I had to protect her. Had to. All because of skin privileges (Morrison 2015: 43).
>
> I know she hates me…All the little things I didn't do or did wrong. I remember when she had her first period and how I reacted. Or the times I shouted when she stumbled or dropped something… Lula Ann was a burden. A heavy one but I bore it well (Morrison 2015: 177).

A different type of violence in mothering is apparent through Susan Rawlings in Doris Lessing's "To Room Nineteen". As a modern woman in the capitalized world, Susan cancels her dreams and desires to bear and nurture her four children, which initiates the conflict between her self-identity and society's expectations (Quawas 2007: 111). Feeling that her life has become senseless, she commits suicide in a hotel room she had rented at Fred's Hotel:

> Rather than continue to live in a radically alienated position, she chooses the only healing she can find through death. She chooses death over compromise with the crushing image of the ideal Woman, the monolithic scripted self which patriarchy has called upon women to produce and create (Quawas 2007: 111).

Although Susan has made her choices with freewill, she has lacked the sense to bear the consequences. In other words, she has lost her freedom, self-identity and career because of "motherhood". This clash between an endless sacred joy of motherhood and the oppressions of the society or environment is the core conflict of

the mothers as explained by Rich in "Anger and Tenderness", based on her own experience:

> My children cause the most exquisite suffering of which I have any experience. It is the suffering of ambivalence: the murderous alternation between bitter resentment and raw-edged nerves, and blissful gratification and tenderness (1995: 1).

In *Of Woman Born*, Adrienne Rich describes one of the female tragedy as the breakdown of emotional connection and intimacy between mothers and daughters. Calling this loss as "matrophobia," in "Motherhood and Daughterhood", Rich explains the term as "the fear not of one's mother or of motherhood but of becoming one's mother" (1995: 24). For Rich (1995), the daughter must alienate herself from the mother to create her own identity. However, she also states that the personalities of mothers and daughters blur or overlap, which later causes alienation and estrangement of daughters from their mothers:

> There are women who are satisfied enough with their lives to want to reincarnate themselves in a daughter, or at least welcome her without disappointment; they would like to give their child the same chances they had, as well as those they did not have: they will give her a happy youth (Beauvoir 2010: 637).

One of the best example of mother-daughter clash is seen in *Aşk-ı Memnu* (1900), the novel of the noteworthy Turkish novelist Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil. In the novel, Firdevs is in clash with her daughters (Bihter and Peyker) and considers them as a burden in her life. She believes that becoming a mother has destroyed her freedom, stole her youth and beauty and turned her to an empty being. Although Firdevs is a middle-aged woman, she still considers herself as young and beautiful (Aksoy 2004: 196). Also, she is obsessed with money and social status and has an unconventional style as a mother. She wears attractive clothes, scolds her daughters, considers them as rivals and pretends to be a young woman. When Adnan, a wealthy old man, proposes Bihter, Firdevs is frustrated and envious, which initiates the clash between the mother and daughter. In order to control her daughter's new life with the old yet rich man, Firdevs moves to the mansion. Realizing the forbidden love between Behlül and her daughter, she plans to match-make Behlül and Nihal and leads the death of her own daughter.

Firdevs recalls Mrs Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), a novel which is a reflection of Victorian attitudes based on materialism, class distinction and arranged marriages. Similar to Firdevs, Mrs Bennet is portrayed as a narrow-minded woman who is obsessed with her daughters' marriage with wealthy upper-class men: "If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield", said Mrs Bennet to her husband, "and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for" (Austen 1993: 7). She fears the humiliation that her daughters might suffer if they cannot have proper marriages. When her two most deserving daughters get married,

she accomplishes her duties as a Victorian mother: "HAPPY FOR ALL her maternal feelings was the day on which Mrs Bennet got rid of her two most deserving daughters" (Austen 1993: 259).

Another clashing mother-daughter relation is observed in Füruzan's short story "Piyano Çalabilmek" (1971). As one of the significant Turkish writers of 1970s, Füruzan has a unique style based on the themes about life, family ties and friendship. In her many novels, the common theme is the clash between mothers and daughters. In the story, the protagonist Müberra is from a wealthy family, but after the loss of her husband, marries a man form a middle-class. Leading an unstatisfied life, Müberra has a nostalgia for her past, which causes her alienation from her daughter. In the story, Müberra constantly criticizes her daughter who is stranger to her mother's feelings and desires (1971: 36). However, Müberra and her memories seem so distanced to the daughter that she considers her mother belonging to a distant world, a world apart from her father (1971: 43). To conclude, it appears that mothers like Firdevs, Mrs Bennet and Müberra consider "motherhood" as a social status, an acceptance in patriarchal societies or an opportunity to compensate their frustrations in life.

Conclusion

The issue of "motherhood" has been one of the most controversial topics in psychology, philosophy, social sciences and literature and it refers to similar concepts for many cultures: excessive joy, unconditional love, compassion, sacrifice, a challenging task or a sacred burden. During Industrial Revolution, women were imprisoned in domestic spheres when they become mothers for child-care and chores. However, in modern period, after women participated in social spheres, mothering has evolved and expanded. With the rise of feminism during the 1980s, the concepts of "motherhood" and "mothering" became a debatable issue for researchers. Within this scope, Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born* (1976) is accepted as a groundbreaking piece, which explains the concepts of motherhood and mothering.

For Rich, patriarchy controls, manipulates and oppresses women when they become mothers. It would not be wrong to state that this "institutionalized" motherhood is shaped by the patriarchal hegemony, which turns women into passive, domesticated, weak and powerless beings: the imprisoned Susan Rawlings ("To Room Nineteen") and the guilty mother Harriet (*The Fifth Child)*. Moreover, according to Rich, although women gain divinely power by bearing a child, patriarchy dominates women and limits their potentiality by imposing roles upon mothers: the depressed mother ("The Yellow Wallpaper"), Fatma (*İntibah)*, Bihruz Bey's mother (*Araba Sevdası)*, Bertha ("Bliss") and Cahit ("Kız Evlat").

In her book, Rich underscores that motherhood cannot be experienced similarly by all women and due to circumstances, some mothers might lack compassion, sacrifice, consideration and dignity: the selfish and greedy mother Anna Fierling (*Mother Courage*) and ignorant mother Gertrude (*Hamlet*). After women become mothers, according to Rich, the patriarchal oppression leads to violence, anger, child neglect or suicide: the murderer mother Medea (*Medea*), the slave-mother Sethe (*Beloved)*, the abusing mother Sweetness (*God Help the Child*) and depressive mother Susan ("To Room Nineteen"). Also, as explained by Rich, the clash between the endless joy and depression causes the conflict between mothers and daughters: Firdevs (*Aşk-ı Memnu*), Mrs Bennet *(Pride and Prejudice*) and Müberra ("Piyano Çalabilmek").

As a conclusion, the aim of this study is not to generalize the concept of "motherhood" for all cultures. However, the implications of this study, based on Rich's *Of Woman Born*, highlight that in many cultures, "motherhood" is depicted and portrayed in accordance with societal expectations and patriarchy in world literature. It would be proper to conclude that motherhood and mothering mirror and recall the similar implications and concepts in many cultures, particularly in male dominated societies for many centuries.

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