

(RE)DRAWING THE MAP OF POLITICS: PRACTICING FEMINIST BLOG WRITING AS A POLITICAL MODE OF ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how feminist blog writing could transform the hyper-masculine character of Turkish politics. It conducts analysis of discourse and practice of three pro-feminist Turkish blogsites, the Reçel Blog, Çatlak Zemin, and 5Harfliler. Interviews with editors and blog writers support the analysis of the blog sites and the articles. Building on the feminist IR and poststructural feminism, this thesis teases out the transformative potential of feminist blog writing in recreating the map of politics and enabling stylized engagements. It brings in examples of feminist perspectives on urban planning and domestic labor. It engages in three thematic sections of stylized interventions from Muslim women, scientist women, and mothers that contest the limits of conventional identities and modes of engagement.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent developments in online feminist praxis promise “a new wave of thinking and practice.”¹ Reçel (Jam), Çatlak Zemin (Cracked Ground), and 5Harfliler (5-Lettereds)² have become new spaces for feminist activism in Turkey. All three blogs welcome women to share their personal stories, opinions, perspectives, curiosities, concerns, and struggles. Blog articles are diverse in terms of topics, language, and styles. They reaffirm the connection between personal and political by situating personal stories within a larger political frame. In Turkish politics, women’s bodies, attires,³ and personal choices have long been politicized and materialized throughout the history of the modern Turkish Republic. Women were categorized as pious/modern⁴ in the modernization process and after, and nation-state tradition naturalized male domination over women.⁵ Women’s experiences, perspectives, concerns were disdained and disregarded unless it matches the ideological tendencies of the ruling parties.

The question is, what is it that feminist blog writing could offer for the imbalanced nature of Turkish politics? How are that individual practices of feminist blog writing could transform the “hegemonic-masculine”⁶ structuring of politics? Enloe argues with clarity, “if the map of what is counted as political were redrawn by feminist-informed cartographers, the gap between

1 Faith Wilding and Critical Art Ensemble, “Notes on the Political Condition of Cyberfeminism,” *Art Journal* 52, no. 2 (September 1997): p. 47-60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1998.10791878>, 47.

2 5Harfliler (5-Lettereds) stands for woman(kadın) in Turkish language. It is a reference to 3-Lettereds, which stands for genies (Cin) in Turkish. Some people refrain from saying the actual word of genies as they believe that it may invite actual genies.

3 See Merve Kavakçı İslam, *Headscarf Politics in Turkey: A Postcolonial Reading*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

4 See Berna Turam, “Turkish Women Divided by Politics,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 10, no. 4 (2008): pp. 475-494, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740802393882>.

5 See V. Spike Peterson, “Sexing Political Identities/ Nationalism as Heterosexism,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 1, no. 1 (June 1999): pp. 34-65, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.1080/146167499360031>.

6 See Ann. J. Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* (New York : Columbia University Press., 1992), 6.

women's and men's political knowledge would shrink dramatically.”⁷ Building upon her argument, this thesis explores the map of politics drawn by three pro-feminist blog sites and their potential to balance hegemonic masculinity in Turkish politics. Herein, this thesis sets out two layers of analysis. Firstly, inspired by Enloe's intervention, the thesis investigates the role of feminist blog-writing in transforming political agenda informed by women's perspectives and everyday experiences. Secondly, feminist blog writing provides new opportunities for (online) performativity and unconventional modes of political engagement, such as stylized interventions from feminist Muslims, mothers, and scientist women. For the latter part, Butler's work on gender performativity is apt here.

Butler powerfully articulates, “the body is not passively scripted with cultural codes, as if it were a lifeless recipient of wholly pre-given cultural relations,” instead, “actors are always already on the stage, within the terms of the performance.”⁸ Gender, just like other identity layers, is performative. Gender identities are sustained through iteration, “the tacit collective agreement to perform.”⁹ Following her line of reasoning, “a different sort of repeating”¹⁰ may unsettle the previously defined (masculine) styles of political engagement. Therefore, performing fluid identities and personalized creative styles of political engagements have the potential to transform hegemonic masculinity in politics.

This thesis analyzes the discourse and practice of the blog articles on the Reçel Blog, Çatlak Zemin, and 5Harfliler¹¹ to map out the feminist agenda and stylistic engagement patterns. It is built on many blog articles to shed light on the feminist agenda(s), stylistic modes of

7Cynthia H. Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, US: University of California Press, 2014), 349.

8Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): pp. 519-531, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893>, 522.

9 *Ibid.*, 523.

10 *Ibid.*, 521

11All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

engagement, and performed identities. These themes allow me to draw a conclusion on the feminist cartographies of political knowledge. Secondly, I conducted semi-structured interviews with two editors and a blog writer from different blog sites. All three interviewees actively publish blog articles on three other blogs. All three of them have a unique understanding of feminist blog-writing. The interviews are essential to understand how individual writers make sense of their experience of writing and publishing. Discourse analysis and interviews together allowed me to theorize on the transformative potential of blog-writing at political and personal levels.

The thesis proceeds in the following structure. The first chapter delves into the Turkish modernization process and the state policies on women to understand the roots of recurring social and political tensions within Turkish society. It explores how women were categorized and made central to the national identity construction. The chapter proceeds with an overview of the history of modern Turkish politics until the current date to explore the motivations behind the increasing popularity of feminist blog-writing.

The second chapter explores the feminist IR theory to unpack the relationship between nation-state, gendered politics, and women. It proceeds with analyzing the blog articles to explore how feminist blog-writing could transform the political content by bringing in multiple personal experiences and reaffirming the connection between the personal and the political. The scholarly discussion evolves around two themes, urban planning, and domestic labor, to map the feminist perspectives.

The third chapter investigates the stylized modes of engagement, namely the potential impact of personalized and creative techniques of writing and fluid identities. It sets out three thematic ways of political engagement: Muslim feminist, a mother, and scientist. It explores how

stylized modes of engagement may destabilize existing political identity categories and present alternative modes of engagement to the conventional styles of doing politics. Lastly, the third chapter discusses the practice of blog-writing as resistance and claiming agency.

Chapter 1 - WOMEN IN TURKISH POLITICS:

MODERNIZATION, STATE-BUILDING, AND POLITICS

The Turkish Republic was founded on the 29th of October 1923, in the aftermath of the national struggle for independence led by Marshall Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. He was elected as the first president of the “modern” Turkish Republic and set out the reformation and transformation process. The transition from a collapsed sultanate/caliphate system to a “modern” nation-state structure was a rocky road. A myriad of reforms was introduced to “elevate” the country to “the level of the most civilized countries of the world.”¹² These reforms aspired to erase the country’s Islamic legacy through deep social engineering practices. From introducing the Latin alphabet and the Gregorian calendar to western-style education and clothing reforms regulated all aspects of social, political, and cultural life. Kemalism, the national ideology of modernization, “continues to be the most favored ideology of the Turkish political elite and intelligista.”¹³ Its principles consist of, though not limited to, nationalism, secularism, statism, and Western-style modernism.

1.1 National Identity in The Making: The Turkish Modernization Process and Women

(Re)invention of Turkish national identity was essential in justifying the political change. Founders of the modern Turkish Republic sought to create a new national identity in line with

12 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. “10. Yıl Nutku [10th Year Speech].” Transcript of speech delivered at the Ankara Hippodrome , Ankara, Turkey, October 29, 1933. <https://www.ktb.gov.tr/TR-96294/10-yil-nutku.html>

13 Suna Kılı , “Kemalism in Contemporary Turkey,” *International Political Science Review* 1, no. 3 (1980): pp. 381-404, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/019251218000100308>, 381.

imported Western values. Nation-building efforts encompassed rejecting the Islamic values and practices, replacing them with Western imported laws and traditions, and recreating the history by prioritizing the pre-Islamic past of Turkish people.¹⁴ The motivation behind these practices was rooted in the East-West dichotomy in which the East made feel inferior and Eastern values were disdained in the eyes of the West. Quijano writes, “in Asia and the Middle East, the high cultures could never be destroyed with such intensity and profundity. But they were nevertheless placed in a subordinate relation not only in the European view but also in the eyes of their own bearers.”¹⁵ The modernization efforts were the indirect reflections of the feeling of inferiority and humiliation that dates back to the regression period in Ottoman history.

The primary motivation of modernization was to inhibit the humiliation of the military defeats and keep “the empire intact by the partial transformation of that traditional society”¹⁶ through reformation. These reforms referred to as “defensive modernization,”¹⁷ sought to prevent nationalist revolts within and external attacks from without. They did not fulfill their purpose for myriad reasons. Kılı writes, “these reformers were either not fully committed to modernization, they had been intermittent and inadequate.”¹⁸ However, these reforms made it possible to train army officers, civil servants abroad who came back to the country and devoted themselves to modernization.¹⁹ Commonly known as Young Turks, who were influenced by

14 Yesim Arat, “From Emancipation To Liberation: The Changing Role of Women in Turkey's Public Realm,” *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 1 (2000): pp. 107-123, <https://doi.org/http://www.jstor.org/stable/24357691>, 109.

15 Aníbal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007): pp. 168-178, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601164353>, 170.

16 Kılı, “Kemalism in Turkey,” 382.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 383.

19 Ibid.

the Western ideas of civilization, they become primary agents of social change.²⁰ The Empire's collapse consolidated the conviction of Eastern inferiority; thus, the main principle of the Turkish Republic was westernization/modernization.

The founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, believed the political change should be supported by a social change, which meant an introduction of changes in the appearances of Turkish people as indicators of westernization.²¹ The Kemalist reforms intended to reach beyond the westernization of the state apparatus and aspired to transform people's "lifestyle, manners, behaviors and daily customs."²² Turkish women were put at the center of Kemalist reforms. They served as a symbolic marker of the national cultural identity, and their bodies and cultural repositories are strategically located at the center of national metaphors and discourse.²³ State elites, including Atatürk himself, advocated for the idea of eliminating Islamic traditions to liberate women. He pointed to his wife Latife Hanim as a role model, in full carsaf²⁴ in the early years of their marriage, but then she started wearing only a headscarf with western outfits, and later, she took her headscarf off completely.²⁵

The national modernization project and nation-building practices were supplemented by eliminating the Islamic civil code and introducing the Swiss secular code that granted women full citizenship. The new civil code strengthened the position of Turkish women by banning polygamy, providing them the right to divorce, removing any arbitrary discrimination in terms

20 Eren Duzgun, "Capitalism, Jacobinism and International Relations: Re-Interpreting the Ottoman Path to Modernity," *Review of International Studies* 44, no. 2 (2017): pp. 252-278, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210517000468>, 272.

21 Islam, *Headscarf Politics in Turkey: A Postcolonial Reading*, 5.

22 Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Michigan, US: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 58.

23 Peterson, "Sexing Political Identities/ Nationalism as Heterosexism," 48.

24 Carsaf is a black, one-piece outfit that covers women from head to toe, merely leaving face open.

25 Islam, *Headscarf Politics in Turkey: A Postcolonial Reading*, 20.

of inheritance.²⁶ The legal framework expanded opportunities for Turkish women by equalizing them to men in the public sphere. Yet, White argues that “state feminism did not concern itself with what happened behind the closed doors of the home.”²⁷ Arat writes, “While women were given civil and political rights equals to men in the 1920s and 1930s, they remained confined by communal norms and customs.”²⁸ The reforms did not seek to challenge male entitlement over women’s bodies and decisions. Instead, they institutionalized state surveillance over women’s bodies and behaviors.

The ideal type of a modern Kemalist woman is characterized by her passion for serving the nation, her willingness to participate in political affairs, and her caring and tender nature.²⁹ The “modern” woman was the representative of the modern Turkish Republic and its transformation. She was expected to behave and dress in a western manner.³⁰ White argues that only a small, urbanized elite could fit in the image of an ideal “modern” Republican woman.³¹ As a result, some segments of the society could not find a space for themselves in the newly created Turkish national identity. White explains that “women who felt that their religious beliefs required them to dress modestly and cover their heads, and women who kept to older customs-like sitting on cushions and eating at low trays instead of sitting on chairs at a table-were not accepted into this Republican sisterhood were alternately reviled as the uncivilized primitive or romanticized as the “noble” peasant.”³² The Westernization/ modernization project, aimed at creating a monotype that matches the new image of the modern Turkish state,

26 Nermin Abadan-Unat, “The Modernization of Turkish Women,” *Middle East Journal* 32, no. 3 (1978): p. 291-306, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4325769>.

27 Jenny B. White, “State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman,” *NWSA Journal* 15, no. 3 (2003): pp. 145-159, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4317014>, 146.

28 Arat, “From Emancipation To Liberation: The Changing Role of Women in Turkey’s Public Realm,” 115.

29 Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*, 56.

30 White, “State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman,” 146.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

resulted in the alienation of people with different socio-cultural statuses by deepening division between so-called modern and traditional.

1.1.1 Do Old Wounds Go Away by Themselves? Reverse Ideology, The Same History

The history of the modern Turkish Republic has bristled with political violence and coup-d'états. The exclusion and alienation practices in the Republic's early years led to social tensions and polarizations among different political ideologies that revealed themselves in the form of political violence in 20th century Turkey. Following the 1960 and 1971 coups, the military intervened in 1980 once again due to the violent conflicts between right-wing and left-wing groups. The post-1980 period was a severe setback in terms of democratic developments and individual liberties. The regulation on clothing banned women personnel at public institutions from wearing a headscarf.³³ The 1982 constitution was an undemocratic attempt to erase the “unfitting” groups from political imagination, such as the Kurdish and Islamist populations. The constitution openly stated that all citizens of the Turkish Republic belong to the Turkish nation.³⁴

Necmettin Erbakan was elected in 1996 as the first Islamist prime minister of secular Turkey.³⁵ Yet, he was forced out of office by the military in 1997 on the grounds of posing a threat to Atatürk's legacy and its secular state. Following the 1997 coup, Islamist Welfare Party was shut down, and prime minister Erbakan was banned from politics, and together with other

33 “Türkiye’de Başörtüsü Yasağı: Nasıl Başladı, Nasıl Çözüldü? [Headscarf Ban in Turkey: How Did It Start, How Was It Resolved?],” Aljazeera Turk, December 30, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/dosya/turkiyede-basortusu-yasagi-nasil-basladi-nasil-cozuldu>.

34 Henri Barkey and Direnç Kadioğlu, “Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (blog), August 1, 2011, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2011/08/01/turkish-constitution-and-kurdish-question-pub-45218>.

35 Islam, Headscarf Politics in Turkey: A Postcolonial Reading, xiv.

measures, the headscarf ban was extended to universities.³⁶ In 2002, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's political party, Justice and Development (AKP), won the elections. However, Erdoğan was banned from politics on the ground of an Islamist poem he read. After his political ban was lifted, he became the prime minister in 2003. The party distanced itself from the anti-Western political tradition adopted by conservative Islamist camps.³⁷ During the first and early second term of its rule, the AKP government initiated reforms to tackle domestic violence, marital rape, sexual harassment and promote gender equality in education and the workplace.³⁸ Some of the main steps taken by the government are as follows: the government initiated talks with the European Union, lifted the headscarf ban, hosted and ratified the Istanbul Convention,³⁹ and started the Peace Process with Kurdish forces. However, the government's autocratic tendencies increased after the Gezi Protests in 2013 and peaked after the coup attempt in 2016. The AKP government replaced its official rhetoric on gender equality with a conservative discourse that situates women within the family institution rather than recognizing women as independent and equal citizens. Moreover, misogynistic statements by the ruling party politicians on women's sexuality,⁴⁰ abortion rights,⁴¹ right to work⁴² consolidated the

36 "Türkiye'De Başörtüsü Yasağı: Nasıl Başladı, Nasıl Çözüldü? [Headscarf Ban in Turkey: How Did It Start, How Was It Resolved?]," *Aljazeera Turk*.

37 Nezahat Altuntaş and Yahya Demirkanoğlu, "An Insight to the Discourses and Policies of Justice and Development Party on Women: Projections towards Conservatism from Conservative-Democracy," *Academic Yaklaşımlar Dergisi* 8, no. 1 (2017): pp. 65-96.

38 Ibid.

39 The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, or commonly referred as, Istanbul Convention is an international human right that aims to prevent gender-based violence, protect victims of violence and punish perpetrators. Turkey was the first member country to ratify the convention.

40 "AKP Döneminde Kadın [Woman in the AKP Era] ," *Sözcü* , March 8, 2014, <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2014/gundem/akp-doneminde-kadin-467398/>.

41 "Çocuğun Ne Suçu Var, Anası Kendisini Öldürsün [What Is the Child's Fault, the Mother Should Kill Herself]," *Milliyet*, June 3, 2012, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/cocugun-ne-sucu-var-anasi-kendisini-oldursun-1548557>.

42 "İşsizliğin Nedeni İş Gücüne Katılan Kadınlar [The Reason for Unemployment Is Women Joining the Workforce]," *Cumhuriyet* , March 18, 2009, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/issizligin-nedeni-is-gucune-katilan-kadinlar-49636>.

patriarchal political atmosphere. Furthermore, the government has been recently criticized for its neglect of femicides and violence against women. President Erdoğan issued a presidential decree announcing withdrawal from the Convention in March 2021, based on the report prepared by the Turkish Thinking Platform, an Islamist think tank.

The withdrawal decision is not simply a misogynistic behavior of the ruling party. Yet, it is the product of patriarchal domination that politicizes women's bodies, presence, attires, headscarves, personal choices for ages. Regardless of the ruling ideology and its reforms, Turkish politics remained a male-dominated space. The language remained heterosexist, aggressive and the political agenda remains blinded to the feminist resistance and knowledge cartography. The Istanbul Convention serves as an illustrative example of decades of politicization and erasure of women from political imagination in Turkish politics; A convention on preventing gender-based violence, criticized by a group of men and annulled with a statement of a single man. The question is, "where are the women"?⁴³

1.2 Stepping into One's Own Power: Feminist Activism

Feminist solidarity networks have been long active in history. They "unite local collectives with other individuals and movements around the world."⁴⁴ These collectives "provide information and support for members and other women, engage in advocacy and criticism of policies and are moving effectively to take part in the formulation of policies and in the process of decision-making."⁴⁵ The idea behind feminist solidarity is the "mutual support between

43 Enloe, Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics.

44 Sally J. Scholz, "Transnational Feminist Solidarity and Lessons from the 2011 Protests in Tahrir Square," *Global Discourse* 4, no. 2-3 (2014): pp. 205-219, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23269995.2014.914369>, 205.

45 Valentine M. Moghadam, "Transnational Feminist Networks: Collective Action in an Era of Globalization," *International Sociology* 15, no. 1 (March 2020): pp. 57-86, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580900015001004>, 66.

individuals, groups, and organizations working on gender equality and women's rights."⁴⁶ Setting common goals⁴⁷ and sharing collective identities are the essence of feminist collectives. Online feminist praxis shares some of these features and can be utilized as a part of broader feminist solidarity networks. Feminist activism can deploy online activism to take part in the formulation of policies and laws. Puente shows how online feminist praxis in Spain achieved significant success in passing combat against gender-based violence and helping female victims of violence.⁴⁸ She argues online collectivities make female agency visible through the conceptualization of broad feminist positions, promoting female agency's grassroots social policies and projects.

Feminist collectives and solidarity networks have been active in Turkey to combat patriarchal domination and social injustice. One example is the Socialist Feminist Collective. Socialist Feminist Collective was created in 2008 due to the frustration of the AKP government's conservative neo-liberal policies on women's rights and development. The Collective perceived patriarchy and capitalism as mutually reinforcing systems of oppression.⁴⁹ Socialist feminism has sought to distinguish itself from other forms of feminism as its core principle is to transform capitalist patriarchy into socialist emancipation.⁵⁰ Socialist Feminist Collective, just like other feminist collectives, sought to develop alternative policies and laws and advocate for the implementation. The Collective initiated various essential projects to make violence against

46 Caroline Sweetman, "Introduction, Feminist Solidarity and Collective Action," *Gender and Development* 21, no. 2 (July 2013): pp. 217-229, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13552074.20.219>.

47 Ibid., 218.

48 Sonia Nuñez Puente, "Feminist Cyberactivism: Violence against Women, Internet Politics, and Spanish Feminist Praxis Online," *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 25, no. 3 (2011): pp. 333-346, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2011.562964>.

49 Selin Çağatay, "Challenging Conservative Neoliberalism in Turkey: The Socialist Feminist Collective," *Sosyalist Feminist Kolektif*, May 24, 2014, <http://www.sosyalistfeministkolektif.org/english/challenging-conservative-neoliberalism-in-turkey-the-socialist-feminist-collective/>.

50 Demet Özmen Yılmaz, "Socialist Feminist Alternatives to Neoliberalism in Turkey," in *Polarizing Development* (London, UK: Pluto Press, 2015), pp. 236-247, 242.

women visible, fight against sexual abuse, and raise domestic and emotional labor awareness. Nonetheless, ideological commitments drew a visible boundary between socialist and conservative women. Concerns and perspectives of women who do not define themselves as socialists were automatically left out from the socialist feminist collectives' agenda.

Socialist Feminist Collective suspended all its activities in 2015 because of diverging opinions within the Collective. They explained it nicely on their website:

“As in all long-term struggles, we have experienced some differences and distancing in all these eight years of experience. We felt that every [ideological] separation and distancing diminished our solidarity, our feminist politics; we tried to understand these divergences and weave the next processes to reduce these situations. Sometimes we understood each other. Sometimes we fell to different points.”⁵¹

As Lorde writes, “the need for unity is often misnamed as a need for homogeneity.”⁵² In Turkish politics, there has been a political tendency to create a homogenous society. Oppressive policies are seen as a way to erase differences at the state level. Differences within were interpreted as a reason for separation in the case of the Collective. Expectations to create a homogenous, thus “prosperous” society is neither realistic nor feasible. A different perspective is needed on human differences to create more ethical and caring spaces of engagement.

Recent developments in online feminist praxis promise “a new wave of thinking and practice.”⁵³ Feminist blogs such as Reçel, Çatlak Zemin, and Beş-Harfliler have become new spaces for feminist activism in Turkey. These three blogs welcome women to share their stories, experiences, opinions both in a formal and informal style. Unlike feminist collectives,

51 Esra Karadoğan, “Reçel Blog,” Reçel Blog (blog), August 4, 2020, <http://recel-blog.com/kadin-cinayetleri-politik-midir/>.

52 Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, 1st ed., vol. 3 (New York, NYC : Crossing Press Berkeley, 1987), pp. 122-132, 127.

53 Faith Wilding and Critical Art Ensemble, “Notes on the Political Condition of Cyberfeminism,” *Art Journal* 52, no. 2 (September 1997): pp. 47-60, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1998.10791878>, 47.

feminist blogs neither advocate for common political goals nor claim to embody a collective identity. In this regard, online collectivities may better serve to make female agency visible through the conceptualization of broad feminist positions.⁵⁴ Feminist blog writing may challenge the homogenized, simplified, and stereotyped representation of women, which would result in the recognition of diverse experiences of subjugated groups and the collective construction of counternarratives.⁵⁵

There are some nuances in style and focus, yet there is certainly one common aspect of all these three websites: they seek to create platforms where women could express and discuss their way of making sense of everyday politics. None of these three blogs neither limit their focus, not writer profile based on political identities. Instead, their basic principle is “women’s agenda is everything a woman could be interested in.”⁵⁶ Their work seems to bypass the aggressively competitive nature of rival groups in Turkish politics. On the contrary, they seem to inspire each other and lead to a larger community of feminist blog-writers who are informed about each other’s work and acknowledge the importance of each other’s online existence. During interviews, editors from Reçel and Çatlak Zemin mentioned that the online presence of 5-Harfliler inspired them to make use of online spaces in slightly different ways, and they still try to follow each other’s content.

The Reçel blog was created in 2014 by a group of women who identify themselves as Muslim, yet not all of them call themselves feminists. The motivation behind it was to give space to women, especially Muslim women, to “reflect on their daily experiences, perceptions of social

54 Puente, “Feminist Cyberactivism: Violence against Women, Internet Politics, and Spanish Feminist Praxis Online”

55 Bonilla and Rosa, “#Ferguson: Digital Protest, Hashtag Ethnography, and the Racial Politics of Social Media in the United States”, 6.

56 “Biz Kimiz? [Who Are We?],” 5Harfliler, accessed March 11, 2021, <https://www.5harfliler.com/hakkimizda/>.

issues, interests, curiosities, troubles, hopes, anxieties and struggles.”⁵⁷ In the interview, one of the blog editors explained, “the Reçel blog aims to raise consciousness through the very feminist gesture of speaking about daily life practices, creating a group awareness and organizing activism through it.”

Çatlak Zemin was created as a feminist discussion ground in 2016. The co-founders aimed not to restrict themselves with Turkish politics’ aggressive and gloomy agenda but to enable a broader framework for feminist political imagination. One of the editors, who was previously part of the feminist collectives, articulated, “Çatlak Zemin responds to the very need of doing alternative politics. It transforms the map of feminist politics and enables multiple feminisms to emerge online.” The platforms offer a myriad of exciting sections such as culture and physics, history, this week in patriarchy (a section for news and updates), global developments, şipşak (quickie), Femihat (a solidarity section for those who want to share their personal stories) and the state of Ruhiye⁵⁸ (women’s perspectives on diverse issues). Lastly, 5-Harfliler, created in 2012, is the oldest one among these three. The editorial team defines the blogsite as an independent website for the women’s agenda(s). One of the co-editors points out the motivation to create the platform comes from “urgent personal need; there was no other platform where we could write the way we wrote and be ourselves.”⁵⁹ It has different thematic sections like history, art, culture, arena, and ecinnlik (e-genie-ness), where writers could publish articles about personal stories, international feminist politics, literature, and translations of the articles published on other platforms. These websites may bear the potential to go beyond Turkish politics’ repetitive and aggressive nature by reaffirming difference as the

57 “Reçel Nedir? [What Is Reçel?],” Reçel Blog, accessed April 30, 2021, <http://recel-blog.com/recel/>.

58 Ruhiye is a female name that means the spiritual and inner state of a person.

59 Wionews, Wionews, March 10, 2017, <https://www.wionews.com/world/in-conversation-with-5harfliler-digital-feminism-in-turbulent-turkey-13249>.

source of enrichment. The next chapter delves into the critical IR theories to unpack the concepts of gendered state and female agency. Feminist IR and Daoism will allow me to explore the room for agency within the patriarchal structure of politics.

Chapter 2 - IS THERE ANY ROOM FOR AGENCY?

GENDERED POLITICS AND FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

The binary difference is one of the essential components in constructing the “modern” state system.⁶⁰ It essentializes binary categories of masculine and feminine; strong and weak; protector and protected. These categories assume binary differences between each other; therefore, permeabilities are abnormalized and precluded.⁶¹ Feminist IR provides lenses to unpack gendered relations between the state and citizens to understand how these categories are constitutive of the making of world politics. These gendered relations are experienced differently by women as patriarchal oppression may take various forms based on race, ethnicity, class, and performed identities. Differences could be interpreted as restricting boundaries that separate women and homogenize their experiences under identity categories, as discussed in the previous chapter. Then the question is how to use differences creatively? Feminist IR theory will enable me to explore the role of feminist blog writing in Turkey in challenging the cartographies of hegemonic masculine political agenda and bringing in new perspectives.⁶²

60 Peterson, “Sexing Political Identities/ Nationalism as Heterosexism,”.

61 Ibid.

62 Véronique Pin-Fat and Maria Stern, “The Scripting of Private Jessica Lynch: Biopolitics, Gender, and the ‘Feminization’ of the U.S. Military,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 30, no. 1 (2005): pp. 25-53, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030437540503000102>.

2.1 Western Political Thought and Exclusion of the Feminine

The exclusion of femininity from political thinking dates to the formation of western liberal political theory, which relegated women from the political space on the ground of the biological differences.”⁶³ In this way, “male-female biological difference was used simultaneously to explain and to justify the figurative and literal separation of men and women, masculine and feminine, into separate and unequal spheres.”⁶⁴ These hierarchal separations lie at the heart of social ordering practices in the form of the modern state structure. Pettman explains, “Classical western political thinkers, such as Plato and Aristotle, and those theorizing the development and meaning of the modern state system, such as Hobbes and Locke, didn’t ignore gender in the ways that contemporary theorists often do. Instead, they incorporated notions of difference, of biology or culture, as reasons for excluding women from the political.”⁶⁵ This conceptualization harbors hierarchical connotations of “superiority” and “inferiority” encoded on both gendered bodies and identities. Gender stereotyping establishes a direct relationship between strength and masculinity and weakness and femininity.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the masculine mind is characterized by rationality, and strength could only be embodied in a biologically male body. On the other hand, femininity is associated with emotions, and pacificism can merely be scripted on a woman’s body.

63 Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (New York, USA: Routledge, 1996), 4-5.

64 V. Spike Peterson, “Transgressing Boundaries: Theories of Knowledge, Gender and International Relations,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 21, no. 2 (June 1, 1992): pp. 183-206, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298920210020401>, 193.

65 Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics*, 5.

66 Julia Welland, “Gender and War,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Gender and Security*, ed. Caron E Gentry, Laura J. Shepherd, and Laura Sjoberg (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), pp. 129-139, 137.

Permeabilities are abnormalized as they unsettle the seemingly stable ordering by revealing the fact that identities are essentially unstable.⁶⁷ However, Pin-Fat and Stern assert that demarcation between masculinity and femininity can never be fully maintained, as “what masculinity or femininity means will always include, by exclusion, its opposite.”⁶⁸ Sjoberg and Gentry further problematize the traditional construct of women as naturally nurturing, pacifist, and apolitical subjects who are incapable of committing violence.⁶⁹ They illustrate how violent women were represented as a product of “faulty biology” who are not women at all.⁷⁰ With Pin-Fat and Stern’s terminology, a woman in military/politics could be read as a “ghostly embodiment of a confrontation with that which is “normally” excluded that serves to rupture “normality” itself.”⁷¹

“The binary association of masculinity with public power, agency, culture, reason, freedom and the association of femininity with privacy passivity, nature, irrationality, necessity” justified women’s exclusion from politics, prestigious occupations, science, and religious authority on the grounds of their nature.⁷² Gender relations are central to the centralization of political power and state-making practices. Hierarchical gender dichotomies naturalize conceptual ordering of masculine over feminine in state-making and (re) produce institutionalized masculinist domination by the normalization of male entitlement to women’s bodies.⁷³ Peterson argues that heterosexism, “institutionalization and normalization of heterosexuality and the corollary exclusion of non-heterosexual identities and practices,” is

67 Pin-Fat and Stern, “The Scripting of Private Jessica Lynch: Biopolitics, Gender, and the ‘Feminization’ of the U.S. Military,” 29.

68 Ibid., 30.

69 Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores Women’s Violence in Global Politics* (New York, NY: Zed Books, 2017), 2.

70 Ibid., 13.

71 Pin-Fat and Stern, 30.

72 Peterson, “Transgressing Boundaries: Theories of Knowledge, Gender and International Relations,” 193.

73 Peterson, “Sexing Political Identities/ Nationalism as Heterosexism,” 40.

inextricable from the practices of state-making.⁷⁴ She explains that masculinity associated with power, control, and order is “reproduced through conceptual systems that privilege male entitlement.”⁷⁵ Nation-state structure is a form of power practice that systematically reproduces male privilege.

Enloe defines nationalism as “a package of interwoven ideas and values, one of which is a commitment to fostering those beliefs and promoting those policies that permit the nation to stay cohesive and control its own destiny.”⁷⁶ Following the same line of reasoning, nationalism is a male tool deployed to control and maintain order over the female territories. Thus, nationalism comes in the form of surveillance and disciplining practices that women and men have not experienced identically.⁷⁷ Enloe asserts that “women have had uneasy relationships with nationalism.”⁷⁸ She problematizes the ideological weight assigned to women’s attire and sexual purity by unpacking women’s place in nationalist discourse. Women were seen as the nation’s possessions, “vehicles” to pass the nation’s values on to the next generations, “nationalist wombs,” the nation’s most vulnerable members to exploitation and assimilation.⁷⁹ Therefore, women’s bodies become sites for male control and “battlefields” for their wars.⁸⁰ Rape as a war strategy is used to feminize the enemy by pointing out their failure to protect their women.⁸¹ The war narrative on the Turkish independence war was constructed on Non-Muslim enemies attacking the nation’s honor by attacking its women and pulling women’s veils off,⁸² illustrates how women were narrated as the vulnerable possessions of the Turkish

74 Ibid., 39.

75 Ibid., 40.

76 Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, 94.

77 Ibid., 87.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid., 108.

80 Peterson, “Sexing Political Identities/ Nationalism as Heterosexism,” 51.

81 Welland, “Gender and War,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Gender and Security*, 132.

82 Islam, *Headscarf Politics in Turkey: A Postcolonial Reading*, 14.

nation. Nationalism depoliticizes masculine dominance over female bodies⁸³ and politicizes and materializes women by situating them at the center of nationalist discourse and policies. Subjugation and politicization of women as objects or lesser subjects results in hegemonic masculinity. Tickner articulates, hegemonic masculinity is “sustained through its opposition to various subordinated and devalued masculinities, such as homosexuality and through its relation to various devalued femininities.”⁸⁴ Hegemonic masculinity denies women’s experiences as a valid source of knowledge and appropriates and materializes their experiences. Consequently, the map of politics drawn by the hegemonic masculine episteme remained incomplete, and it failed to reflect the complexities of women’s experiences, perspectives, need, and concerns. In the next chapter, I will tease out the role of feminist blog writing in balancing hyper-masculine agenda. I am going to discuss two themes, namely, urban planning and domestic labor, to illustrate the feminist interventions in knowledge mapping through feminist blog-writing.

2.2 Alternative Feminist Agendas: Examples on Urban Planning and Domestic Labor

Politics is experienced in the everyday lives of people. It penetrates deeper into the very personal spaces like bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens. Patriarchal ordering of political power can reveal itself in the forms of contraception loading chemicals to women’s bodies,⁸⁵ the marketing strategies for female hygiene products promising the smell of roses,⁸⁶ the

⁸³ Peterson, “Sexing Political Identities/ Nationalism as Heterosexism,” 55.

⁸⁴ Tickner, *Gender in International Relations*, 6.

⁸⁵ *Doğum Kontrol Yöntemleri [Birth Control Methods]*, 5Harfliler (blog), June 16, 2015, <https://www.5harfliler.com/dogum-kontrol-yontemleri/>.

⁸⁶ *Vajinadan Tuvalete Her Yeri Temizleyen Ürün [The Product That Cleans Everything From Vagina to Toilets]*, 5Harfliler (blog), May 31, 2018, <https://www.5harfliler.com/vajinadan-tuvalet-her-yeri-temizleyen/>.

desperation of victims of gender-based violence due to lack of support mechanisms that the Istanbul Convention intended to set up,⁸⁷ emotional frustration of a woman who searched for a hospital to get an abortion yet was rejected based on hospitals' arbitrary policies.⁸⁸ In this sense, blog-writing can be seen as an alternative mode of political engagement that sheds light on the subtle forms of patriarchy in everyday life and reclaims the connection between the personal and the political. Women challenge the patriarchal ordering of power relations that deny them voice and agency and render their presence invisible. Informed by feminist knowledge mapping,⁸⁹ blog-writing recreates the cartography of politics by welcoming personal stories, experiences, and encounters.

Blog articles render a myriad of neglected policy areas visible. A series of blog articles, "In a World Designed for Men 1," proposes to broaden the policy perspectives on security.⁹⁰ Security and safety may have different meanings for urban women and men. The feeling of insecurity is something urban women have to deal with on a daily basis, as urban planning does not consider women's needs. One of the aspects is to provide safe trips for women on public transports. Public transports are one of the places spaces where women have to tackle the fear of sexual abuse.⁹¹ The writer highlights that urban planning does not consider women's simple needs, such as security.

"One of the most critical issues affecting the daily life of women is safety. More than 50% of women in many countries, including Canada, say they do not feel safe on public transport, at stops, and on the way home from a stop. (This ratio is between 20-30% for men.) But even a

87 Istanbul Sözleşmesinden Sonra Ne Oldu? [What Happened After the Istanbul Convention?], Reçel (blog), May 8, 2021, <http://recel-blog.com/istanbul-sozlesmesinden-sonra-ne-oldu/>.

88 Yeni Türkiye'de Kürtaj: Bekar Bir Kadının Deneyimi [Abortion in New Turkey: Experience of a Single Women] 5Harfliler (blog), September 7, 2018, <https://www.5harfliler.com/yeni-turkiyede-kurtaj-bekar-bir-kadinin-deneyimi/>.

89 Enloe, Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics.

90 Şeyda İpek, "Erkekler İçin Dizayn Edilmiş Bir Dünya 1 [A World Designed for Men 1]," 5Harfliler (blog), August 2, 2019, <https://www.5harfliler.com/erkekler-icin-dizayn-edilmis-bir-dunya-1/>.

91 Deniz Bayram, "Çatlak Zemin," Çatlak Zemin (blog), January 16, 2017, <https://catlakzemin.com/toplu-tasimada-tecavuz-belediyelerin-sorumlulugu-1/>.

solution that can quickly come to mind, such as lighting the stops, is to ask, “What do women need?” It does not occur to (male) urban planning experts because they do not bother to ask what women may need at the public transport.”⁹²

She adds, “girls use areas such as parks and sports fields much less often than boys, and partly because they don’t feel safe.”⁹³ This is an illustrative example of how public spaces are gendered and remain blind to women’s concerns. Pettman writes, “The Athenian polis marks the emergence of the male citizen and the construction of public spaces as male. Politics involved performance and appearance in the public space. In the private space of the home, women, children, and slaves lived and worked to provide for the physical and emotional needs of men thus freed to go about their public and citizen duties.”⁹⁴ Western state making conceptually and materially constituted gendered spaces and spheres of social activity that “hierarchal structure divisions of authority, power, labor, and resources.”⁹⁵ The gendered dichotomies of spaces and spheres of social activity are still prevalent and discriminate against women in everyday life.

On the other hand, there is still room for agency and transformation. Feminist blog writing makes various approaches visible by bringing more caring and ethical alternatives from the globe. The article called “Women who healed Sarajevo” on 5Harfliler points out Dobre Kote, a Sarajevo-based collective, which seeks to transform abandoned and unusable urban areas by incorporating art and children in the process of transformation.⁹⁶ The Collective works together

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics*, 4.

95 Peterson, “Sexing Political Identities/ Nationalism as Heterosexism”, 41.

96 Saraybosna’yi İyileştiren Kadınlar [Women Who Healed Sarajevo], 5Harfliler (blog), December 5, 2016, <https://www.5harfliler.com/saraybosnayi-iyilestiren-kadinlar/>.

with residents, including children, amplifying the organic bond between urban spaces and their inhabitants.

Another aspect of the gendered spaces and spheres of social activity is domestic labor. Masculinist understandings of the market, labor, and productivity disregard women's domestic reproductive labor and care work. As Pettman powerfully articulates, "all states rely on women's unpaid domestic and reproductive labor," and there is no state that could seriously attempt to pay fairly for women's work.⁹⁷ Furthermore, women's work has been naturalized as a "labor of love," resulting in double load and the domestication of women.⁹⁸ Unlike the hegemonic masculine agenda of the Turkish political, blog articles make gendered labor visible by sharing their personal experiences.⁹⁹ By doing so, blog writers could determine the feminist agenda in a way that reflects their realities. The blog article called "Domestic Labor? Nagging can also be a desert" narrates the writer's "personal" story of frustration that her family has neglected:

"I have been a housewife for 22 years. I raised two children. I did all the housework and caring for the children on my own, unaided. This situation was not the fact that I chose, but the fact that I had to. I had to, but I did not like it. I hated the house, housewife, all the burdens loaded unjustly. I never hid this. I thought it was unfair. I got tired, got angry, and got angry with myself, but I continue instead of leaving [...]. Whereas I have the least free time at home, I am the one who satisfies everyone's demands. However, I work for a short time outside the house and contribute to the household. I am the only person who does not have any sick leave, [...] I am the only person who has to take care of everything and get back to work immediately. I have never been unemployed for 22 years, never quit my job, never received any wages. But today, I learned that I was doing all this to be the queen of the household."¹⁰⁰

97 Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics*, 9.

98 Ibid.

99 Rûmeysa, "Reçel Blog," Reçel Blog (blog), April 4, 2020, <http://recel-blog.com/evde-kalalim-ama-hayat-eve-sigmasin/>.

100 Femihat Yanıtıyor [Femihat Responding], Çatlak Zemin (blog), August 19, 2020, <https://catlakzemin.com/femihat-yanitliyor-ev-ici-emek-mi-tat-kacirmak-da-tatli-olabilir/>.

She narrates what she heard from the household is that she is the boss of the house, the owner of the house, the queen of the house. The romanticization of women's position in private spaces could be seen as an implicit strategy to make women feel capable of activities of immanence such as cooking and cleaning so that men could "feed himself off her labor."¹⁰¹ According to Beauvoir, "woman's drama lies in this conflict between the fundamental claim of every subject which always posits itself as essential, and the demands of a situation that constitutes her as inessential."¹⁰² Her immanence is consumed by male transcendence to survive. Male state transcends by stepping on the female immanence. Put differently, the patterns of masculine state policies and practices are deeply rooted in the everyday routines of the division of gendered labor within the traditional family. Hills show how micro-politics within the conventional family structure produces and naturalizes hierarchical structures based on gender and age.¹⁰³ Family being a micro-organization of society, has the power to normalize gender hierarchies which are directly or indirectly reflected in politics and the practices of nation-states.

Women's labor being naturalized by the state and the household, and their voices are heard at neither level. As the writer narrates her cries for help, she hears back that her motivation is to be the "queen" of the household. The naturalization of women's domestic work denies women's agency as a speaking subject within the household. Demanding an equal share of domestic labor went unnoticed and domestic labor was interpreted as a craving for power by the household. Dotson would explain the household's attitude as "pernicious ignorance" that

101 Simone De Beauvoir , *The Second Sex* (New York, NY: Vintage Classics, 2010), 124.

102 Ibid., 37.

103 Patricia Hill Collins , "It's All In the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation," *Hypatia* 13, no. 3 (1998): pp. 62-82, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1998.tb01370.x>.

results in an epistemically violent act of silencing.¹⁰⁴ According to Dotson, a speaker's ability to be heard cannot be dictated. There should be a willing and capable audience listening.

Otherwise, a failed communicative exchange owing to pernicious ignorance would result in epistemic violence.

State-level pernicious ignorance can be observed in the Turkish National Assembly on the issue of gendered domestic labor. According to the "The Covid Pandemic Women Report" prepared by the main opposition party (CHP)¹⁰⁵, domestic labor has disproportionately increased for women during the pandemic.¹⁰⁶ The report demands immediate policy regulations regarding gendered domestic labor and containment of women. Prior to the report, a parliamentarian from the People's Democratic Party (HDP), Züleyha Gülüm, submitted a parliamentary inquiry to investigate the socio-economic effects of the pandemic on women, which hosted an exciting moment of women's solidarity across four political parties with conflicting political views. Women parliamentarians from HDP, the ruling party (AKP), the main opposition party (CHP), and the central right-wing party (İYİ Party) took the floor to express the adverse effects of the pandemic on the already unfair conditions in terms of domestic labor and care work such as increased hygiene practices and healthy eating.¹⁰⁷ Following the exceptional moment of exchange of perspectives and ideas, Salih Kora, a male parliamentarian from AKP, took the floor to say, "the participation rate of women in the workforce has exceeded 50 percent," and the inquiry was dismissed. Pernicious ignorance operates similarly in the Turkish national

104 Kristie Dotson, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing," *Hypatia* 26, no. 2 (2011): pp. 236-257, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2011.01177.x>.

105 Republican People's Party, commonly referred as CHP.

106 Gülizar Biçer Karaca, "Covid Döneminde Kadın Raporu [Report on Women During Covid Pandemic]," 2021, <https://chp.azureedge.net/7987f24f011f4afba9a38d41610dd8ac.pdf>.

107 "EŞİK'ten TBMM İzleme Raporu: İstanbul Sözleşmesi Maskelerde Kaldı," [Parliamentary Monitoring Report from EŞİK: Istanbul Convention Remains Under Masks] SES Eşitlik, Adalet, Kadın Platformu, November 20, 2020, <http://esitlikadaletkadın.org/esikten-tbmm-inceleme-raporu-istanbul-sozlesmesi-maskelerde-kaldi/>.

assembly and the family; it is the systematic male ignorance and denial of women's voices, experiences, and concerns.

Feminist blog writers intentionally or unintentionally raise awareness within their community and articulate possible gender-sensitive solutions. Solutions do not always come in the form of future maps for a policy framework but also in the form of individual practical suggestions such as “how to tackle misogynistic behavior in a white-collar plaza setting.”¹⁰⁸ Unlike high politics, feminist blog-writing creates a healing space through community support, solidarity, and personal tips. It expands the possibilities of feminist politics. One of the editors of the *Reçel* blog explains, “blog-writing can be seen as a practice of returning to the very core principles of radical feminism that was to organize activism around the everyday forms of oppression.” She adds, “*Reçel* serves as a feminist archive” that could map out the feminist political agenda of the time in question. They contribute to a broader feminist memory work by expanding the limits of history beyond the conventional forms of history-writing. Feminist blogs incorporate multiple individual stories, perspectives, experiences, struggles, concerns, and global perspectives into feminist history along with misogynistic policies and discourse.

As Enloe writes, “every time the conversation slips into abstractions, one of the women pulls it back to women's complex everyday realities. This is what making feminist sense of international politics.”¹⁰⁹ Blog articles reveal patriarchal ordering in the form of micro and macro practices of daily life and reaffirm and amplify the intertwinement of the personal and political by situating women and their everyday experiences within a larger political framework. In this way, blog articles enable the creation of an alternative political agenda(s)

108 Femihat Yanıtıyor [Femihat Responding], Çatlak Zemin (blog), November 7, 2017, <https://catlakzemin.com/femihat-yanitliyor-plaza-yasaminda-kadin-dusmani-erkeklerle-varolmaya-calismanin-dayanilmaz-agirligi/>.

109 Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. p. 359.

and perspectives. That is how blog-writing comes in the form of making feminist sense of politics. In the next chapter, blog writers' stylized interventions will be discussed. The role of creative language use and various styles of writing in balancing the hegemonic masculine character of politics will be investigated.

Chapter 3 - POLITICS: IDENTITIES AND PERFORMATIVITY

One of the most salient features of practicing feminist blog writing is the diversity of identities and styles. Blog writers unsettle conventional boundaries of identity categories such as modern/conservative, and they contest ideological borders that kept women separated for years. Furthermore, some blog articles simultaneously perform multiple identities, such as Muslim feminist, and scientist mother, and many more. In this sense, blog writing reveals the fluid, dynamic and porous nature of social identities and polarities. Stylized interventions from blog-writers engender individualized alternatives to rationality-driven and heterosexist modes of political engagement. Creative styles of writing and language used by blog-writers balance the hegemonic hyper-masculine language of politics by creating new possibilities of relating to others, connecting and co-creating the hybrid maps of politics, power, and identities.

Adopting personalized and creative techniques of writing contests the conventional rationality-driven, heterosexist, and plain language of politics. As Cohn asserts, “our reconstructive task is a task of recognizing and developing alternative concepts of rationality, a task of creating rich and imaginative voices – diverse voices whose conversations with each other will invent those futures.”¹¹⁰ Blog writers’ varied personalized linguistic interventions engender possibilities for transforming the style and language of political engagement.

A blog article called “Bureaucracy of existence” creatively demonstrates the writer’s internal tensions on emotions. A woman who considers her emotions as weakness narrates her internal talks in the form of state negotiations. Her artistic intervention reflects on the masculine

110 Carol, “Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 12, no. 4 (1987): pp. 687-718.

character of state relations by drawing out two states, I and myself, regarding the politics of emotions. Individual resistance to the patriarchal teachings and hyper-masculine rationality is actualized in writing. The article comes in the form of a fable:

“As you know or do not know, the land of I has been complaining about how lousy emotionality is on various media channels for years. In the last meeting, the ambassador of I stated that “politics of sentimentality is an indication of weakness. I hope the country of Myself will give up this policy as soon as possible and imprison its feelings like us and other powerful nations.”¹¹¹

The tension derives from the ambiguity and imbalance between the feminine and masculine self within her. She explores how to negotiate her desire to be powerful and strong with her sensuality and emotions. Her inner talk comes in the form of the peaceful resistance of the feminine self against hyper-masculine rationality. Eventually, she decides to reconcile her hyper-masculine desires with her sensual self. She continues:

“As a result of our long studies, we have seen that the emotionality policy is not that bad,” says another resident. On the other hand, the Civil Emotions Organization addressed this issue in its latest report: Sentimentality is associated with womanhood. The woman is weak; Then, sentimentality is also a powerless policy. [...] However, in our latest research, we could find that neither the concept of femininity nor emotionality is related to powerlessness. [...] Being a woman is a powerful reform, and sentimentality is a good policy. We hope that in the negotiations, both sides will make the necessary concessions and provide peace assurance as soon as possible.”

Her conclusion unsettles gender as a fixed identity. Instead, the storyline reveals that both feminine and masculine parts co-exist within her. As Butler powerfully articulates, “gender is in no way a stable identity,” it is “a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo.”¹¹² In that sense, the “I” state performs masculine gender to be recognized by the

111 Varomanın Bürokrasisi [Bureaucracy of Existence], Reçel (blog), April 14, 2021, <http://recel-blog.com/var-olma-nin-burokrasisi/>

112 Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” 519-520.

group of male states. Gendered statehood/selfhood is practiced and naturalized as “the stylized repetition of acts through time.”¹¹³ Butler writes, “the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking of subversive repetition of that style.”¹¹⁴ In feminist blogs, creativity and diversity in styles engender new possibilities of relating to others, connecting and co-creating the hybrid maps of politics, power, and identities.

3.1 Stylized Interventions and Performing Identities: Islam, Mothers, and Science

As discussed in the previous chapters, Turkish politics is a highly polarized space where women of varying identity categories may not realize how much they have in common. To illustrate the possible genesis of contestation and transformation, two scholars are particularly apt here: Audre Lorde and Judith Butler. Lorde articulates that those differences among women are essential for creativity. Therefore, denial of differences equals denial of the creative function.¹¹⁵ Feminist blogs demonstrate a strong case in terms of affirming difference as a source of enrichment.

Secondly, Butler’s work is equally important to understand how identity categories can be destabilized and transformed. I read Butler’s work on gender, taking gender as an identity layer among all others. Butler writes that gendered bodies are corporeal “styles of the flesh” that have a “histories condition and limit the possibilities” and “never fully self-styled.”¹¹⁶ Gender,

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, 1st ed., vol. 3 (New York, NYC : Crossing Press Berkeley, 1987), pp. 122-132.

¹¹⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, US: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 227.

like other identity layers, is a fluid yet limiting concept reproduced through repetitive performative acts. They are “created through sustained social performances.”¹¹⁷ Then the question is, what happens in the case of discontinuation? Butler writes, “Gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized.”¹¹⁸ Like gender, identities can be destabilized, deconstructed, and reconstructed. In the next section, three thematic engagements, Muslim womanhood, woman scientist, motherhood, will be discussed to illustrate how feminist blog-writing may unsettle existing political identity categories and present alternative modes of engagement without conforming to conventional styles of talking/doing politics.

3.1.1 Performing Islam

Muslim women’s movement and their resistance to their symbolic annihilation from public spaces gained momentum in the 1990s. One of the iconic figures of the “headscarf issue” is Merve Kavakçı, a former parliamentarian, who wanted to her oath at the parliament without removing her headscarf. As a veiled woman who “was perceived as not worthy of being in the parliament,”¹¹⁹ she was subjected to various forms of violent disciplinary practices by the state. She was “jeered at the parliament, prevented from taking her oath, attacked by the press, [...] accused by the president of being a threat to the modern Turkish state.”¹²⁰ Kavakçı’s bodily intervention to the symbolic fortress of the masculine state was a form of resistance to androcentric norms and practices in their purest. She patiently demanded recognition, yet she was denied. According to Butler, “gender is a performance with clearly punitive

117 Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” 527-528.

118 Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York, USA: Routledge, 2004), 42.

119 Islam, *Headscarf Politics in Turkey: A Postcolonial Reading*, 109.

120 *Ibid.*, 2.

consequences.”¹²¹ Performing Muslim womanhood was non-permissible in the male territory of politics. Former prime minister, Davutoğlu, explained how the political change happened.

“The foundation of AK Party politics is to protect [...] the honor of our women. This is the main difference between the old Turkey and the new Turkey. Close your eyes for a moment and remember the old Turkey, the old Turkey that said to a woman wearing a headscarf, who entered the Turkish Grand National Assembly with the national will, “somebody should teach this woman her place.”¹²²

The AKP government protects the honor of “our” women, which reaffirms women’s position “as his [own] to save against the system.”¹²³ Women are precious yet vulnerable belongings of the nation;¹²⁴ As Enloe asserts, women are often treated as “patriarchally sculpted symbols of the nation” by male national leaders.¹²⁵ Thus, their participation should be secured by the responsible male members of society. In his discourse, the AKP government is positioned as the saviors of the helpless veiled woman that protects and enables their participation. The fight and resistance of veiled women are appropriated by the AKP male politicians who saved them from immoral secularist men who forced women to uncover their hair. A blog article called “If we are normalized, why do I experience these?”¹²⁶ shed light on the hardships and pressure that veiled women still experience in Turkey. The writer argues that the headscarf is far from being normalized; she illustrates her arguments with references to her everyday experience of covering her hair in different styles that is never unnoticed.

“If a woman’s act of covering her head were normalized, we wouldn’t still feel the need to talk about it. We would not be subjected to so much judgment and imposition in our family, on the

121 Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” 522.

122 “Kimse Kadınlık Onurunu Çiğneyemeyecek [Nobody Will Violate the Female Honor],” AA, March 15, 2015, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/kimse-kadinlik-onurunu-cigneyemeyecek/66765>.

123 Gayatri Spivak Chakravorty and Lawrence Grossberg, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” ed. Cary Nelson, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, 1998, pp. 271-313, 281.

124 Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, 305.

125 *Ibid.*, 87.

126 Madem Normalleştik Ben Niye Bunları Yaşıyorum? [If We Are Normalized, Why Do I Experience These?], Reçel (blog), May 18, 2018, <http://recel-blog.com/madem-normallestik-ben-bunlari-niye-yasiyorum/>.

street, in the subway, at school, on social media. We would not be regularly expelled from religion because we do not comply with the hijab standards of others; we wouldn't be seen as inferior to religion. [...] Contrary to what is claimed, I do not see society as normal, nor do I feel liberated. For me, the headscarf struggle is now a struggle that I have to wage against religious people.”¹²⁷

Another blog article, “The story you are telling is not mine,” resists against the appropriation of veiled women's fight by the video clip prepared by the ruling party:

“AKP came with a white horse, lifted the ban, life became a feast. They talked, the AKP did. [...] We are used to the hearing lies in politics, but when one hears a story about herself, about the situations and feelings she goes through, she [questions]. She says, was this the story? Even if it started like this, did it continue like this, did this story end like this?”¹²⁸

Unlike the male territory of politics, feminist blog-writing characterized as an open and hybrid space enables stylized interventions in various ways. Spiritual interventions are neither seen as a threat to the secular inhabitants of these blog sites nor needed to be guaranteed by “kindhearted” men. Furthermore, feminist blog sites render visible multiple feminisms and heterogeneous styles of Islam. A Muslim woman resists the conventional (male) interpretations of Islam on homosexuality. She explains how she decided to create her own understanding of Islam based on the principle of love. Resisting against the imposed interpretations and creating one's own is a practice of claiming female and Muslim agency:

“I took all the beautiful and useful teachings in Islam and adopted them again. Frankly, I didn't care about many other issues. There are many comments on the verses on [homosexuality], and they all emanate hatred. I think my religion and my God could not have wanted to say this. I just love it and will always love it. The most important element of my Islam is “love”!”¹²⁹

127 Ibid.

128 Feyza, Anlattığın Hikaye Benim Hikayem Değil [The Story You Tell Is Not Mine], Reçel (blog), May 4, 2015, <http://recel-blog.com/anlattigin-benim-hikayem-degil/>.

129 Benim Dinim Bunları Söylemiş Olamaz [My Religion Could Not Have Said These], Reçel (blog), May 11, 2018, <http://recel-blog.com/benim-dinim-bunlari-soylemek-istemis-olamaz/>

Drawing insights from religious teachings is another mode of stylized political engagement practiced in blog writing. A call for care and ethics referring to Islamic teachings on tolerance, unity, and respect may constitute an alternative approach for recreating new associations with political Islam. Stylized religious language exemplifies pacific conservative intervention to politics and contests the stereotypical assumptions about political Islam within Turkey. In the blog article, “Resisting through fasting,” the writer reminds the teachings of Islam to stop othering practices against the Kurdish population to create a more inclusive and caring space for co-habitation. She refers to the spiritual teachings to communicate the need for recognition of human differences with references to the Qur’an in the following way:

“And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colors: verily in that are Signs for those who know. (Rum, 30:22) We would tremble and say to deny His languages is to deny Allah. Our differences were with our richness, and superiority was through piety. Did we not believe in them? How can a Kurdish announcement on the plane divide us?”¹³⁰

Blog-writing offers a freer space for women’s creative engagement and story-telling that contest previously established limits and perception regarding Muslim women. One of the editors of the Reçel Blog said, in the interview, “previously identities were performed within the mutually exclusive territories of each identity (modern/pious). Nowadays, identities become entangled, fluid, and dynamic. We cannot talk about mutual exclusivity of Islam and feminism.”¹³¹ Performing multiple Muslim womanhood in blog-writing is vital in two ways. First, the diversity of interpretations, performances, and styles unsettle hegemonic “system of representation”¹³² on a pious woman that “make them a product of a state power.”¹³³ It is a

130 Oruçla Direnmek [Resisting by Fasting], Reçel (blog), February 5, 2016, <http://recel-blog.com/orucla-direnme/>.

131 Interview with editor B, May 20, 2021

132 Islam, Headscarf Politics in Turkey: A Postcolonial Reading, 7.

133 Ibid.

resistance against the nationalist rhetoric in which women are denied agency. Interventions in personalized styles render complexity and heterogeneity of women's experiences visible and allow them to co-construct their narrative. These interventions destabilize demarcating boundaries between modern/conservative women, allowing them to support each other's resistance.¹³⁴ Secondly, performing multiple womanhood(s) disconcerts the binary conceptualization of gender, which is one of the foundations of the nation-state that naturalizes male domination.¹³⁵

3.1.2 Performing Motherhood: Are you one of the sacred ones?

AKP politicians have often praised motherhood. Former prime minister Davutoğlu stated, "Motherhood is the position that undertakes the most honorable mission of humanity."¹³⁶ The motherhood is symbolically constituted as the "nationalist wombs" who are the "bearers" of the nation's future generations."¹³⁷ Deputy speaker of the national assembly, Bilgiç, said, "our Prophet says, 'heaven is under the feet of mothers.' As it can be understood from this hadith, motherhood is a sacred profession."¹³⁸ President Erdoğan takes it further and claims that motherhood is being necessary for the self-fulfillment of a woman. "A woman who rejects motherhood, [...] regardless how successful her working life is, is deficient, is incomplete."¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Rümeysa, "*Şortuma da Başörtüme de Karışma [Keep your nose out of my short and my headscarf]*," Reçel (blog), July 30, 2017, <http://recel-blog.com/sortuma-da-basortume-de-karisma/>.

¹³⁵ Peterson, "Sexing Political Identities/ Nationalism as Heterosexism", 55.

¹³⁶ "Kimse Kadınlık Onurunu Çığneyemeyecek [Nobody Will Violate the Female Honor]," AA, March 15, 2015, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/kimse-kadinlik-onurunu-cigneyemeyecek/66765>.

¹³⁷ Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, 94.

¹³⁸ "Annelik Kutsal Bir Meslektir [Motherhood Is a Sacred Profession]," Son32, May 9, 2021, <https://www.son32.com/haber/annelik-kutsal-bir-meslektir>.

¹³⁹ "Turkish President Says Childless Women Are 'Deficient, Incomplete'," *The Guardian*, June 6, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/06/turkish-president-erdogan-childless-women-deficient-incomplete>.

In these speeches, motherhood is symbolized as an inorganic mission to be completed to reach a higher status in the social hierarchy.

There is a flip side to the concept of motherhood at the state level. Not all mothers are sacred from the male state perspective. Saturday Mothers,¹⁴⁰ a group of women whose relatives were disappeared in police custody in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup, gather at Taksim, Istanbul on every Saturday since 1995. Saturday mothers have faced police repression, including violent handling and beating at times.¹⁴¹ On 25 August 2018, the security forces intervened in the group with tear gas and baton rounds.¹⁴² In addition to that, the minister of Interior Soylu acknowledged what happened and said, “Should we have turned a blind eye to the abuse of motherhood by a terrorist organization?”¹⁴³ An alternative reading of his statement is that motherhood is vulnerable to manipulative acts of terrorists. Therefore, it had to be defended by the state. Mothers are inherently “characterized as apolitical”¹⁴⁴ within the nation-state discourse. Their resistance, political agency, and their act of demanding justice were not recognized.

In blog articles, the concept of motherhood is deconstructed and reconstructed based on the writer’s own feelings and understanding. The blog articles problematize how motherhood is reproduced in religious/nationalist discourse. A blog article, “Maybe motherhood is not such a sacred profession?” resists against the prominent discourse on the sacredness of motherhood

140 “Turkey: Listen to the Saturday Mothers,” Amnesty International, November 11, 1998, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur44/017/1998/en/>.

141 Ibid.

142 “Soylu'dan 'Cumartesi Anneleri' Açıklaması [Soylu's Explanation Regarding Saturday Mothers],” Bir Gün, August 27, 2028, <https://www.birgun.net/haber/soylu-dan-cumartesi-anneleri-aciklamasi-228222>.

143 “Polis Cumartesi Anneleri'ne Plastik Mermiyle Saldırdı [Police Attack Saturday Mothers with Plastic Bullets],” Bianet, August 25, 2018, <https://bianet.org/bianet/print/200206-cumartesi-annelerine-polis-biber-gazi-ve-plastik-mermiyle-saldir-di-en-az-8-gozalti-var>.

144 Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores Women’s Violence in Global Politics* (New York, NY: Zed Books, 2017), 51.

and develops an alternative reading of religious teachings. The writer questions and reinterprets what Islam might have said on mothers and produces her own reading of religious teachings.

“I realized that I could not live with these doubts in these years when my fertile age was about to pass, and I decided to reconsider the religious references. [...] In all the verses about mothers, the mother and father are mentioned together. [...] But what is essential in all these verses is to do good to parents, to be merciful, not to hurt them. The reason for this is their self-sacrifice for us, [...] their compassion for us. In none of these verses is motherhood attributed to an existential meaning and holiness. No comparison was made between the mother and the non-mother, and a hierarchical relationship was not established.”¹⁴⁵

Motherhood can be performed in the form of stylized intervention in communicating concerns of everyday politics. A mother happened to find a children’s book on her child’s desk, reaffirms her position as a Muslim mother, and claim voice over the non-pedagogical approach of the religious children’s books.¹⁴⁶ Motherhood could come in the form of a claiming voice over the campaign on removing the co-education system.¹⁴⁷ Performing motherhood becomes claiming agency in two (or possibly more) ways. Firstly, it attempts to detach oneself from (male) state-generated discourse on simplifying the understanding of women’s body’s organic function. Put it differently, individual intervention contests the hegemonic discourse on mother-as-a-womb of the nation and motherhood-as-a-national duty. By doing so, motherhood reclaims agency and recognition of its own in self-discovery and self-realization. Secondly, it opens up the possibilities of multiple creative modes of engagements challenging hyper-masculine patterns of political engagement.

145 Annelik Aslında O Kadar Da Kutsal Olmayabilir mi? [Could Motherhood Actually Not Be That Sacred?], Reçel (blog), December 12, 2014, <http://recel-blog.com/annelik-aslinda-o-kadar-da-kutsal-olmayabilir-mi/>.

146 Feyza, Bütün Kitaplar Faydalı Değil (Not All Books are Educative), Reçel (blog), July 8, 2015, <http://recel-blog.com/bütün-kitaplar-faydali-degil/>.

147 Rûmeysa, I Want Co-education That’s it, Reçel (blog), May 15, 2019, <http://recel-blog.com/i-want-coeducation-thats-it/>.

3.1.3 Performing Science: Physics, Lacemaking, DNA Sequences

An interviewee, a physicist, practicing blog-writing in gender issues and popular science, said that her field had been dominated by men, reflected in the technical language. However, she has recently noticed that letting out her feminine self helps her boost creativity in writing/talking about her work. While writing a popular science blog on symmetries in physics, she depicted them as “a lace-like structure.” Then, she was impressed by the power of her feminine imagination for finding such a simple yet ingenious way to explain her work to other people. Her female interventions make it easier to talk to people who do not have a background in physics.

The same applies to using scientific language to communicate social polarization. Creative deployment of scientific references diversifies political language and serves as a stylistic engagement. The article “A medieval darkness: a binary gender system” discusses the randomness of DNA sequencing and normality of variations in evolution theory to illustrate binary gender construction is practicality rather than descriptive:

“Not the strongest, the most beautiful, the most handsome, the most wonderful creatures, but the living beings that are compatible with the environment survive. That is, the laws of physics require this. As you can see, there is more harmony than a hierarchy. We can say that success in natural selection is roughly related to how large and rich the gene pool the population has. If there is diversity, you will continue to exist. I am calling out to our people, do not be so afraid of colors, diversity is richness, it is a necessity for living.”¹⁴⁸

Scientific references such as natural selection, the randomness of evolution, and DNA sequences are a creative engagement to discuss social tensions and political polarization. The

148 Özlem Yalçın, Bir ortaçağ karanlığı: İkili biyolojik cinsiyet sistemi [A medieval darkness: The binary sex system], Çatlak Zemin (blog), March 31, 2021, <https://catlakzemin.com/bir-ortacag-karanligi-ikili-biyolojik-cinsiyet-sistemi/>.

withdrawal decision from the Istanbul convention revived discussions around the LGBTQI+ community in Turkish politics. The Convention was another example of solidarity within the national assembly. All four political parties (246 in favor and one abstention out of 247)¹⁴⁹ voted in favor of the Convention on 24 November 2011.¹⁵⁰ However, more conservative AKP supporters started voicing discontent with some articles of the Convention. One of the arguments of these critiques is that Article 4 normalizes homosexuality and advocates for LGBTQ+ rights.¹⁵¹ Article 4 states the Convention condemns discrimination of any kind, including gender-based discrimination.¹⁵² Nonetheless, the arguments regarding Article 4 framed the protection of the rights of homosexual people as abnormal and “contradictory with Turkish norms and values,” thus, normalizes violence against the LGBTQ+ groups. Herein, science comes in the form of intervention, if not resistance, to inorganic political views on human diversity.

3.2 Blog Writing as Resistance

Feminist blog-writing for the platforms Reçel, Çatlak Zemin, and 5Harfliler can be seen as a practice of resistance, rejection, and claiming agency. As blog-writing becomes a way of political engagement, women challenge the patriarchal ordering of power relations that deny them voice and agency and render their presence invisible. In Turkish politics, these three feminist blogs demonstrate a case of a fused solidarity community that resists the stereotypical

149“Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi,” Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, November 24, 2011, https://web.archive.org/web/20200809140501/https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tutanak_sd.birlesim_baslangic?P4=21045&P5=B&page1=85&page2=85&web_user_id=18881547.

150 Deniz Işık, “T24,” 20 Maddede İstanbul Sözleşmesi Nedir? [Istanbul Convention in 20 Points], August 8, 2020, <https://t24.com.tr/haber/20-maddede-istanbul-sozlesmesi-nedir,895435>.

151 Ersin Çelik, “İstanbul Sözleşmesi’Ndeki LGBT Kodları Nelerdi? [What Are the LGBT Codes in the Istanbul Convention],” Yeni Şafak, March 24, 2021, <https://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/ersin-celik/istanbul-sozlesmesindeki-lgbt-kodlari-nelerdi-2057995>.

152 “Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence,” Treaty Office, 2011, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168008482e>.

understanding of femininity in different ways. Blog writers' creative resistance unsettle the hegemonic masculinity that dictates political agenda and limits modes of political engagements.

Individual resistance becomes visible, dynamic, and fluid in the form of writing. While rejecting the social norms, perceptions, convictions, and traditions, the self reclaims agency in resistance. Resistance comes from a position of imposition of hegemonic discourse upon women; Žizek asserts that the resisting subject is not convinced of its inner inferiority or lack of its capacity.¹⁵³ Fanon's interpretation of the resisting subject is complementary in this sense. According to him, the interiorized self is not convinced of its inferiority; conversely, it is always on alert to change the role assigned to it.¹⁵⁴ With Fanon's terminology, the female self is "made to feel inferior" within the patriarchal episteme, yet "by no means convinced of her inferiority."¹⁵⁵

Resistance is also actualized before and through writing. An editor/writer explained, "writing is the product of a long and deep-thinking process, yet the act itself is short. The idea writing initiates the thought process."¹⁵⁶ The writing process consists of external stimulant (an event/situation), inter stimulant (the idea writing), and stimulated self-consciousness. In that sense, feminist writing serves as a trigger to unlock one's own resourcefulness. Another blog-writer mentioned, "when I started writing blogs, I did not consider myself as a feminist. But the more I wrote, the more I notice patriarchal norms and beliefs encoded in me. Since then, I am trying to see and transform them."¹⁵⁷ In that sense, narrating personal stories and opinions gives room for self-reflection and introspection. Self-realization becomes a mode of claiming

153 Slavoj Žizek, *Violence Six Sideways Reflections*, 1st ed. (New York, USA: Picador, 2008), 73.

154 Franz Fanon, "On Violence," in *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2004), pp. 1-62, 16.

155 Ibid.

156 Interview with editor B, May 20, 2021

157 Interview with writer C, May 20, 2021

agency; the subject reclaims its subjecthood in seeking transformation. Feminist writing opens a space “to rewrite what was inhibiting and obsolete.”¹⁵⁸ Therefore, what has been subjugating, polarizing, and categorizing could be rewritten.

Lastly, feminist blog-writing is an intervention in hegemonic masculinity in politics. It is a form of claiming voice that resists the aggressive male rationality in doing politics. Personalized methods of communication highlight women’s subjectivities and engenders myriads of possibilities of “doing politics.” It is a stylistic resistance to the limits of hyper-masculine, political language, and monotypic modes of engagement. Feminist blog-writing opens up the narrowly defined codes of conduct. Herein, it becomes an ethical practice to inhabit the space.

158 Erzsébet Strausz, “Writing the Self and Transforming Knowledge in International Relations: Towards a Politics of Liminality,” (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), pp. 1-26, 2.

CONCLUSION

This thesis sought to find out how the new feminist praxis of blog-writing balance, if not transform, the hyper-masculine character of Turkish politics. Informed by previous literature on poststructuralist feminism and feminist IR, it explores blog-writing as a political mode of engagement. The thesis starts with situating women in the Turkish modernization period and exploring the roots of social fractions based on political identity categories. A closer reading of modern Turkish political history reveals the political tendency to create a homogeneous community. This tendency was reflected in previous feminist activism in the country. However, the in-depth analysis on the Reçel blog, Çatlak Zemin and 5Harfliler shed light on the change in practice. The practice of feminist blog writing utilizes differences as a source of enrichment. Furthermore, these feminist blogs recreate the cartography of politics by situating women's perspectives and experiences of everyday life as a valid source of knowledge. The feminist blogs diverge from conventional politics in two main ways: content and styles of engagement.

The blog articles make multiple stories, perspectives, and concerns visible and anchor them in a larger political frame. Thus, the feminist cartographies of social and political are broader. The feminist methods of engagement are diverse. Thematic engagements, Muslim womanhood, woman scientist, motherhood unsettled existing political identity categories and presents alternative modes of engagement without conforming to conventional styles of doing politics.

This thesis contributes to the existing literature on feminist IR by theorizing feminist blog writing as a mode of political engagement. Feminist blog writing comes in the form of claiming agency, resistance, and rejecting the androcentric norms and hyper-masculinity. Resistance is embedded in stylized modes of communication that reject of conditionality of recognition of

one's agency based on the patriarchal codes and standards. Feminist blog-writing opens new possibilities for creative engagement, co-creation, and transformation.

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