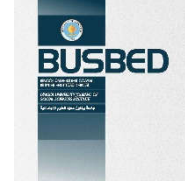


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BLOWING ON THE WOUND: A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY ON NON-FICTION LITERARY GENRE; A MEMOIR, *I AM MALALA* (2013)

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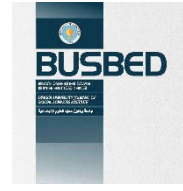
ABSTRACT


Memoir which is one of the most common genre in the literary field has a special place in terms of presenting historical and social facts. A memoir is not the history itself but one of the aiding tools to understand history. This particular genre primarily focuses on the events and the phenomena that leaves traces in a personal account. It sheds light on historians, researchers and to those who contribute studies on psychosocial and socio-political issues. Most importantly, it makes the facts remembered for all times. In this regard, the purpose of this particular study is to explore how memoir as a literary non-fiction genre promotes sustainable awareness of gender-based injustice against women as presented in *I am Malala* (2013) by Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb. It is widely acknowledged that patriarchy and dominant masculine perception of gender norms have institutionalized power over women in many parts of the world. Much research on global gender-based inequalities has shed light on the particular effects and bitter consequences of applied dogmatic socio-political sanctions against women's rights. Among the most important factors for female gender role trauma can be shown as the violation of rights and freedom due to the lack of legal protection. To view how gender-based injustice is produced and justified as two critical means of power, one should highlight the domains of ideology and power dynamics. Especially in South Asia countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan, government policies impose ideological constraints on women's rights. In this regard, literary analysis is an effective way to create universal awareness of the destructive effects of patriarchal hegemony, sex bias, and stereotypical labeling. As this genre suggests, the memoirs collected in the book constitute a work of high significance that reflects the effects of gender discrimination via historical events and promotes universal awareness. Thus, the study will carry out qualitative research by focusing on the published book as the main source. Supported by secondary sources, the findings of the study draw out the fact that memoir plays a pivotal role and is a powerful agent in dealing with gender-based injustice issues and a key to universalize international awareness on gender development.

Keywords: Gender, restraints, status, equality, rights, critical discourse, power, awareness, literature, education, politics, economics, memoirs, empowerment

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YARAYA ÜFLEMED: KURMACA OLMAYAN YAZIN YOLUYLA KADIN HAKLARINA İLİŞKİN KÜRESEL FARKINDALIK YARATMA: I AM MALALA (2013)

Serap Melek ERYAZICI¹

ÖZ

Edebi alanda en sık rastlanan türlerden biri olan anı, tarihi, toplumsal ve kişisel gerçekleri ortaya koyması bakımından özel bir öneme sahiptir. Bu özel edebi tür, belli bir örüntüde, tarihsel gelişimleri anlamaya yardımcı araçlardan biri olmakla birlikte kişide iz bırakan olaylara ve olgulara odaklanır. Özellikle psiko-sosyal ve sosyo-politik konularda çalışmalar yapan araştırmacılara ışık tutar. Kişisel gerçeklerin akılda kalmasını sağlar. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Malala Yousafzai ve Christina Lamb'in *I am Malala*'da (2013) sunduğu gibi, kurmaca olmayan yazın yoluyla, anıların kadınlara yönelik toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı adaletsizlik konusunda sürdürülebilir farkındalığı nasıl teşvik ettiğini araştırmaktır. Zira, ataerkil ve toplumsal cinsiyet normlarına ilişkin baskın eril algı, kadınlar üzerindeki gücü kurumsallaştıran bir olgu olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Küresel cinsiyete dayalı eşitsizlikler üzerine yapılan pek çok araştırma, kadın haklarına karşı uygulanan dogmatik sosyo-politik yaptırımların belirli etkilerine ve acı sonuçlarına ışık tutmaktadır. Kadın cinsiyet rolü travmasının en önemli etkenleri arasında yasal korumanın olmaması nedeniyle hak ve özgürlüklerin ihlali olarak gösterilebilir. Toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı adaletsizliğin iki kritik güç aracı olarak nasıl üretildiğini ve haklı çıkarıldığını görmek için, ideoloji ve güç dinamiklerinin alanları vurgulanmalıdır. Özellikle Pakistan ve Afganistan gibi orta doğu ülkelerinde hükümet politikaları kadın haklarına ideolojik kısıtlamalar getiriyor. Bu bağlamda, eleştirel bir söylem analizi yaklaşımı, ataerkil hegemonyanın, cinsiyet yanlılığının ve basmakalıp etiketlenmenin yıkıcı etkilerine dair evrensel farkındalık yaratmanın bir yoludur. Kitapta derlenen anılar, türünden de anlaşılacağı gibi, kişisel tecrübeleri yansıtan çok önemli bir eserdir. Bu çalışma, ana kaynak olarak yayınlanan kitaba odaklanarak nitel bir araştırma gerçekleştirecektir. İkincil kaynaklarla desteklenen çalışmanın bulguları, anıların yol gösterici bir rol oynadığını ve toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı adaletsizliğin ortadan kaldırılmasında güçlü bir etken olduğunu ve toplumsal cinsiyet gelişimi konusunda uluslararası farkındalığı evrenselleştirmenin anahtarı olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cinsiyet, Kısıtlamalar, Statü, Eşitlik, Haklar, Eleştirel Söylem, Güç, Farkındalık, Edebiyat, Eğitim, Politika, Ekonomi, Anılar, Güçlendirme

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 MEMOIR AS A SUBJECTIVE REPERTOIRE

The term “memoir” is derived from Latin word “memoria” which means “remembrance” or “memory” that originated from the same word root. The history of memoir as a literary non-fiction tradition dates back in its origins since the first century BC. Formerly, the priority of this literary genre was to spread heroic stories. As time progressed, memoir took its aim for advocating for global issues. On a large scale, through sharing the accounts of subjective experiences that intend to inspire others by focusing on a specific snapshots of time with a novelistic style, memoirs have become effective tools for global calls. Memoirs focus on the purpose of raising awareness based on issues that concern the whole world. In this wise, it is found out that literary studies play critical role in identifying problems and enable the creation of solution-oriented works exclusively by drawing attention to gender inequalities, violence and other issues. Unlike autobiography, memoir as a genre is considered to be more selective that focuses on a certain period in the author’s life and recounts the pivotal effects where as autobiography details the whole life span. It is argued that memoirs pinpoint dramatic sequences by encouraging the readers throughly toward documented personal experience. It functions as a bridge between the author and the reader. Written from an author perspective, a memoir contributes to a specific timeline and sheds light on the perspective through storytelling.

With the purpose of universally resonating with others, the popularity of memoirs have increased in the last decades. However, memoirs do not only lead to a variety of exploration but also offer opportunity to question and engage in the author’s insights. Complicated issues such as war, migration, violence, gender trauma and discrimination are among the main interest of memoirs. Such an ideological exchange of information between the author and the reader lead to a broader knowledge about other cultures and ideologies. In order to explore an incident or series of incidents in greater depth, a memoir draws out a significant source to recall or provide a voice for the unsaid. Quite often, memoirs deal with complicated or tragic personal hardship with vivid characters and places and end up with certain ideas or resolutions which often lead to self discovery or actualization. As evident in the case of *I am Malala*, Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani girl who was shot by a Taliban gunman on October 9 2012 on a school bus when she was only 14 years old. She was considered a global advocate and an education activist. She stood up for education rights for women in Pakistan with contributing campaigns to raise awareness. Malala states that at the time of pursuing Islamic principles, women's rights were restricted under Zia Ul-Haq's regime in Pakistan: "life for women in Pakistan became much more restricted. A woman couldn't open a bank account without a man's permission" (p.21).

To achieve gender equality, Malala risked her life and struggled with death threats. As a result, she underwent numerous surgeries during her treatment in Britain. She survived and continued to speak out on the importance of education finally awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014. She was issued as one of the most influential people globally. She attended high school in England. Later on, she studied at Oxford University and studied philosophy, politics, and economics and received her bachelor's degree in 2020. Her diary about life under the Taliban regime inspired millions of people especially women around the region. Her influential book became a global symbol for women empowerment and it has been observed that through literature raising awareness on gender issues has a positive impact.

Malala Yousafzai protested against Taliban forces to gain education rights for girls in Pakistan during Fazlullah, a Talibani chief leading that particular branch at Swat Valley. Malala’s father Ziauddin is one of the strongest activists who still advocates for women’s equality in education and supports women’s rights. Malala often emphasizes that her father is very different from other men of her society: "My father shares everything with her. Most Pashtun men never do this, as sharing problems with women is seen as weak. 'He even asks his wife!' they say as an insult" (p.17). Like his grandfather Malala's father, Ziauddin is known as an impressive rhetorician and committed himself to speak up about the consequences of unequal opportunities. According to him, ignorance is the reason and the source of political confusion. As Malala states: "He believed schooling should be available for all, rich and poor, boys and girls" (p.26).

Yousafzai was shot by a Taliban gunman on October 9 2012 on a school bus when she was only 14 years old. She was considered a global advocate and an education activist. She stood up for education rights for women in Pakistan by contributing to campaigns to raise awareness. Malala states that at the time of pursuing Islamic principles, women's rights were restricted under Zia Ul-Haq's regime in Pakistan: "life for women in Pakistan became much more restricted. A woman couldn't open a bank account without a man's permission" (p.21). The patriarchal ideology that objectifies women is the product of male dominated perception. It is explicit that the idea of male supremacy lies on the basis of this understanding which is very common in societies that support patriarchal structure. By normalizing the subordinate position of women in society, patriarchy remains as an obstruction for women.

2. DISCUSSION

Among common traits of a memoir as a literary genre, the characteristics of the story are often narrated in a styled account of a person's life. Literary styles and techniques are supported to highlight personal experiences presented in a memoir to ensure that the experience is original and unique while covering a particular time frame. It points to transformation and the stages of change on a personal account. However, the written account focuses on past experiences with a first-person point of view including the key moments that shape knowledge and personality. Memoirs also present historical events and mainly employ universal messages to provide insight into the past to attract attention to a traumatic experience.

Howard (1986) highlights that literature is an agent in constructing a cultural sense of awareness of gender issues. *I am Malala* (2013) deploys a non-fictional literary example for inspiring women to struggle to achieve their rights by serving as a positive stimulation for affecting the community's attitudes and beliefs. To promote mutual understanding and develop awareness through literature, discourse functions as the primary tool for achieving equitable and sustainable empowerment.

Bloor (2007) suggests that language and discourse are tools to complete global goals to achieve empowerment through literary theory. Ideological power exists within economic and political power. Thus, to understand the ideological structure of a particular community, discourse relevant to reminiscences serves as an interpretive system to define the required practices. *I am Malala* (2013) draws attention to Malala Yousafzai's account by employing elements of fiction that provide the opportunity to examine gender discrimination in a wider socio-political context.

Her narrative not only puts the readers in her shoes by immersing a full scope of her bitter experiences after she was shot but also provides a compelling exemplary life stance. Her genuine story ties the readers to authenticity and universal truth by revealing women's struggles whereas they are portrayed as powerless and submissive. Moreover, the memoir functions both as a voice and a powerful attempt to end collective suffering. Since many women are silenced with violence and terror, Malalai's memoir can be considered both a sharp reaction and a resistance to the distorted religious oppression of the Talibani regime in Pakistan. In addition, she enables constructive ideas to raise collective awareness about women's educational rights. Through her memoirs it is visible that the roles of men and women adopted in the Middle East have been shaped under the guise of religion. Thus, the idea of women reaching the consciousness of existence and self-realization have been completely rejected. Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytical theory (2014) argues that the alienation of women from their own body and existence is at the root of patriarchal ideology. It can be stated that Malala explicitly protests against perception of female existence idealized and shaped by patriarchal norms. Moreover, she recounts the heavy price of revolting against power and authority dynamics attributed to men in this particular context.

Malala reflects on her lifelong journey by creating an original space for the readers to investigate the roles attributed to women in the eastern frame. While pointing out the value and importance of women in Middle East culture, she questions the existence of women under the Taliban regime. She criticizes the evaluation of women as a commodity. She argues that this kind of apprehension creates trauma in women and is caused by the wrong perception of religion. Her memoirs are indeed a discursive reaction to the terror of female victimization that raises the need for universal legitimization.

Following the interpretation above, it can be argued that male dominance ideology subjugates women through hegemony therefore a global mindset on change is needed. Since men have vital strength, supporting women through education is the key to progressive and sustainable development. Malala (2013) suggests that education is the fundamental right of everyone regardless of gender, race, and ethnicity as indicated in *The Holy Quran*. It is also highlighted that knowledge should be accessible. She reports that education opportunities for women in Pakistan are not appropriate since women are restrained due to the Taliban by-laws; "5.1 million children don't even go to primary school even though in our constitution it says every child has that right. We have almost fifty million illiterate adults, two-thirds of whom are women, like my own mother" (p.154).

One of the key policy messages presented by Geena Davis in United Nations Dialogues at the Economic and Social Council in New York (2010) was that "improving gender representation is a critical component of influencing and changing attitudes toward women and girls" (p.95). Malala often emphasizes that education is the vital need for prosperous life both for women and men in Pakistan. Since empowerment issues are multidimensional and complex in Pakistan, her memoir reveals the severity of educational frustration that needs to be challenged critically.

Kabeer (2005) claims that access to appropriate education has great effects on empowering women's cognitive talents, as increasing women's ability to question, learn, and develop new ideas. Educated women also suffer less from violence, as they are better at expressing themselves and protecting their legal rights with the help of increased literacy talents. Among the most striking memoirs of Malala, she questions the reason why the Taliban dictatorship

sees education as an obstacle during a conversation she encounters with her father: "Why don't they want girls to go to school? I asked my father. 'They are scared of the pen,' he replied" (p.62).

One needs to define power dynamics to fully understand the destructive effects of the repressive regime in Pakistan. Women are perceived as powerful agents of life empowerment and Talibani power holders treat them as threat factors that need to be restricted in any means. Keeping women under control and isolating them from education are among destructive purposes. In other words, providing women educational rights would risk the authority to be questioned and counted among the dangers that cannot be underestimated. Questioning the Talibani authority in force would confuse and cause such an undesirable situation. Manipulating society through oppression and preventing basic rights strongly emphasizes the discussion of power dynamics.

Rahman (2013) classifies Rawland's (1997) power dynamics under four primary forms. "Power over" is a controlling force over other humans manipulating their thoughts and behaviors. At this point, linked with Malala's memoirs, it can be argued that hindering the intellectual development of Pakistani women is an influential way to keep them under control. As frequently mentioned in the book, "girls should stay at home. The first school to be blown up was a government girls' primary school." (p. 72).

Also, "Power to" is defined as the productive strength enabling to generate new opportunities. "Power with" is an individual's sense of empowerment with the help of other individuals. "Power from within" is the spiritual self-respect that extends to accepting others as equals. According to the "power to" and "power with" forms of power, empowerment is defined as gaining more determination and self-confidence in making decisions and influencing the decisions of others. Despite all the difficulties, Malala succeeds in advancing her life in this direction by aiming to preserve her mind and consciousness of existence.

Rawland (1997) suggests that empowerment is experienced in three dimensions. "Personal empowerment", which is in the form of "power from within", is unique sense of self-confidence that identifies his/her capacity for development and production. "Relational Empowerment", in the form of "power over", is an individual's capacity to influence other's decisions. "Collective Empowerment" in the form of "power with", is the cumulative strengthening as an outcome of a collaborative group of individuals. Rahman (2013) suggests that first individuals are empowered then they can maximize their opportunities using their "power within", without constraints of other individuals' "power over" effects. It is observed that Malala's father through his rhetoric adopted all forms of power and achieved his best to create collective empowerment by encouraging the society to resist Talibani oppression.

Chong (2012) states that although women produce more food than men, they earn ten per cent of the world's income and own only one per cent of the world's property. Also, most of the primary school-age children out of school are girls and most of the World's poor population is women. Upadhyay (2017) suggests that women with access to education are more likely to participate in decisions at home and in society. Malala highlights this severe devastation of the oppressive regime as: "By the end of 2008, around 400 schools had been destroyed by the Taliban" (p.75). After this tragic event, Malala decides to access her diary through web sites using the nickname Gul Makai to raise universal awareness. Soon after, the diary received attention, and BBC made a recording hiding Malala's identity. It is the first step to the resistance that represented the power of discourse in raising awareness: " I began to see that the pen and the words that come from it can be much more powerful than machine guns. We were learning how powerful we are when we speak" (p.81).

She even shows her unworn school uniform and explicitly tells her fear through words: "I was scared that if the Taliban caught me going to school, they would throw acid in my face as they had done to girls in Afghanistan" (p.82). It's visible that Talibani's restrictions are mainly concentrated on women and through her discourse the reader can explicitly identify the reasons for her trauma. Furthermore, the closing of schools means the loss of job opportunities. It is reported in the memoirs that, due to the Pakistani military and Talibani conflict, female teachers lost their work and were limited to households and nursery.

Duflo (2011) argues that the economic development of the nation and the empowerment of women are very linked to each other. Not only development of the nation increases gender equality, but empowering women economically increases the nation's development. Since economic development is not enough to ensure women's empowerment, economic policies should guarantee a playing field for both genders aiming to improve women's economic conditions.

After being shot in a school bus, Malala had brain surgery. Her brain was severely injured therefore the operation took five hours. As the high risk of infection was moving fast, she was airlifted to a military hospital. Later, she was taken to Birmingham to be treated safely since her life was at risk due to Talibani attacks. This was a military decision.

As the assassination attempt made a significant impact in the world media, her pioneer role in voicing equal rights for women's education reached its highest point. She won the National Peace Prize and her name became a symbol of courage and determination for many people.

Esplen et al. (2006) state that India reserved thirty-three per cent of the seats in village councils for women by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. With the help of the Amendment, many women could find the opportunity to enter the political arena. They have gained prestige and changed their roles from mothers to politicians. Becoming role models, their efforts have given confidence to many women who were bound by the patriarchal system's roles. When linked to the situation in Pakistan, it can be considered that Malala's call for equitable education rights through her book achieved a positive result.

Chong (2012) states that United Nations Women was established to support women's rights. However, the UN Women's goal to increase gender equality is very limited to a few areas. So until the world changes its gender policies the struggle to empower women may remain a never-ending battle.

As Silverstone suggested (1999), mediated meanings seek to make sense of the world and the construction of meaning is possible through discourse. This is how literary works represent cultural and ideological domains in this respect. According to Fairclough (2010), ideology can be best defined as a code that resides in texts. Memoir as a form of literary discourse has the power to shape ideologies while critical discourse analysis suggests specific measures in literary representations. Therefore the approach is effective in examining discourses within relations of power.

3. CONCLUSION

Yousafzai gives an important message to humanity through her memoir that everything is possible with the consciousness of being. This message is primarily addressed to women who are victimized. The collection of Malala's memoirs advocates equality for women as a primary ideology. The memoir functions as the key which increases awareness of gender discrimination. Her efforts to restore women's education rights achieved their purpose with the support of international organizations. *I am Malala* (2013) is powerfully considered as a call for worldwide access to education highlighting the slogan every girl has the right to education regardless of gender, sex, and ethnicity. It can also be concluded that Malala's discourse is powerful as it reflects the changing lives and also improves gender perspectives.

It can be concluded that violence against women has gendered political impacts that impede and undermine equal rights for women as mentioned in Malala's book. In this regard, literary works function as one of the most important agents to reflect women's struggle in the socio-political and cultural context. It figures or rather reflects the conditions of gender by employing historical facts. *I am Malala* (2013) is one of the most important works for the forming and developing of a new perspective in the mental framework. Its academic and promising discourse makes the memoir a profound exception by presenting the socio-political management of reality.

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