

**DISSIDENT READING OF *THE TRAGEDY OF MARIAM* AND *KURBAN*
IN TERMS OF CULTURAL MATERIALISM¹**

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ABSTRACT

Theatre has always been considered one of the mirrors that reflect the traditions and practices of societies. Through the performances of the characters on stage, the real life of humans, the ideological meanings, the power relations, and the resistance that individuals within a society put up against the system are unfolded. Feminine and masculine roles and rules coded for each sex are also transmitted through the attributed acts of the characters. Accordingly, in this paper, the ideological stance of women is discussed with regards to the expression of power both in Renaissance drama and Turkish Republican drama. The challenging attitude that female characters adopt against the masculine authority is examined through incorporating dissidence in interpretation with the aim of social change in many fields such as religion and femininity. To achieve this aim, the plays *The Tragedy of Mariam* by Elizabeth Cary and *Kurban* by Güngör Dilmen are analyzed with reference to the principles of cultural materialism as the textual analysis of the plays in question demonstrates dissident reading in the form of negation of the dominant structures of each society.

Keywords: Gender Perception, The Tragedy of Mariam, *Kurban*, Cultural Materialism, Ideology

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INTRODUCTION

Woman has always been forced to repress her subjectivity both in private and public domains under the influence of the public opinion that the patriarchal ideology manipulates on the purpose of satisfying male ego. Based on the archaic traditions and clichés associated with woman, man is considered the authority who puts in a claim for controlling and containing woman under the pre-established regulations. Despite the fact that patriarchy takes on the might of public awareness, women have the potential to protest against the system and subvert the negative perception of feminine stance (as passive, silent, and submissive) in domestic and external spheres. In other words, as Giddens regards, “power relations are always two-way; that is to say, however subordinate an actor may be in a social relationship, the very fact of involvement in that relationship gives him or her a certain amount of power over the other” (qtd. in Hamilton 394). In this regard, cultural materialism argues for the possibility of subversion that could be achieved through turning the texts into the sites of struggle (Sinfield, *Cultural Politics* 56). Stated in other words, as a literary and cultural theory, cultural materialism “interrogates the material circumstances in which culture is produced and disseminated, with a particular focus on the ways texts are both shaped by and contest exploitative relationships” (Cuddon 176).

The Tragedy of Mariam, written and published by Elizabeth Cary in 1613, addresses the issue of women during the Renaissance period in which they were externalized from the outer world and forced to comply with public roles such as obedience, virtue, and silence that were attributed to female sex by the patriarchal system of England. The play is possible to be interpreted from two opposite perspectives: on the one hand, it supports the patriarchal ideology of the period (even Queen Elizabeth undergirds the system without any sense of sisterhood) in that the protagonist is portrayed as the one who deserves punishment because of her disobedience against and resistance to her husband. On the other hand, the play reveals the subversive power of woman through enabling her to resist the manners of the expected female characteristics. Marian repudiates the authority of her husband at the risk of her life: her uprising and persistence ensure her death. While she could neither escape from her fate nor change the ideology of the society she lives in, she becomes a heroine whose death liberates her from the unbearable condition she has been imprisoned in and mundifies the kingdom from patriarchal misjudgments. The play also presents Salome and Graphina as the representations of a strong and self-conscious woman representing the dissident, and an oppressed and repressed woman who has accepted to be confined within the rules that their male masters operate on her.

On the other side, *Kurban*, written by Güngör Dilmen in 1967, is regarded as one of the most remarkable plays of Turkish Republican theatre. The play tells the tragedy of an Anatolian woman, Zehra who resists her husband’s passion to bring a second wife. As a consequence of the failure in her attempts to dissuade her husband, Zehra chooses to kill her children and herself as emancipation. The stoutheartedness that Zehra does display in performing this terrible decision makes the play a tragedy. Despite the roles cast for her sex as deaf and dumb, Zehra, forced to share her husband with another woman, does protest against the situation the whole society in which she lives has naturalized.

While the play portrays Zehra as a challenging figure of the period she lives in, it also concentrates on the other female character, Gülsüm who exemplifies the passivity of femininity on any ground. In this sense, the play handles the woman issue from two different perspectives: the one which enables the heroine to achieve dissidence, and the other which legitimates the suppression of women by patriarchal authority.

CULTURAL MATERIALISM AND *THE TRAGEDY OF MARIAM AND KURBAN*

The term is generally regarded as an alternative to New Historicism which deals with the representation of power and interaction between state power and cultural forms. Both movements, according to Greenblatt, “represent [...] a world which is hierarchical, authoritarian, hegemonic, and unsubvertable” (245); therefore, he focuses on the impossibility of any change in the system under the name of subversion. However, under the influence of the theories by Williams, who emphasized the “co-occurrence of subordinate, residual, emergent, alternative, and oppositional cultural forces alongside the dominant” (qtd. in Sinfield, *Faultlines* 9), Sinfield, as a cultural materialist, has approached the issue from a different standpoint; this is all to say, dissident reading.

According to Sinfield, the texts discussed within cultural materialism enables reading with an attempt to represent the dissident and offer an optimistic indication of potentiality of subversion because “cultural materialists seek to find instances of dissidence, subversion and transgression that are relevant in the contemporary political struggles” (Bertens 188). Accordingly, while the New Historicists argue for the impossibility of subversion and dissidence in a literary text – since it is regarded as the supportive of the dominant ideology –, cultural materialists emphasize the role of dissident along with the dominant ideology. As Williams states, “there are always residual and emergent strains within a culture that offer alternatives to hegemony” (qtd. in Bertens 186). Put it differently, the dominant ideology is always under the pressure of dissident beliefs. That said, Sinfield, in *Cultural Politics*, emphasizes that “cultural materialism is much more optimistic about the possibility of change and is willing at times to see literature as a source of oppositional values” (184). In the general sense, cultural materialists do negate the traditional and subsistent literary criticism which is unable to go beyond the replication of the dominant ideology; instead, via a different method, cultural materialists focus on the marginal ideologies that resist the dominant ones.

Zehra, the protagonist of *Kurban*, is married to Mahmut who is a peasant in Karacaören Village of Anatolia, and with their two children they live in peace and quiet. The happiness of the family begins to be shattered when Mahmut falls in love with a fifteen-year-old girl, Gülsüm and decides to bring her as a fellow wife. The course of events in the play does progress by the time Zehra decides to struggle to dissuade Mahmut rather than resign to her fate. As an Anatolian woman, Zehra is the example of a submissive wife – at least at the beginning of the play – under a male-dominated traditional society which maintains the exorbitance of men while restricting women in the patriarchal family order. Zehra also has all characteristics of a married woman; she makes the best of a mother; her initial aim is to maintain her children from dangers and also she is compassionate both for her children and for her husband.

She knows her responsibilities and restrictions, and thus she conforms to patriarchal rules to the bitter end. However, in due course, Zehra shows her power; behind her silence and serenity there underlies a powerful and decisive woman. No matter how difficult the situation is, Zehra cannot approve the wrong; rather, she is in pursuit of absolute fact through resistance.

Being away from justice and equality, traditional codes are regarded as taboos which are forbidden to be challenged by individuals. Women, in such a male-oriented society, are characterized by passivity and they are forced to obey to the rules that males have assessed for them. In *Kurban*, the patriarchal oppression makes its presence felt by the time Mahmut and Gülsüm's brother, Mirza discuss about the bride price for Gülsüm. Meantime, Zehra is exposed to listen to their bargain over the fifteen-year-old girl. Neither Zehra, nor the children can express their objection to the decision that Mahmut has taken. On the other side, Gülsüm is not informed about the matter, and top it all off, she is not even asked whether she gives consent to marry Mahmut or not because the dominant ideology does not allow Gülsüm to state her opinion about the situation she is in. As for Mahmut, initially he is depicted as a mannerly and quiet husband towards his wife and a compassionate father towards his children. No matter how tender-minded he seems to be, Mahmut mirrors the male-oriented mentality, and the containment of patriarchal power and gender ideology is manifested through his dreams concerning his son's future:

MAHMUT: Clever is my son, Murat.

He will be a decent man, right?

He will study in big cities

Then, he will change us

He will tell us: "Be a man, live humanely"

Then only then we will live humanely¹ (Translation mine 1.1. 51-6).

Corruption of moral values, gender segregation and male superiority manifest itself in Mahmut's speech. Although he is aware of their incorrect way of living, he still believes that the only way to save them from deterioration could be achieved through his son, not through his daughter and the male dominance is clearly indicated through the dialogue between Mirza and Mahmut:

MAHMUT: “Well, Mirza... I feel free to you... I want to know, what is her impression?”

MİRZA: She is only fifteen, is it possible for such a girl to have any impression?”

MAHMUT: At her age, she could be fragile.

MİRZA: How can I express her real feelings before being certain about the marriage?”

MAHMUT: Can’t you speak out her thought?”

MİRZA: We are... in such matters....the Ottomans in some degree² (Translation mine 1.1.152-8).

Despite many regulations concerning the status of women in the society, the condition which Gülsüm is subject to suffer reveals the fact that laws take shape with regards to the common perception of the society, and in the present case Gülsüm cannot escape from being treated as a possession. Gülsüm, as a rival for Zehra, is displayed as direct opposite to Zehra; despite the maturity and the maternal nature of Zehra, Gülsüm is characterized as a naive and inexperienced Anatolian girl; she represents a timid, weak, and feeble minded young woman. She is the only character who never speaks throughout the play. In other words, she is portrayed as the one who is supposed to keep quiet, submit to male ordinance, and accept the patriarchal dominance. She is forced to become the second wife of an already married man. Thus, she becomes the symbol of the Anatolian girls whose happiness is put up for sale.

Despite the assumptions that are based on the religious misapprehension, Islam regards that women and men are created from a single soul. From Islamic perspective, woman is a creditable being and she deserves respect, affection, mercy and kindness. Apart from that, Islam claims that women and men have equal rights although their duties and aims may differ. However, Muslim societies, which are based on the patriarchal system, deliberately distort the real value of women in the Islamic world. Nonetheless, the Koran crystallizes the misconception regarding the place of woman by addressing all human beings without any discrimination: “O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of God is the most Godwary among you. Indeed, God is All-knowing, All-aware” (qtd. in Shomali and Skudlarek 122). Besides, the Prophet Muhammed is reported to have said that “All people are equal, as the teeth of a comb. There is no claim of merit between an Arab and non-Arab, or a white over a black person or a male over a female. Only God fearing people merit a preference with God” (qtd. in Jawad 5). However, Mahmut, like almost all men adopting the male-dominant ideals, legitimates his desire to have a second wife. He believes that religion allows him to have more than one wife. On the basis of the customs that legitimate the acts and decisions of men, Mahmut reasons no drawback in bringing a second wife to the house.

ZEHRA: I'm not worth a shit, is that right?

MAHMUT: I cannot do without her, she conquered my heart.

ZEHRA: I'm not worth a shit, is that right? (Aloud)

MAHMUT: You're different. My first love, the mother of my children.

ZEHRA: What else apart from being a mother?

MAHMUT: As if I would be the first man to bring home a second wife³ (Translation mine 1.1. 566-71).

The last statement of Mahmut demonstrates the general perception of women in a male-dominated society; he is neither the first nor the last to have a second wife. He is determined to persist in his action because he gets support from the other men of the village. When they try to persuade Zehra to open the door to Gülsüm, Muhtar, as the headman, legitimates the situation: "Even our Prophet took wives over our beloved Hatice / A man should marry as many women as his strength can master" (Translation mine 1.1. 576). Such a perspective is related to the misevaluation of Islam; as mentioned above, Islam neither segregates genders nor allows women to be oppressed. According to sharia law, males could get married to more than one woman. However, the main reason for polygamy was to protect women from dangers, not to satisfy the passions of men. Likewise, Kadınlar – the women stand for the Chorus and Halime, the leader of them – attempt to convince Zehra to accept the situation and keep silent. The effect of oppression that patriarchy and customs apply on women is concretized in the personalities of these women who react in a usual way and feel nothing wrong in Gülsüm's acceptance as a second wife.

HALİME: Initially, it would be difficult, but soon you will get used to the situation.

THE WOMEN: You will, once you resolve to get used to it.

ZEHRA: Would it be ever possible to get used to it?

FIRST WOMAN: You are neither the first nor the last woman to experience this situation.

THIRD WOMAN: It has been legitimated by men.

THE WOMEN: By men.

ZEHRA: There is another law in my heart, I will pursue it.

SECOND WOMAN: This is the destiny of thousands of women in Karacaören, you will change it?

ZEHRA: Save your breath. It is wrong for me. Thousands are thousands, me the one. I can share my food and house, but never my husband⁴ (Translation mine 2. 39-50).

Zehra would only live in a pure and right world; otherwise, it is possible for her to kill her children rather than bring them up in such a wicked world. There is no other way for her to maintain her identity except killing herself and her children. For the sake of her value judgment, Zehra disputes with the people around her, and instead of getting involved in this order she prefers to sacrifice both herself and her children. Although sacrificing her children might be considered felonious, Marian is indeed determined to save them from patriarchal understanding.

ZEHRA: Masculinity has not been worth a shit in Karacaören,

such a pitch that it is under-representation,

My daughter, Zeynep should not be a woman.

My son, Murat, who felt pity for the sacrificial lamb, should not become a man.

They should remain in the sky of God with their purity⁵ (Translation mine 2.

583-90).

As a background to *The Tragedy of Mariam*, it is appropriate to regard Herod as an opportunist who gets married to Mariam in order to secure the Jewish monarchy. In order to get the power and status, he has Mariam's grandfather and brother killed. By the time he is called to Rome to answer the accusations, he orders one of his men to kill Mariam in case he dies; (consumed with jealousy), he thinks that if he cannot possess her, then nobody else can. Such an egocentric perspective of Herod demonstrates how a woman's life could be disregarded easily. Herod's attitude towards Mariam and her family thus might be interpreted as a proof for his despotism; killing her family members – just for the sake of his own benefit – is sufficient to make him a tyrant. When she hears of his attempt to compel her life to him, she comes to realize the facts concerning the egocentric and cruel attitude of her husband. The Renaissance period regards marriage as an institution that legitimates property arrangements and inheritance for male benefit. As a matter of the fact that Protestantism encourages patriarchal authority, and the social hierarchy is justified through the assumption that “a chain of authority running from God to the husband to the individual, and from God to the monarch to the subject” (Sinfield, *Faultlines* 44). The legitimation of male power, which is derived from the idea that the monarch and men are the head of the state and the family, fulfills the role of God on earth; because men are regarded as the representatives of God in the world, thus the patriarchal oppression on women is internalized and approved readily. Furthermore, the Christian doctrine does legitimate total submission and obedience to male sex. According to the Bible, woman must be obedient to her husband under all circumstances; as a wife and as a mother, she must always be at her husband's disposal. Under the pretext of religion, St. Paul claims, “Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord; for the husband is the head of the women, as Christ is the head of the Church.” (qtd. in Wang 1). Therefore, women's passive and submissive stance in private and public domains are legitimated and maintained both by the state and the religion.

The containment of the ideology dominant in Renaissance England is exemplified through the characterization of the slave girl. In *The Tragedy of Mariam*, Graphina embodies the ideal values that a woman should have in the eyes of patriarchy: obedience, silence, and chastity are all present in the portrayal of Graphina. Through the dialogue between Graphina and her lover, Pheroras, the blind confidence of Graphina in her lover is realized:

GRAPHINA: You know my wishes ever yours did meet:

If I be silent, 'tis no more but fear
 That I should say too little when I speak:
 But since you will my imperfections bear,
 In spite of doubt I will my silence break:
 Yet might amazement tie my moving tongue,
 But that I know before Pheroras' mind (2.1. 48-54).

The emphasis here is on her conscious choice of being oppressed and guided in all spheres of life. "Graphina is usually dismissed as a conventional, subordinate woman, a one-dimensional character whose dutiful silence serves as a foil for Mariam's outspoken independence" (Wolfe 22). Total submission and disowning her own self in order to please her lover unconditionally makes Graphina the only ideal woman in the play in terms of patriarchal understanding of being the ideal woman.

As for Mariam, self-awareness about the real emotions she feels toward her husband becomes apparent when she receives the false news regarding the death of Herod by Caesar. Having realized the fact that she is not satisfied with her marriage and that she does not approve his unjust authority, Mariam is now determined enough to express her true emotions in public rather than pretend to be sorry for the death of her husband: "Oft have I wished that I from him were free: Oft have I wished that he might lose his breath, Oft have I wished his carcass dead to see" (1.1. 16-8). Although she knows that her confession is not approved by the society, Mariam, through these lines, indicates her stance against oppression not only by her husband but by the society in which she lives as well. For certain, Mariam's confession indicates her oppression by Herod; she was isolated and closed indoors without any right to express herself especially neither in the private or in the public domain. However, considering her exposure to espouse everything Herod has enforced on, it is overtly stated in the play that Mariam has never thought of leaving her husband or loving someone other than Herod:

MARIAM: Then rage and scorn had put my love to flight,

That love which once on him was firmly set:
 Hate hid his true affection from my sight,
 And kept my heart from paying him his debt.
 And blame me not, for Herod's jealousy
 Had power even constancy itself to change:
 For he, by barring me from liberty,

To shun my ranging, taught me first to range.
 But yet too chaste a scholar was my heart,
 To learn to love another than my lord:
 To leave his love, my lesson's former part,
 I quickly learned, the other I abhorred (1.1. 19-30).

Though initially Mariam does attempt to dissemble her real feelings, when she learns that Herod is indeed alive, she realizes that it seems no longer possible for her to live and endure the abuses of her husband. Mariam's reaction to Sohemus' news regarding Herod's return anytime soon reveals her anxiety not because she is afraid of Herod, but because she knows that she could no longer tolerate him. Sohemus is stumped by the courage Mariam has shown, and he attempts to appease and convince Mariam to force herself to be happy with Herod as before again. However, Mariam rejects wearing a mask of submission:

MARIAM: Foretell the ruin of my family,
 Tell me that I shall see our city burned:
 Tell me I shall a death disgraceful die,
 But tell me not that Herod is returned (3.3. 127-30).

I will not to his love be reconciled,
 With solemn vows I have forsworn his bed.

SOHEMUS: But you must break those vows.

MARIAM: I'll rather break
 The heart of Mariam. Cursed is my fate:
 But speak no more to me, in vain ye speak
 To live with him I so profoundly hate (3.3. 133-38).

The Chorus, which embraces the patriarchal order, criticizes Mariam for her open-heartedness in expressing her true feelings. In accordance with the traditional ideals of the society, the Chorus condemns Mariam for unchastity; instead of remaining silent and obedient, Mariam resists her husband's oppression and repression, and the Chorus claims that such an act is not unwarrantable:

THE CHORUS: 'Tis not so glorious for her to be free,
 As by her proper self restrained to be",
 "No sure, their thoughts no more can be their own,
 And therefore should to none but one be known (3.3. 219-20).

The Chorus argues for the male power by emphasizing the need for women's subordination through keeping them silent to fit for the purpose of not to be heard in public by the others. The Chorus, as "the omniscient moral voice of the play" (Wang 6), focuses on the importance of virtue which is directly related to the reputation of a woman as long as she dedicates her mind and her body to her husband. Through the speech of the Chorus, the dominance of the patriarchal power and the normalization of female submission is emphasized. That said, within the textual analysis of the play, the impossibility of total subversion in terms of women's status is revealed; the dominant ideology is contained within the utterances of the Chorus. However, the courage Mariam does show against her husband and the society might be regarded as a positive attempt to represent the dissident. Adamant on what she says, Mariam never thinks of retreating; she rather resolves to refuse his sexual attempts, through which she manifests her determinance against the masculine perception of woman as a commodity. She is aware of her physical beauty; yet she does not take the advantage of her femininity; instead, she prefers making use of her mind: "I know I could enchain him with a smile: And lead him captive with a gentle word" (3.3. 163-64).

Salome, the sister of Herod, is also regarded as a dissident who reveals her conflicting emotions about her husband heartily. Being in love with Silleus, Salome is torn between her husband, Constabarus and her lover, Silleus. Antithetical to the Renaissance ideals, Salome decides to divorce her husband and announce her love with Silleus:

SALOME: On Constabarus' now detested face,
 Then had I kept my thoughts without remove:
 And blushed at motion of the least disgrace:
 But shame is gone, and honor wiped away,
 And impudency on my forehead sits:
 She bids me work my will without delay,
 And for my will I will employ my wits (1.4.290-296).

By this way, Salome becomes the voice of the dissident; she never abstains from expressing her real feelings; rather, she stands against the common perception of women in a patriarchal society. Salome criticizes the unjust treatment of women before the law and religion which prioritize men in marriage and in other areas of life. "Salome...speaks forcefully for a woman's right to divorce and for evenhanded justice for unhappy wives" (Stobaugh 89).

SALOME: He loves, I love; what then can be the cause
 Keeps me from being the Arabian's wife?
 It is the principles of Moses' laws (1.4.297-299).

A separating bill might free his fate [...]
 Why should such privilege to man be given?

Or given to them, why barred from women then?
 Are men than we in greater grace with Heaven?
 Or cannot women hate as well as men?
 I will be the custom-breaker: and begin
 To show my sex the way to freedom's door (1.3. 303-310).

However, her husband's reaction to the words of Salome proves traditional understanding of women. Through his speech, Constabarus exemplifies the patriarchal viewpoint; he is bewildered due to the unexpected resistance and self-expression of Salome. Within such a society in which male supremacy and transcendence are the principle, Salome's courage to confess her real thoughts is unusual. Therefore, he attempts to warn and discipline Salome by predicating patriarchal privilege on religion:

CONSTABARUS: Didst thou but know the worth of honest fame,
 How much a virtuous woman is esteemed,
 Thou wouldest like hell eschew deserved shame,
 And seek to be both chaste and chastely deemed.
 Our wisest prince did say, and true he said,
 A virtuous woman crowns her husband's head (1.6.391-396).

Are Hebrew women now transformed to men?
 Why do you not as well our battles fight,
 And wear our armour? (1.6. 421-23).

Salome, as the rival of Mariam, achieves to deceive Herod concerning the assumed unchastity of Mariam; for this aim, Salome invents a lie concerning Mariam's betrayal of Herod with Sohemus during his absence. Condemning Mariam because of her alleged unfaithfulness, Herod decides to have Mariam beheaded without listening to her explanation. Mariam could not escape death. However, she does not object to the calumniation; rather, she prefers to liberate herself – through death – from the abuses of Herod:

MARIAM: Am I the Mariam that presum'd so much,
 And deem'd my face must needs preserve my breath?
 Ay, I it was that thought my beauty such,
 As it alone could countermand my death (4.8. 524-27).

Mariam is ready to compensate for her candidness and resistance to her husband at the cost of her own life. The easy manner of Mariam is related to her reliance on her innocence and chastity. When Nuntio, the messenger, informs Herod about the death of Mariam, it is understood that she appreciates her death as a kind of emancipation:

NUNTIO: She told that her death was too too good,
 And that already she had lived too long:
 She said, she shamed to have a part in blood
 Of her that did the princely Herod wrong (5.1. 41-44).

Mariam could not achieve total subversion; however, she becomes the voice of the dissident. She is unable to justify her rights against the false inculpation within the patriarchal system. Since patriarchy requires her to be silent and submissive, she cannot find a way to get herself out of this situation. In such a world, she is left to her own fate which is shaped by man's mode of thinking, and she is given the death sentence. However, "Mariam [...] breaks women's silence, reexamining conventional attitudes toward femininity, marriage, and political power" (Wolfe 19) by rejecting to maintain the satisfaction of male ego. By contrast, her unresisting stance against her death is a sort of freedom from the patriarchal prison.

CONCLUSION

Dissidence implies "refusal of an aspect of the dominant, without prejudging an outcome" (Sinfield *Faultlines* 49) and the dissident potential originates from the conflict and the contradiction that the social pattern constructs within while it strives for the maintenance of itself. Herewith, dominant ideologies are always under the pressure of promoting their position as the only way over against multiple uproars. The presentation and representation of women on stage during the English Renaissance and Turkish Republican periods seem to be identical in that both represent the oppressed and restricted position of women. Although the texts do serve dominantly as the instruments of the dominant ideology, through cultural materialist perspective, they have been examined in terms of dissident reading that does enable the reader to recognize the marginalized facet of the society. As Sinfield remarks in *Faultlines* "The strength of ideology derives from the way it gets to be common sense. [...] As the world shapes itself around and through us, certain interpretations of experience strike us as plausible: They fit with what we have experienced already, and been confirmed by others around us" (30). In other words, ideology is produced, and it takes shape by the society which prioritizes the dominant ideology assuming that what people live is a social reality. As ideology is not given yet created deliberately, the restoration of order, resistance, and dissidence are possible as well. In a sense, women has the potential to contravene the authority and become subversive.

Kurban portrays the decisive stance of a woman against the patriarchal ideology that has attempted to enslave her sense of self. Rather than conform to the traditional and unfoundational principles of the male authority, Zehra becomes the heroine through her act of rebellion. *The Tragedy of Mariam* presents a stance against patriarchal and traditional attitudes, including the perception to categorize women under certain roles. The play displays a different point of view of female agency, questioning the masculine power which controls and manipulates society. Mariam and Salome challenge the boundaries of their predefined roles in the society, and they achieve to construct and control their own subjectivity rather than submit to their husbands.

The female characters analyzed within different aspects manifest female submission to, or uprising against patriarchal conventions. Although each play is considered a tragedy telling the inevitable end of a woman, from the perspective of cultural materialism, both plays indeed reveal the struggle that the protagonists put up against the system: Mariam's, Zehra's, and her children's death liberate them from the prison that male authority put them into under the pretext of their right to sovereign women. While the speech by Graphina and the Chorus in *The Tragedy of Mariam* and the submissive stance of Gülsüm and the Women in *Kurban* underline the containment ideology of patriarchal power, Mariam, Salome, and Zehra construct their own voice to strengthen the possibility to change the ideology that societies impose on women.

Notes

1. MAHMUT: Pek akıllıdır Muradım.

Büyük adam olacak ilerde, değil mi oğlum?

Okuyacak, uzak büyük kentlere gidecek.

Sonar gelip bu köyleri yıkacak başımıza.

“Biraz adam olun, insan gibi yaşayın!” diyecek,

Biz de o zaman insan gibi yaşayacağız.

2. MAHMUT: Şey Mirza...Seninle rahat konuşuluyor...

Bilmek isterim, kızın gönlü nicedir.

MİRZA: On beş yaşındaki kızın gönlü ne olacak?

MAHMUT: Asıl o yaşlarda duygulu olurlar.

MİRZA: İyi ama şu işi bir sonuca bağlamadan kızın gizli duygusunu nasıl açarım sana?

MAHMUT: Niye açamazmışsın kızın düşüncesini?

MİRZA: Biz bu konularda biraz...Osmanlıyız da...

3. ZEHRA: Ben neyim evin içinde?

MAHMUT: Onsuz yapamam, Gülsüm kanıma buyruk.

ZEHRA: Ben neyim bu evin içinde?

MAHMUT: Senin yerin ayrı. İlk göz ağrım, çocuklarımın anası.

ZEHRA: Çocukları doğurmuş olmaktan öte yerim yok mu evin içinde?

MAHMUT: Eve yeni bir kadın getiren erkek ben miyim köyde?

4. HALİME: Önceleri zor gelir, ama alışırın.

KADINLAR: Alışmayı usuna koyunca bir kez.

ZEHRA: Bunun alışması olur mu? Ben...

I.KADIN: Üstüne kuma gelen ne ilk ne de son kadınsın sen.

III:KADIN: Yasası böyle kurulmuş erkeklerce.

KADINLAR: Erkeklerce...

ZEHRA: Başka bir yasa var benim yüreğimde, onu izleyeceğim.

II:KADIN: Binlerce Karacaören’de binlerce kadının yazgısı bu, sen mi değiştireceksin?

ZEHRA: Nice çoğaltsanız örneği, boş...Bana aykırı.

Binler bin, ben birim.

Aşımı ocağımı paylaşırım herkesle, paylaşmam erkeğimi.

5. ZEHRA: Erkeklik öyle aşağılandı ki Karacaören'de,

Öyle örneksiz kaldı ki

Zeynep'im kadın olmamalı.

Murat'im,

Kurbanlık koça acıyan Murat'im

Erkek olmamalı.

Gelişmemiş iki yıldız gibi kalmalı onlar

Tanrı'nın mavi bağrında.

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