

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. MoulayTahar University, Saida Faculty of Letters, Languages and Arts Department of English Language and Literature



Orientalism and Middle Eastern Feminism in *Deconstructing Images of The Turkish Women* by Zehra Arat

A Thesis Submitted as Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of *Master* in Literature and Civilization.

Presented by: Supervised by:

Miss. BELGHABA IKRAM Dr.MAACHOU KADDOUR

Board of Examiners

Dr. YOUCEF MOUSTEFAOUI Chair Person (MAA) University of Saida

Dr. MAACHOU KADDOUR Supervisor (MCB) University of Saida

Dr.DJAMILA MEHDAOUI Examiner (MCB) University of Saida

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Declaration of Originality I hereby declare that this submission of my work and that , it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution.

Date: 20 / 05/ 2024

Name: Belghaba Ikram

Signature:

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my beloved parents who have supported me, surrounded me with love and care, believed in me since my first day in this road. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my beloved father, who has been my primary source of inspiration. Your ideals and values have become an integral part of who I am. I am aware of your unwavering aspiration to see me reach the pinnacle of success. Today, as I stand here, I proudly lift my head in acknowledgment of your steadfast support. Your vision has guided me, and it is my decision to follow this path. Thank you, father, for imparting knowledge and providing invaluable guidance that has illuminated my journey.

My lovely cheerful mother, you are the light at the end of a dark road, your prayers have always paved my path into success, your beautiful eyes and captivating smile give me courage each time life puts its burden on me.

My sister Yasmine, I have always called you little angel, thank you for your support and help in completing this task, thanks for the nights you spent with me writing this humble work. With heartfelt appreciation.

I dedicate this achievement to to my cherished confidante, Fifi and our enduring friendship and shared experiences.

Also, I would like to thank all my family members, my sisters and my brother, my grandmother, aunts, cousins and uncles for their kind and supportive words. I hope this work would set you proud of your daughter.

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Abstract

The portrayal of women has long served as a powerful reflection of cultural values, societal expectations, and evolving gender roles. This research work aims to provide an overview of the portrayal of Turkish women, highlighting the transformative insights of Zehra Arat. Furthermore, the study seeks to dismantle Orientalist stereotypes and tropes while navigating the complex intersectional dynamics of gender, culture, and historical context. Through the examination of Orientalism, the research underscores its profound influence on societal perceptions of Turkish women. Moreover, it probes the pivotal role of Middle Eastern feminism in challenging Western hegemony and reshaping narratives of Turkish women's identity. By closely examining Arat's scholarly contributions, the research emphasizes her persistent advocacy for challenging Orientalist representations and advancing the empowerment of Turkish women on both local and global platforms. Henceforth, this study examines the evolution of Turkish women's identity and the strategic efforts to counter Orientalist narratives through an exploration of media, literature, and art.

Keywords: Identity, Middle East feminism, Orientalism, Turkish women, Zehra Arat.

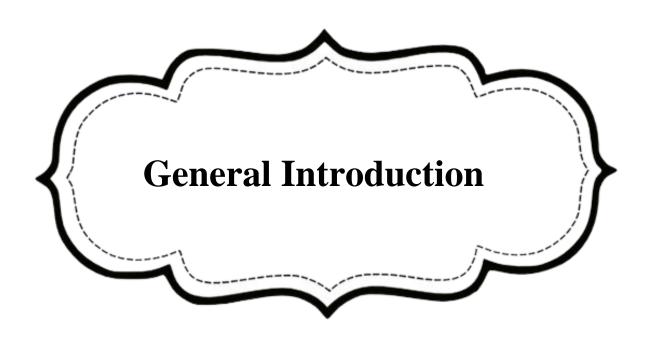
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General Introduction

Women in the Middle East are complex figures, reflecting both tradition and change. They act as guardians of culture, shaping societies' visions for the future. Despite the region's rich diversity, cultural norms influence the perceptions of women. Their story is a dynamic one, reflecting historical shifts, from ancient civilizations to the influence of patriarchal structures and religion on societal norms. Common stereotypes persist, perpetuated in part by Orientalist narratives that exoticize and otherize women in this region. However, feminist movements have emerged to challenge these portrayals and provide women with opportunities to share their own narratives.

Turkey, with its rich history shaped by influences from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, offers a unique perspective on the portrayal of women. From the Ottoman era to the modern republic, Turkish women have experienced significant shifts, from limited depictions under cultural norms to embracing modernization and women's rights championed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Despite challenges and stereotypes perpetuated by Orientalist narratives, a growing feminist movement in Turkey advocates for more empowered portrayals of women in society.

In this context, this research will delve into the complex narrative surrounding Turkish women, aiming to examine the influences of Orientalism and Middle Eastern feminism on their representation. With a particular focus on the scholarly contributions of Zehra Arat, who holds paramount importance in bridging this gap by shedding light on the experiences of Turkish women. This study will seek to uncover Orientalist stereotypes while navigating the multifaceted intersection of gender, culture, and historical context.

On the light of the background provided, this work will contribute significantly to a more nuanced understanding of Turkish women's identities and challenges prevailing stereotypes. The following objectives are intended: Firstly, to shed light on how Orientalism has historically shaped Western perceptions of Turkish women and its impact on their epresentation. Secondly, to put under discussion what is the role of Middle Eastern feminism in challenging Western hegemony and reshaping narratives surrounding Turkish women's identities and roles in society. Finally, to reveal ehra Arat's scholarly contributions in challenging Orientalist representations and empowering Turkish women.

To address these objectives, the research poses the following questions::

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- 1. How has Orientalism historically shaped Western perceptions of Turkish women, and what impact has this had on their representation?
- 2. How has Middle Eastern feminism contributed to the reevaluation and redefinition of Turkish women's identities and roles in society?
- 3. To what extent do Zehra Arat's key themes and motifs challenge and subvert Orientalist stereotypes about Turkish women?

Based on these questions, the hypotheses proposed are:

- 1. Orientalism has played a significant role in shaping perceptions and representations of Turkish women, with real-world consequences in how they are viewed and treated.
- 2. Middle Eastern feminism has empowered Turkish women, facilitating a more nuanced understanding of their roles and identities in society.
- 3. Zehra Arat's deconstruction of images of Turkish women serves as a significant critique of Orientalism, challenging and redefining Western representations.

This research work will use an interdisciplinary approach that combines literary analysis, involving the examination of Turkish women's representation in literature, the identification of common stereotypes and tropes, and assessment of the transformative contributions of Zehra Arat. Additionally, it will adopt a critical theory to analyze Orientalism as a method of cultural representation, explore the impact of colonial history on gender dynamics, and critique Western hegemony in shaping perceptions of the "Other." Furthermore, it will study the Middle Eastern feminist perspectives, involving the critique of patriarchal structures and exploration of the role of women in challenging and reshaping societal norms.

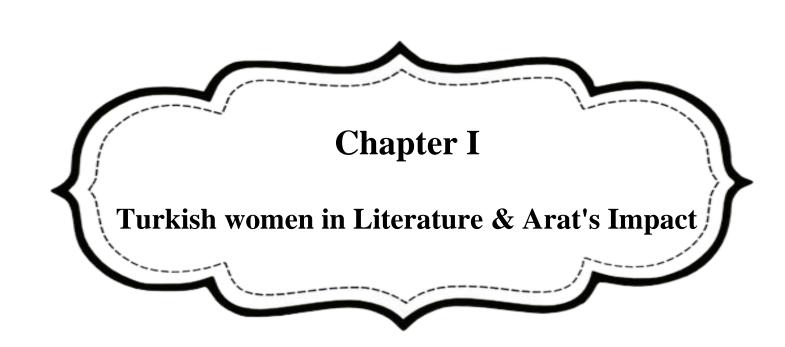
This research work will comprise of three chapters to provide a detailed analysis The first chapter will be devoted to the depiction of Turkish women through history and societal changes in literature. It will examine literature's reflective role, the evolution of Turkish literature, and prevalent stereotypes. This chapter will lay the groundwork for a deeper understanding of Turkish women's representation and Arat's contributions.

The second chapter will be divided into two sections: The first section will delve into Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, examining its role in perpetuating East-West

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dichotomies and power dynamics, with a focus on its implications for Turkish women. The second section will provide a historical overview of feminism, defines Middle Eastern feminism, and will explore its intersection with gender, culture, and colonial history in Turkey. This chapter will aim to establish the theoretical foundation for understanding the complex relationship between Orientalism and Middle East feminism within Turkey's socio-cultural context.

Finally, the third chapter Chapter will critically analyze the multifaceted identity of Turkish women through the lenses of Orientalist representations, Middle East feminist perspectives, and intersectionality, with a particular focus on the transformative contributions of Zehra Arat Ultimately, it will offer a comprehensive analysis of the complex factors shaping Turkish women's identities within socio-cultural contexts.



1.1. Introduction:

In this introductory chapter we attempt to present an insightful exploration of Turkish women's portrayal in literature, tracing a narrative that traverses the historical progression of Turkish literary works to the nuanced evolution of female characters. Central to this exploration is a thorough analysis of the transformative impact of Zehra Arat, a scholar whose contributions have significantly influenced the dialogue surrounding Turkish women. From examining the role of literature in society to unveiling common stereotypes and tropes, this study delves into the complex layers of cultural expectations embedded in narratives. The exploration offers glimpses into Zehra Arat's background, followed by a succinct overview of her key ideas and a focused investigation into her contributions to Orientalism and Middle East feminism.

1.2. The Representation of Turkish Women in Literature:

Literature serves as a reflection of cultural norms and values, shaping and reflecting societal attitudes towards gender roles (Singh, 2019, p. 39). As Singh (2019) asserts, literature mirrors the culture, with women's representation evolving over time. Shukla (2016) further highlights the ambivalence in literature's portrayal of women, depicting diverse perspectives and approaches. While some authors portray women as symbols of strength and unity, others reduce them to objects of pleasure, reflecting both personal experiences and societal stereotypes (Singh, 2019, p. 39).

Furthermore, Shukla (2016) underscores the historical bias in literature, where women were often marginalized and limited in their roles due to the dominance of male authors and strict literacy constraints. This bias has perpetuated the narrative of women being marginalized and controlled throughout literary history. Female characters have been interpreted in diverse roles, ranging from archetypes of wickedness, heartlessness, and prostitution to those of motherhood, wifeliness, sisterhood, deceitfulness, partnership, and confidants (Singh, 2019, p. 40). Nonetheless, Singh (2019) emphasizes the significant contribution of women to oral culture, which eventually influenced written literature.

In Eastern civilizations, such as those discussed by Patra (2022), women were often confined to traditional gender roles, perceived as dependent beings fulfilling the desires of men. Moreover, Önen and Sincar (2022) discuss the representation of women in Turkish literature, noting that despite the emergence of successful female authors, the

representation of women remains limited. Thus, while literature reflects societal changes and challenges gender norms, it also perpetuates historical biases and inequalities.

1.2.1. The Reflective Role of Literature in Society:

"If we are to promote our rich cultural heritage, then the most logical thing to do is to preserve both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage in writing...consequently literature. Literature survives the test of time and is always apprehended. The main stakeholder in the preservation of culture is the community." (Umutesi, 1970)

In exploring the expansive landscape of literature, Uppu (2022) beautifully characterizes it as a "looking glass," underscoring its role as a profound reflection of society. This metaphor takes on deeper resonance as Qasim (2023) enters the conversation, contending that the absence of a universally accepted definition for literature is a testament to its inherent complexity and multifaceted nature. Scholars grapple with the elusive nature of literature, each interpretation shaping the contours of its meaning. Expanding on this complexity, Malloy (2017) adds depth to the discussion, portraying literature as a mirror wielded by humanity to introspectively reflect on the intricate interplay between the world, individual identity, and the continuum of history. Together, these perspectives craft a narrative of literature not merely as a fixed concept but as a dynamic force intricately connected to society, continuously capturing the actions and expectations of its time while mirroring the multifaceted nature of human existence.

Moreover, writers share powerful ideas and emotions that connect with individuals and communities. Literature acts like a memory box for cultures, safeguarding their essence through stories, myths, and histories. By capturing the spirit of a particular era and location, literature offers a window into the values, beliefs, and customs that shape communities,

creating a sense of connection across generations. (The Impact of Literature.docx | CliffsNotes, 2024)

Additionally, literature is also a platform for social commentary and criticism, challenging established beliefs and advocating for progress. Authors use novels, plays, and poems to examine societal structures, norms, and injustices, sparking conversation and reflection. Marginalized voices gain a platform, and social issues come to light,

inspiring readers to question the world around them and think critically. (The Impact of Literature.docx | CliffsNotes, 2024)

Furthermore, literary works often explore complex ideas, moral dilemmas, and philosophical questions, prompting readers to analyze and contemplate them. This exposure to diverse perspectives fosters well-rounded individuals and a society that values critical thinking and a deeper understanding of the world. (The Impact of Literature.docx | CliffsNotes, 2024)

1.2.2. The Historical Evolution of Turkish Literature:

Turkish literature has long been a vital part of Turkish culture , Halman (n.d.) encapsulates the essence of Turkish literature, tracing its rich history spanning almost twelve centuries. Turkish literature holds a unique position as one of the oldest living traditions, traversing continents, and embracing diverse languages and scripts while remaining open to external influences. It serves not only as a preserver of timeless values but also as a dynamic platform for introducing innovative ideas, mirroring the diverse Turkish societies and cultures. This narrative of continuity and adaptability transcends geographical boundaries, extending from Central Asia to Anatolia and beyond.

In the dialogue surrounding the significance of literature, Wells (1891) echoes the sentiment that a people without literature are akin to individuals without a tongue, emphasizing the vital role of literature in shaping identity. This resonates seamlessly with the examination of Turkish literature's historical evolution, outlined by the phases articulated by Turkish Literature (n.d.).

Turkish literature has roots that go back to the 13th century, continuing to develop throughout the Ottoman Empire until the early 20th century. Firstly the pre-Islamic era, or the Early Turkic literature was primarily an oral tradition, with epics like the Book of Dede Korkut being passed down through generations, this tradition was rooted in the nomadic lifestyle of the Central Asian Turks. The adoption of Islam in the mid-10th century or Ottoman literature, on the other hand, was a written form heavily influenced by Arabic and Persian literature. Divan poetry, with its focus on love and praise, was a prominent genre during this time. Sufi poetry, expressing love and devotion to God, was another major influence. The narrative then shifts to the influence of Western literature during the Republican era, guided by movements like Tanzimat and figures like Ziya

Gokalp, and concludes with the emergence of modern Turkish literature in the mid-20th to early 21st century, shaped by Westernization and the National Literature movement. This historical journey, marked by resilience and transformation, emphasizes the dynamic interplay between literature, societal changes, and cultural identity in the context of Turkish literature.(*Turkish Literature*, n.d.; Akbulut et al., n.d.).

1.2.3. Turkish Women Literary Transformations:

In the realm of Turkish literature, the portrayal of women emerges as a nuanced and ambivalent theme, as expressed by Anita Nair, the author of "Mistress" and "A Better Man" (Uppu, 2022). This ambivalence is further underscored by Çekiç's (2016) exploration of the evolving gender roles in Ottoman society during the nineteenth century. Transitioning to the Turkish context, Kaya (2009) delves into the multifaceted status of women, shaped by patriarchal structures and entrenched cultural roles. This complexity engenders tension in male-female relations, with ongoing concerns about women's conditions persisting.

Önen and Sincar (2022) contextualize this within Turkish literature, delineating four periods that encapsulate the evolving roles of women – from being obscured to equal and triumphant. Moving back in time, the late Ottoman Empire's epic literature, as explored by Can Eyüp Çekiç (2016), reveals a transformation in the roles of Turkish women. Traditional narratives marginalized women, emphasizing male achievements, but the rise of new literary forms in the nineteenth century introduced more dynamic female characters (pp. 623-639). Çekiç delves into three dimensions: a shift from active military roles to symbolic domestic figures, the depiction of active women characters reflecting intellectuals' views on modern OttomanMuslim women, and distinct spatial frameworks mirroring societal changes (pp. 623-639).

Examining the Kemalist single-party era, Bilgiç (2020) suggests a shift in the political discourse, emphasizing the neglect of women's roles in the public sphere during the Ottoman period (para. 11). However, the 21st-century literature signals a shift towards portraying women in a more realistic and equitable manner, depicting them as strong and empowered individuals whodefy societal limitations (Uppu, 2022). This progression underscores the ongoing transformation in Turkey into an industrial urban economy and society, expected to impact women's activities significantly (Kaya, 2009, p. 219). The historical narrative of women's contributions, as highlighted by Sabah (2020),

underscores the pivotal roles women have played in shaping societies globally. From the inception of civilizations to innovations in various fields, women have showcased innate creativity. However, this creative prowess has been overshadowed by societal inequalities, a reality emphasized by Önen and Sincar (2022). Akyıldız (2019, as cited in Önen & Sincar, 2022) further accentuates the struggle women face in gaining visibility, being positioned as "the other" by patriarchal norms. This theme echoes through literary history, with Henry James acknowledging the unique advantages and freedoms bestowed upon literary women in the 19th century (1881). However, the shadowy existence of women, even within Turkish literature, remains a stark reality, as Önen and Sincar's (2022) findings indicate. Despite the emergence of accomplished female writers like Ayşe Kulin, Elif Shafak, İnci Aral, and Buket Uzuner, women's depictions within literary works continue to be confined, reflecting broader societal norms. McNiel's (2023) observation about the delayed recognition of women's contributions to literature resonates with historical patterns. The burdensome expectations placed on women, outlined by Evason (2019), perpetuate the need for protection, reinforcing traditional gender roles. In this evolving landscape, the increasing number of women speaking up in the literary world, as noted by Önen and Sincar (2022), heralds a positive shift. The voices of Naciye Bacı, Zehra Bacı, and Şukufe Nihal Başarbreak free from traditional constraints, emphasizing that a womanplace is not limited to her home (Dincer, n.d.). This emerging narrative fosters a transformative space for women to step out of societal shells, marking a dynamic shift in the representation of women in Turkish literature. Examining the representation of Turkish women in literature provides insights into the evolving dynamics of gender roles and societal perspectives. Kaya (2009) emphasizes the challenges faced by women in Turkey, making gender equality a significant priority for the European Union and democratic societies (p. 219). The historical context is crucial in understanding women's roles, as discussed by Sansal, who claims that women historically lacked opportunities in the realms of art and literature (para. 38). Despite this assertion, the 1950s marked a turning point when women's writings, including personal letters and travel literature, became crucial sources for shaping popular Ottoman history in Turkey (para. 39). These writings allowed a closer examination of the private sphere, emphasizing domestic aspects of Ottoman women's lives.

1.3. Identification of Common Stereotypes and Tropes:

The perpetuation of stereotypical depictions of women has persisted throughout history, yet changing the beliefs of those who adhere to these outdated notions proves challenging. Tanner (1986) acknowledges that "the images or stereotype has some truth—as stereotypes often do" (Tanner, 1986, as cited in Singh, 2019, p. 39).

In traditional society, women were subjected to certain expectations, as reflected in the English proverb"silence is the best ornament of a woman" (Coates, 2004, as cited in Singh, 2019, p. 39). This suggests that women were expected to maintain silence in the past (Coates, 2004), portraying them as mere decorative objects fulfilling the demands of a male-dominated society.

Mehdi (1993) eloquently describes the prevailing myths of Middle Eastern women in the Occidental world, stating:

"Popular myths of the Eastern female prevailing in the Occidental world seem to have constantly revolved around dual paradigms, shifting between the image of a silent beast of burden or that of a capricious princess, half-naked odalisque or the shapeless figure of the woman wearing the veil or the Islamic 'Hejab'. Often, the two images overlap as with artistic constructions based on fantasies; the colonial postcard provided such instance by allowing the belly dancer to become, within the same frame of representation and through a special rearranging of objects, customs and decor, a mind, all in one picture" (Mehdi, 1993, p. 25; as cited in Alghamdi, 2020, p. 28).

Mehdi's analysis captures the pervasive and dichotomous representations of Middle Eastern women in Western narratives

Likewise, the portrayal of Turkish women was highly significant and drew considerable interest. Particularly, stereotypical viewpoints and commercial interests were crucial in promoting the representation of Turkish women (Hüseyin, 2021).

Examining the representation of Turkish women in literature reveals persistent stereotypes and tropes throughout different historical periods. The essayist Irvin Schick (1998) delves into the eroticized depictions of Turkish women, highlighting recurring stereotypes in narratives about women in Turkish harems. He said: "Sexualized images of Turkish women have long been a staple of European culture" (Irvin Cemil Schick, 1998).

The depictions of Turkish women by European Orientalist artists present various problematic themes. Firstly, they often portrayed women from the palace, including sultanas, odalisques, and harem attendants. These representations frequently objectified women, portraying them in eroticized contexts such as slave markets, perpetuating stereotypes and emphasizing physical attractiveness over their humanity. However, behind these mythologized images lies a more diverse reality. Ottoman women were depicted engaging in everyday activities, such as walking on the streets, enjoying picnics, shopping, and taking boat trips along the Bosphorus. These depictions offer a glimpse into the lives of Turkish women beyond the confines of the harem or slave market. It's noteworthy that the portrayals of women within the harem often featured atypical characteristics, with many depicted as Caucasian, often blond or fair-skinned. This seeming contradiction reflects the Eurocentric standards of beauty prevalent at the time, where blond or red-haired women were highly valued and automatically deemed beautiful, even within the context of slavery (Hüseyin, 2021).

Furthermore, Bayraktaroglu (2019) discusses two significant aspects regarding the portrayal of Turkish women: sexual objectification and Orientalist discourse (Bayraktaroglu,

2019). Sexual objectification, influenced by Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze, presents women as objects of patriarchal desire (Mulvey, 1999 as cited in Bayraktaroglu, 2019, p.7).

Additionally, Edward Said's work on Orientalism highlights how Eastern women are "Othered" by Western perceptions, sparking a desire to conquer the unattainable (Said, 2001 as cited in Bayraktaroglu, 2019, p.8).

These portrayals often depict women as non-Turkish, frequently Christian or Circassian, reducing them to a nameless mass lacking individuality. The narrative emphasizes their sexualization, idleness, and indolence, constructing an image of the "other" as an omnisexual

figure engaged in various sexual practices (pp. 94-98). Arat underscores the contradictory nature of these depictions, vacillating between highlighting women's submission to male desires and the potential for an erotic universe within the harem devoid of male authority. Additionally, Arat explores representations of Turkish women's grooming habits, such as henna application and body hair removal, accentuating perceived differences from

Western norms. The portrayal of Turkish women's sexuality, according to Arat, not only serves colonial projects but also contributes to Europe's self-definition by constructing spaces of otherness(Arat, 1998, pp. 94-98).

However, Irvin Schick(1998) discusses the contradictory nature of Orientalist discourse, which simultaneously perpetuates stereotypes while presenting while presenting a wide range of conflicting assertions about "the Oriental woman. He says:

"the Oriental woman" is described as both harpy and sylph— -both repulsive and alluring, crude and refined, disgustingly filthy and obsessed with bathing, unspeakably ugly and fabulously beautiful, ragged and elegant, shapeless and perfectly proportioned, clumsy as a duck and graceful as a gazelle, languorous and a beast of burden, a wily manipulator and a helpless prisoner, a scheming evil-doer and innocent as a child" (Schick, 1998, pp. 92).

In the light of these contradictions, Rivera (2020) highlights the urgent need for a critical reevaluation of how women are portrayed in literature. By acknowledging the complexities and biases inherent in Orientalist discourse, scholars can work towards a more inclusive and equitable representation of women's experiences and voices within literary narratives. This calls for a concerted effort to challenge and deconstruct the entrenched stereotypes and narratives that have long marginalized women in literature (Arat, 1999, pp. 94-98; Rivera, 2020).

1.4 Zehra Arat's Contributions:

Zehra Arat, a prominent scholar in Turkish feminism, has played a crucial role in reshaping perceptions of Turkish women (Vickrey, 2024d). Arat provides insightful critiques of the conventional portrayal of Turkish women, particularly addressing the use of standardized language and investigating the impact of Western dominance on the identities of Turkish

women, she often challenges Orientalist narratives and advocates for the amplification of diverse feminist voices (Kiran et al., 2023, p. 755).

1.4.1 Introducing Zehra Arat:

Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat, associate Professor of Political Science, has made significant contributions to the field of human rights, particularly women's rights. Her notable bibliography includes influential works and numerous journal articles and book chapters, as well as books: Democracy and Human Rights in Developing Countries (1991); Non-State Actors in the Human Rights Universe (2006); Human Rights Worldwide (2006); Human Rights in Turkey (2007), received Choice Award of Outstanding Academic Titles. Her research covers diverse topics, combining theoretical and empirical approaches, and she has received prestigious awards for her scholarly achievements. In addition to her academic pursuits, Arat actively engages in human rights activism and is a founding member of the Women's Platform for Equality in Turkey (Vickrey, 2024).

1.4.2. Key Ideas in Arat's Work:

The collection "Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Woman," edited by Zahra Arat, stands as a comprehensive exploration of the prevalent global tendency to confine women in Turkey within predefined stereotypes. It compiled in the 1990s, the essays within this collection collectively examined the diverse experiences of Turkish women throughout the

20th century, with a keen focus on identifying both transformative shifts and persistent patterns ("Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Woman," n.d.-b). This collection dissect the multifaceted dimensions of the Turkish woman's representation. By delving into historical contexts and ideological frameworks, the authors dismantle enduring myths, unravel the intricacies surrounding Turkish women, and illuminate the complexities that have shaped their portrayal over time. This nuanced examination extends beyond mere critique, providing readers with a deeper understanding of the historical, social, and cultural forces that have influenced and continue to influence the image of Turkish women. The anthology serves as a valuable resource for those seeking to navigate women's representation in Turkey, challenging preconceived notions and fostering a more nuanced and informed discourse ("Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Woman," n.d.-b).

Similarly, Arat's "Deconstructing Images of 'The Turkish Woman", argues that prevailing stereotypes portray these women as either oppressed by Islamic patriarchal norms or liberated by the secular reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatiirk. However, contributors to the book challenge these oversimplified notions, emphasizing the nuanced

complexity of women's lives in both the late Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic (Ener, 1999, p. 8).

Through a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating insights from economists, political scientists, sociologists, and historians, the volume dismantles monolithic interpretations of women's roles. By drawing on diverse sources such as interviews, cartoons, literature, and statistical data, the essays unveil the intricate fabric of women's experiences and confront stereotypes perpetuated by external observers and Turkish society itself (Ener, 1999, p. 8).

For instance, Emine Onaran Incirlioglu contrasts the stereotypical portrayal of rural Turkish women as ignorant and oppressed with the reality of their being articulate and politically engaged individuals. Similarly, other essays scrutinize representations by Turkish novelists, satirists, and educators, revealing the multifaceted nature of gender dynamics within Turkish society. Arat's own contribution explores the gendered dimensions of education during the early Turkish Republic, exposing the tensions between egalitarian ideals and societal norms (Ener, 1999, p. 8).

Furthermore, the essays shed light on how Turkish women perceive themselves as feminists, Islamists, businesswomen, and political activists. Aynur Ilyasoglu's examination of Islamist women challenges stereotypes surrounding veiling and delves into the intricate ways in which women negotiate their religious and professional identities (Ener, 1999, p. 8).

While each essay offers valuable insights, the brevity of some contributions may leave readers craving more depth. Additionally, the absence of historical and theoretical context in certain essays could pose challenges for readers who are not specialists in the field. Nevertheless, the volume makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Turkish women's lives and disrupts conventional narratives about their societal roles (Ener, 1999, p. 9).

1.4.3 Arat's Contribution to Orientalism and Middle East Feminism

The interplay between Orientalism and Middle East feminism unfolds as a complex and nuanced relationship, profoundly shaped by Edward Said's seminal work, "Orientalism" (Abu-Lughod, 2001). Within this intricate dynamic, as aptly described by

Marilyn Strathem, an "awkward relationship" emerges, signifying the intricacies and challenges inherent in the confluence of Orientalist and feminist studies.

Said's pioneering exploration of Orientalism serves as a transformative trigger, significantly influencing the scholarly examination of gender and women's issues in the Middle East (Abu-Lughod, 2001). This transformative impact manifests in the expanded exploration of the gender and sexuality dimensions embedded within Orientalist discourse, surpassing the boundaries of Said's own analysis.

Furthermore, The impetus for this expanded exploration is grounded in the rationale provided by "Orientalism," urging scholars to move beyond stereotypical portrayals of Middle Eastern women and gender relations (Abu-Lughod, 2001). This call to action has propelled a surge in historical and anthropological research, aimed at transcending prevailing stereotypes and delving into the intricate realities of gender and women in the Middle East. This shift towards ethnographic and social historical research is integral to fostering a more nuanced understanding of the complex fabric of gender relations.

This increased research serves as a catalyst for the reexamination and historical recovery of feminism in the Middle East (Abu-Lughod, 2001). The rediscovery of feminism prompts a critical reevaluation of East/West politics within the framework of Orientalism, marking a pivotal moment in the discourse.

Moreover; Kiran et al. (2023) highlight the significance of Edward Said's seminal work "Orientalism" in providing a fundamental understanding of the Orientalist perspective and its impact on the portrayal of the East, serving as a cornerstone for critically engaging with Orientalist feminist studies. Additionally, Meyda builds upon Said's ideas by exploring the intersection of feminism and Orientalism, stressing the importance of a feminist critique of Orientalist frameworks. This research underscores the role of gender in perpetuating Orientalist stereotypes (p. 755).

Additionally, In her examination of feminist studies related to Orientalism and the Middle East, Abu-Lughod (2001) delves into various works by scholars such as Meyda Yegenoglu, Zehra Arat, Homa Hoodfar, Judith Tucker, and Haideh Moghissi. These scholars offer diverse

perspectives and analyses within the field, who have discussed is the impact of Orientalism on gender studies in the Middle East.

Zehra Arat's notable contribution to Orientalism and Middle East feminism emerges in her meticulous deconstruction of images portraying "The Turkish Woman" (Abu-Lughod, 2001). Arat's collection of essays, particularly "Deconstructing Images of The Turkish Woman," addresses the underexamined theme of gender and sexuality within Orientalism. Her critical exploration scrutinizes how travelers, writers, and missionaries represented "the Orient," shedding light on the implications of these representations within the broader discourse of Orientalist narratives. Arat's work emphasizes the imperative of considering gender and sexuality aspects in Orientalist studies, challenging their relegation to the periphery within the analysis of colonial discourse (Abu-Lughod, 2001).

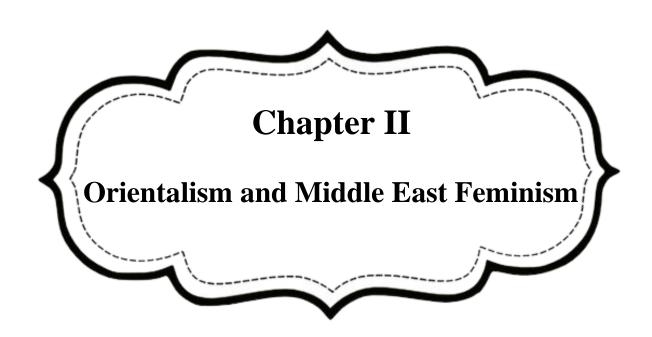
Thus, through thorough analysis, Arat dives into the societal pressures that restrict women and the stereotypes that surround Turkish women, revealing the complexities of their identities (Arat, 1999). She also critiques Western dominance and the simplistic views it fosters, showing how these views affect not just Turkish women but also women in other regions labeled as "Third World" (Kiran et al., 2023). Arat's core focus lies in challenging existing portrayals of Turkish women, uncovering the cultural and ideological biases that shape them and highlighting women's ability to shape their own identities (Arat, 1998).

1.5. Conclusion:

This chapter provides a detailed overview of how Turkish women are portrayed in literature, navigating through various aspects to uncover the intricate relationship between literary narratives and societal norms. The initial section establishes the groundwork, emphasizing how literary portrayals reflect cultural values and changing gender roles. As we progress through the role of literature in society, the historical development of Turkish literature, and the shifts in the depiction of Turkish women, the chapter explores the complex interplay between literature and society. The focus then turns to the identification of common stereotypes and tropes, revealing recurring themes that shape how Turkish women are represented. This scrutiny highlights the need for a more inclusive and fair representation in literary discussions, challenging entrenched ideas and contributing to wider conversations about gender equality. The chapter

concludes by examining Zehra Arat's influential contributions, breaking down her impact into three key areas. The introduction to Arat sheds light on her background and academic pursuits, establishing her as a significant figure in the realm of human rights, especially

women's rights. The overview of Arat's key ideas discusses her collection, "Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Woman," emphasizing its interdisciplinary approach and its role in dispelling persistent myths about Turkish women. Moreover, Arat's involvement in Orientalism and Middle East feminism is explored, highlighting her meticulous analysis of images portraying "The Turkish Woman." Her critical exploration challenges the sidelining of gender and sexuality aspects in Orientalist studies, marking a crucial moment in the discourse and urging scholars to move beyond stereotypical portrayals. In essence, this chapter lays the foundation for a comprehensive understanding of the historical and literary context of Turkish women's representation. It paves the way for deeper exploration into Zehra Arat's specific ideas and contributions in the upcoming chapters, providing a rich background for unraveling the complexities embedded in the portrayal of Turkish women in literature.



2.1. Introduction:

Chapter two delves into the relationship of Orientalism and Middle East feminism within the Turkish context. It starts by unpacking Orientalism as a methodological lens, exploring its key concepts like othering, exoticism, and hegemony. Shifting focus to Middle East feminism, that traces the evolution of women's movements in Turkey and scrutinizes feminist theories' responses to colonial legacies and local socio-political landscapes. Through this exploration, the chapter aims to elucidate the intricate interplay between culture, feminism, and power dynamics in the region.

2.2. Orientalism as a Method:

Nijamatulla (2019) Orientalism as a methodology encompasses the systematic study of the Orient, influencing fields like postcolonial studies and gender studies. Through the lens of Western discourse and cultural hegemony, it constructs a reality about the Orient, denying self-representation to Oriental peoples and perpetuating stereotypes. This approach defines the Occident by defining the Orient, shaping perceptions and understanding of both (p. 92-94).

2.2.1. Defining Orientalism:

According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2024): "orientalism" refers to "Western ideas about the Middle East and about East and Southeast Asia, especially ideas that are too simple or not accurate about these societies being mysterious, never changing, or not able to develop in a modern way without Western help" (orientalism, 2024b).

"Orientalism originates from the Latin word oriens, signifying "east" or "rising sun," contrasting with "Occident." In the old world, Europe was deemed "The West" or Occident, while the farthest known Eastern point was "The East" or "The Orient"" (Orientalism - New World Encyclopedia, n.d.-c).

Additionally, the concept of Orientalism involves the exploration of both Near and Far Eastern societies, languages, and customs by scholars from the Western world. It also encompasses the replication or portrayal of elements of Eastern cultures in Western literature, design, and artistic endeavors. Formerly, this term carried negative connotations, often associated with the study of the East through the perspective influenced by European imperialism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this context, it implies outdated and biased interpretations by outsiders of Eastern cultures and peoples, leading to frequent misunderstandings regarding their cultural, ethical, and religious beliefs. However, in an era marked by increased global

connectivity and communication, there has been a growing exchange and mutual understanding between Eastern and Western cultures, fostering the vision of a unified global community and contributing to the pursuit of lasting peace worldwide (Orientalism - New World Encyclopedia, n.d.-c).

2.2.2. Introducing Edward Said's Concept of Orientalism

Formerly,the term "Orientalism," popularized by Edward Said American literary critic, postcolonial theorist and political commentator who was born in the Middle East. In 1963 Edward Said (1935- 2003) was made Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature, at Columbia University, New York, where he has remained to this day. Said's interests span the realms of cultural and critical theory and literary criticism (Mambrol, 2020b).

Orientalism opens with this Karl Marx quote: "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented." Hibri (n.d.-b) noted that in Said's seminal 1978 book of the same name explores the ways Western experts, or "Orientalists", have come to understand and represent the Middle East peoples who are described as lazy, suspicious, gullible.

Said shows how Orientalist writings and ideologies actively shape the world they describe, and how they perpetuate views of Middle Eastern people as inferior, subservient, and in need of saving. As a result, these often racist or romanticised stereotypes create a worldview that justifies Western colonialism and imperialism (Hibri, n.d.-b).

2.2.3. Orientalism in Postcolonial Studies:

Burney (2012) points that Edward Said's influential book "Orientalism" (1978) is seen as the starting point for what we now call 'postcolonial theory.' It challenges how the West has portrayed and understood the 'Orient' in history, literature, art, music, and culture. Said's ideas caused a big stir in academic circles and have shaped the way we study subjects like literature, anthropology, history, politics, and more. The impact of "Orientalism" is monumental. Said is often credited with founding the field known as postcolonial studies, and his work has significantly influenced fields across the humanities: including cultural studies, anthropology, comparative literature and political science. (Hibri, n.d.-b)

Said argues that Orientalism is a system created by the West to shape and control how people see and understand the East. This system uses various tools like literature, art, movies, and travel writing to construct a specific image of the Orient and maintain power over it through dominant narratives and representations. Burney, S. (2012)

As he emphasizes that Orientalism is not merely a Western conspiracy to oppress the Oriental world but rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness across various domains such as aesthetics, scholarship, economics, sociology, history, and philology. It represents a deliberate effort to understand, and in some cases control or manipulate, a fundamentally different world. This complex interplay of interests and intentions further underscores the pervasive influence of Orientalism in shaping Western perceptions and interactions with the Orient (Said, 1978, as cited in Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007).

2.2.4. Said's insights on East-West dichotomies :

Vergese (2021) highlighted Edward Said's groundbreaking characterization of Orientalism in his 1978 publication, defining it as a framework predicated on a fundamental division between 'the Orient' and 'the Occident.' Said contends that the concept of the 'Orient' is a construct born out of colonial perspectives. Orientalism, as elucidated by Said, operates through a series of dichotomies, including 'East' versus 'West,' civilized versus uncivilized, and colonizer versus colonized, portraying the East as diametrically opposed to the West. This framework serves as a method of representation through which the West depicts the East as an enigmatic and perilous entity, distinct from itself.

The peoples of the Middle East are often portrayed as weak, barbaric and irrational. Westerners, in comparison, are made to seem strong, progressive and rational. This style of thinking, in which East and West, or Orient and Occident, are placed into a mutually exclusive binary, is central to Orientalist thought (Hibri, n.d.-b).

Said's seminal work explores how the concept of the 'Orient' was constructed and perpetuated in European thought. Said highlights that while professional Orientalists, including scholars in disciplines like languages, history, and philology, played a role, Orientalism extended far beyond academic discourse. It became a pervasive style of thought rooted in the ontological and epistemological distinction between the "Orient" and the "Occident." (Said, 1978, as cited in Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007).

2.2.5. Said's perspective on Western Orientalism:

Edward Said's work "Orientalism" challenges Western representation of the 'Orient' by highlighting the way in which the West has historically constructed and imposed its own views, perceptions, and descriptions of the Orient. Said argues that the Orient has been subjected to a hegemonic process that robbed it of its true identity and indigenous culture, replacing it with

representations derived from a Western, Eurocentric perspective. This process, which Said refers to as Orientalism, involves the objectification and subjectification of the Orient by the Occident, where the Orient is viewed through the vested interests and power dynamics of the West. Said contends that the binary oppositions between the East and West are not as distinct as they are made out to be, and that the two are actually interdependent and intertwined. By shedding light on these underlying structures of power, knowledge, and imperialism, Said's work challenges the Western representations of the 'Orient' and calls for a more nuanced and critical understanding of the relationship between the East and the West. (Burney,2012,pp 2-14)

2.2.6. Orientalism as a Method of Cultural Representation and Power Dynamics:

Orientalism is a complex and enduring phenomenon that shapes perceptions and understanding of the Orient by manipulating knowledge and power dynamics between the West and the East. It operates as a form of Western authority, relying on representations of the Orient to reinforce stereotypes, divide the world into distinct East-West compartments, and perpetuate Western superiority. Europe's view of the Orient as dangerous and distant has led to a limited understanding of Islamic culture and history. This Western approach involves studying the Orient through texts, projecting power, and making cultural generalizations with political implications. However, this perpetuates stereotypes, dehumanizes the East, and creates a rift between the Orient and the West. Modern orientalism has emerged as a secular discipline, expanding knowledge about the Orient but still perpetuating orientalist structures. Oriental studies aim to make knowledge accessible to Europeans, but the interchangeability of representations and adaptation to philology perpetuate orientalism. This reduction of diverse Orient identities reinforces Western dominance and perpetuates inequality, while scholars filter and categorize Oriental knowledge to fit European sensibilities, creating an imaginary museum. (Eightify, 2023c)

In "Orientalism," Edward Said explores how the concept of the 'Orient' has been constructed in European thinking, shedding light on the pervasive influence of Orientalist discourse in shaping perceptions of the East. He emphasizes that Orientalism extends beyond academic discourse, permeating various aspects of European thought as a method of dominating and restructuring the Orient to maintain Western authority. Said argues that Orientalism is not merely about understanding the Orient but serves as a tool for exerting power and control over it, perpetuating stereotypes and reinforcing Western hegemony. (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin,

2007). Moreover, Said highlights the power dynamics inherent in the relationship between the Occident and the Orient, where Orientalist discourse serves as a sign of Westerndominance rather than an accurate portrayal of the East. He discusses how Orientalism has influenced the Western understanding of the Orient, leading to the emergence of a complex and constructed Orient suitable for study, display, and theoretical illustration within Western hegemonic structures. (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007).

2.2.7. Key Orientalist concepts:

Traditional Orientalism is marked by a mix of hostility and fascination with the exotic. According to Dong (2020), Western scholars, when studying Orientalism, often adopt a Western-centric viewpoint, holding strong biases against Eastern cultures. They tend to compare Eastern cultures to Western norms, often emphasizing the supposed superiority of the West. Dong (2020) argues that this comparison is based on a worldview of dominance, where Western control is strengthened. Moreover, Dong (2020) notes a constant sense of 'othering,' where the East is seen as fundamentally different and potentially a challenge to Western interests. Furthermore, Dong (2020) highlights that the West maintains a deep interest in the exotic aspects of Eastern cultures, often idealizing them. Consequently, this focus on exoticism sustains unequal power dynamics and reinforces Western dominance over Eastern cultures (p. 101).

2.2.7.1. Othering:

The concept of othering, as elucidated by various scholars, particularly Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, underscores the intricate power dynamics inherent in Western representations of the East. Spivak (as cited in Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007) defines othering as the process by which imperial discourse constructs its 'others,' where the colonizing Other and the colonized subjects are established simultaneously. This dynamic symbolizes the focal point of desire or power, with the 'Other' often aligned with dominant entities like the Mother, Father, or Empire, while the 'other' represents the marginalized or 'mastered' subject shaped by the discourse of power.

Said (as cited in Mohrem, 2020) further emphasizes the flawed nature of Western representations of the East, labeling it as the "Other" in a relationship characterized by power and domination. He argues that the Orient is constructed and misrepresented in binary opposition against the Occident, reinforcing a European self-image of superiority and positioning the Orient as an inferior reflection of Europe.

Moosavinia, Niazi, & Ghaforian (2011) further elaborate on the key Orientalist concept of othering, highlighting how it perpetuates hegemonic power dynamics between the Occident and the Orient. They emphasize that Orientalism constructs the Orient as the Other, maintaining dominance and control over it through misrepresentation and marginalization, thereby reinforcing the superiority of European identity and culture. Moreover, Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (2007) assert that the Orient is not a natural phenomenon but a construct perpetuated by generations of intellectuals, artists, and politicians who uphold Orientalist assumptions and stereotypes. This power dynamic of othering by the Occident demonstrates the immense influence of Western binarism, where the Self is privileged and defines the passive, silent, and weak Other.

2.2.7.2. Exoticism:

Exoticism, within the context of Orientalism, encompasses the portrayal of non-Western societies and individuals as unusual, exciting, and distinct from Western norms. According to Moosavinia, Niazi, & Ghaforian (2011), the Orient is depicted as everything that the West is not—exotic, alien, dangerous, unreliable, to be tamed, exhibited, and perceived as a threat. Hout (2002) further elaborates that exoticism serves as a rhetorical device emphasizing fundamental distinctions between the observer, typically Western, and the observed, non-Western, by highlighting the observed as exotic, enigmatic, and different. Additionally, Lewington (2020) explains that exoticism denotes a quality of something or someone being intriguing and captivating due to their origins from a distant place. She contrasts this with Orientalism, a concept rooted in colonialist thinking and laden with fantastical notions and exotic stereotypes. Therefore, within Orientalism, exoticism plays a significant role in shaping Western perceptions of the East by emphasizing its perceived differences and allure.

2.2.7.3. Hegemony

According to El Aidi and Yechouti (2017), as articulated by Edward Said, draws heavily from Gramsci's idea of hegemony. Said argues that Orientalism represents a form of ideational domination wherein Western powers exert control over Eastern cultures. This dominance is perpetuated through discourses that essentialize the superiority of the West over the East. Such discourse, Said contends, serves the interests of dominant groups by justifying their oppression and exploitation of Eastern societies. Orientalism functions as a framework through which Western power structures maintain and reinforce their dominance. This perspective highlights the enduring influence of cultural hegemony in shaping perceptions and interactions between

the West and the East, ultimately maintaining power differentials and exclusivist attitudes. Said's analysis underscores the importance of understanding how hegemonic discourses shape relations between dominant and subor dinate groups in society.

Moosavinia, Niazi, & Ghaforian (2011) stated that "the relationship of the Occident and Orient becomes the relationship of "power, of domination, of varying degree of a complex hegemony" (Said, 1978:5).

2.2.8. Oriental Concepts and Turkish Women

Western perceptions and representations of the East, including Turkish women, have been profoundly influenced by concepts such as Orientalism, exoticism, and hegemony. Leon (2023) highlights one of the most damaging aspects of Orientalism, emphasizing how it distorts the reality of the Eastern world by focusing on an idealized and romanticized version, thereby creating a false image that denies the true complexity and diversity of Eastern cultures. This denial not only misrepresents the East but also reinforces a sense of superiority in the West, further entrenching the divide between the two worlds. Moreover, Leon (2023) observes that despite a few notable exceptions such as Orhan Pamuk and Elif Şafak, many portrayals of Turkey, particularly the lives of women, are projected through the lens of Western perceptions of the Middle East – as dangerous, mono-cultural, male-dominated, and archaic (Morrow, 2024b).

This narrow portrayal perpetuates stereotypes and fails to capture the rich diversity and complexity of Turkish society. However, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's "The Turkish Embassy Letters" provides a notable example of challenging Orientalist dichotomies (Berktay, 2018). Montagu's firsthand experiences in Turkey allowed her to offer a nuanced view of Turkish women's culture without reducing them to mere stereotypes or the "Other." Her accounts moved away from replicating the typical Orientalist portrayal of the East as exotic and inferior, countering earlier male travelers' misconceptions about Ottoman society, religion, traditions, and the treatment of women (Berktay, 2018).

Exoticism, as seen in Orientalism in art history, plays a significant role in reinforcing Western perceptions of the East as exotic, dangerous, and sensual, while contrasting it with the rational and civilized West (Leon, 2023). However, Morrow (2024b) notes that contemporary works by women about Turkey aim to present a more multifaceted view of the country and its people, moving beyond simplistic portrayals influenced by Western perceptions. By exploring everyday life in Turkey through diverse perspectives, these works challenge monolithic

representations influenced by othering, hegemony, and exoticism, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of Turkish society and challenging Western-centric narratives about the East.

2.3. Middle East Feminism as a Method:

In the Middle East, recent decades have seen complex changes affecting women, including economic challenges, the rise of patriarchal Islamist movements, and enduring authoritarianism. However, women have actively participated in social and political movements, demonstrating agency, creativity, and innovation, challenging stereotypes. Despite adversity, they have developed strategies for empowerment, establishing strong organizations, advocating for equal citizenship, and engaging internationally. Their efforts are reshaping the public sphere, evolving civil society, and shifting feminist power from North to South. This new generation of feminists sees women's rights as crucial to a wider democratic struggle, transcending societal divisions (Moghadam, 2010; Alaoui, 2023)

2.3.1. The History of Feminism and Women Movements

According to Soken-Huberty (2022), Feminism is a multifaceted and evolving movement, encompasses various definitions and perspectives depending on the individual or source. Broadly speaking, Britannica provides a concise framework, defining feminism as the belief in the social, economic, and political equality of the sexes. It advocates for the elimination of discriminatory practices based on gender, ensuring that no one is denied fundamental rights, such as voting, holding political office, or pursuing employment opportunities, solely because of their sex or gender identity. However, feminism extends beyond securing basic rights; it seeks broader societal transformations, aiming to eradicate sexism and address intersectional oppression rooted in gender, race, sexuality, and class.

The history of feminism is often segmented into distinct "waves," each characterized by its unique objectives, challenges, and achievements. The first wave emerged in the 19th century, coinciding with movements for abolitionism and suffrage. It gained momentum with significant events like the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, where the goals and strategies of the movement were delineated. This wave witnessed gradual improvements in women's rights globally, including milestones such as New Zealand granting women the right to vote in 1893, followed by the United States in 1920 and Great Britain in 1928.

The second wave of feminism emerged in the 1960s, aligning itself with anti-war and Civil Rights movements. This phase broadened the scope of feminist discourse to include reproductive rights, sexuality, and critiques of capitalism. It fostered intellectual diversity within the movement and emphasized inclusivity, addressing issues affecting women across various social and economic backgrounds.

Third-wave feminism, which followed, built upon the foundations laid by the second wave while challenging some of its assumptions and limitations. It embraced individuality, irony, and self-expression, advocating for a more nuanced understanding of gender and sexuality. The proliferation of the internet during this era facilitated the dissemination of feminist ideas and content, contributing to a more diverse and decentralized movement.

2.3.2. Feminism in postcolonial studies:

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2007) provide valuable insights into the intersection of feminism and post-colonial discourse, highlighting its critical importance for understanding the complexities of power dynamics, representation, and resistance within imperial and colonial contexts. The convergence of feminism with post-colonial discourse holds significant importance for two primary reasons. Firstly, both patriarchy and imperialism exert comparable forms of dominance over those they subjugate, leading to parallels between the experiences of women under patriarchy and those of colonized subjects. Consequently, both feminist and post-colonial movements resist such forms of dominance. Secondly, debates within colonized societies have arisen regarding the relative significance of gender versus colonial oppression in shaping women's lives, sometimes causing divisions between Western feminists and activists from impoverished regions. Alternatively, some argue for an intertwined understanding, where colonial dominance materially impacts women's positions within their societies, necessitating a deeper consideration of gender within the frameworks of imperialism and colonialism.

In both feminist and post-colonial discourses, language and representation play vital µroles in identity formation and subjectivity construction. Language serves as a tool to challenge patriarchal and imperial power structures, with both movements invoking essentialist arguments to posit authentic linguistic forms against imposed ones. Moreover, both feminists and colonized groups have employed appropriation to subvert dominant languages and practices (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007).

The texts of feminist theory and post-colonialism converge on various aspects of identity theory, difference, and subject interpellation, offering mutual strategies of resistance against dominant discourses. Notably, critiques emerged in the 1980s, highlighting Western feminism's failure to account for the experiences of Third World women due to hidden universalist assumptions and Euro-centric biases. These critiques emphasize the need to acknowledge the diverse material realities of women across different social contexts.

Recent concerns within feminism revolve around the neglect of gender within colonial formations, as post-colonial theory tends to overlook gender differences in constructing the category of the colonized. Critics argue for a nuanced understanding of colonialism's differential impacts on men and women, stressing the importance of considering the "double colonization" experienced by women subjected to both general and gender-specific discrimination. (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007).

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2007) noted that the intertwining of feminism with post-colonialism offers rich insights into the complex dynamics of power, representation, and resistance within imperial and colonial contexts, shedding light on the diverse experiences of women across different social, cultural, and historical landscapes (pp. 93-95).

2.3.3. Middle East Feminism

Kikoski (2000) observes that "the status of women in the Middle East has been oscillating, noting a slow but steady increase in self-awareness among women in the Middle East today" (p. 137-138).

The historical context of feminism in the Middle East dates back to the late 19th century. The feminist movement began in Egypt and quickly spread to other parts of the region. Women in the Middle East lobbied for changes in areas such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody laws, although they faced limited success. Moslem and Christian feminists of the 19th and 20th centuries contributed to strengthening women's voices. Notable figures include Aisha Ismat al-Taimuriya, Zainab Fawwaz, Nazira Zain al-Din, and Huda Sha'raoui, who played significant roles in advocating for women's rights. These women challenged the practice of veiling, supported women's rights to education and employment, and fought against discriminatory laws. Their efforts laid the foundation for the feminist movement in the Middle East (Kikoski, 2000, pp. 136-146).

2.3.4. The Evolution of the Women Movement in Turkey:

Women movements across the Middle East showcase a diverse array of historical paths and contemporary strategies, yet they are united by common themes influenced by historical and political dynamics. These dynamics include their connections to nationalist movements, their roles within processes of modernization, and the intricate interplay between secular and religious forces. In the context of Turkey, the women's movement is deeply rooted in historical discourse surrounding the legacies of both the Ottoman Empire and the Kemalist Republic. Previously, discussions predominantly centered on the reforms spearheaded by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, which were often heralded as transformative for the status of women in Turkish society. However, recent scholarship has begun to challenge this narrative, shedding light on the presence of vibrant women's activism prior to the establishment of the Republic. Before the inception of the Republic, Ottoman women engaged in a myriad of activities aimed at advancing their rights and liberties. This included participation in literary circles, the formation of feminist organizations, and active involvement in debates surrounding education, employment, and legal reforms. While these discussions initially took place within the framework of Islamic principles, there was a gradual incorporation of secular arguments, aligning with broader efforts towards modernization during the Tanzimat period. (Al-Ali, n.d., pp. 22-31).

The transition to the Kemalist Republic ushered in a series of legal reforms aimed at enhancing the status of women within society. However, these reforms were primarily geared towards integrating women into existing patriarchal structures rather than fundamentally challenging them. Despite the outlawing of practices such as polygamy and the granting of certain legal rights to women through the 1926 Turkish Civil Code, the implementation of these reforms remained uneven, and independent feminist activism faced suppression. Kemalist reforms also sought to instrumentalize women as symbols of modernization and Westernization, emphasizing their role within the domestic sphere while perpetuating patriarchal norms in both public and private life. Although efforts were made to promote women's participation in education and professional spheres, the overarching framework maintained traditional gender roles (Al-Ali, n.d., pp. 22-31

The emergence of a new wave of feminism in the 1980s marked a significant departure from previous movements, as it aimed at challenging patriarchal norms and advocating for radical societal restructuring. Led by intellectuals, professionals, and university students, this wave sought to create autonomous spaces for women's activism, distinct from existing political structures. However, the contemporary Turkish women's movement faces numerous challenges, including co-option by political authorities and resistance towards institutionalization. Despite these obstacles, the movement persists in its advocacy for women's rights, secularism, and

gender equality, drawing inspiration from diverse feminist ideologies and global movements (Al-Ali, n.d., pp. 22-31).

2.3.5. Middle East Feminism and the Intersection of Gender and Culture:

Alaoui (2023) contends that the West has historically exploited issues of gender inequality in the Middle East, asserting its authority to either liberate or further marginalize Middle Eastern women. This should not entail a binary choice between addressing the roots of female oppression within the region or depicting Middle Eastern women solely as victims of colonialism and subsequent demands for cultural authenticity.

Reem Hassan (2021), discusses how colonial narratives and Western feminist perspectives have influenced perceptions of Middle East women, often leading to oversimplified and stereotypical portrayals in mainstream discourse. She also recounts personal experiences of cultural misunderstanding and feeling pressured to adhere to Western feminist norms while still valuing her identity (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 2019). Despite concerted efforts by governmental and non-governmental organizations to address gender disparity globally and regionally (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 2019), intersectionality emerges as a promising framework for understanding and tackling gender inequality, particularly in the Arab region.

This concept recognizes the interconnected nature of gender with other social categories and is increasingly utilized in academic research. Gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, race, and other societal distinctions continue to dictate the distribution of social resources, perpetuating ongoing inequality (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 2019). Within this context, Middle East feminism scrutinizes the intersectionality of gender, culture, and colonial history in the region. It acknowledges that gender inequality is influenced by cultural norms, historical legacies of colonialism, and social factors such as socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity.

This feminist approach aims to dismantle oversimplified narratives prevalent in the Arab region, especially regarding colonial history. By challenging essentialized and stereotypical portrayals of Arab women, Middle East feminism emphasizes the diversity of women's experiences and the impact of colonial legacies on gender dynamics. This approach underscores women's agency in the region and endeavors to address structural inequalities perpetuated by colonial and post-colonial power dynamics (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 2019).

2.3.6. Prominent Feminist Theories:

Nadda Osman (2021) asserts that the status of women in the Middle East has historically sparked considerable discussion and intrigue, both domestically and internationally. Despite significant advancements, gender disparities persist, particularly evident in the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles throughout the Arab world and various influential domains.

The development of feminist theories within Middle Eastern scholarship has been profoundly shaped by colonial legacies and local socio-political contexts, leading to a multifaceted exploration of gender equality, colonial influences, and the systemic effects of underdevelopment on women in the region. Prominent feminist theories in Middle Eastern scholarship include liberal feminism, socialist feminisms, and feminist theories influenced by modernization theory and world systems/dependency theories. These theories have offered distinct responses to the challenges posed by colonial legacies and local socio-political contexts (Kandiyoti, 1995, pp. 5-16).

During the early phases of feminist scholarship in the Middle East, there was a significant intersection between feminism and nationalism. This connection stemmed from the post-colonial state formation era and emphasized movements for social reform and modernization. Feminist scholars engaged with local debates and broader feminist thought while reflecting the influence of nationalist sentiments in the region. However, this wave also highlighted concerns about the effects of cultural imperialism, discouraging a systematic exploration of local institutions and processes implicated in gender hierarchies (Kandiyoti, 1995, pp. 5-16)

Postcolonial feminists contend that within postcolonial societies, oppression transcends gender boundaries, encompassing racial, class, and ethnic marginalization stemming from colonial legacies (History and theory of feminism, n.d.). They challenge the notion that gender oppression alone propels patriarchy, refuting portrayals of non-Western women as passive victims and Western women as inherently empowered. Rooted in the gendered dynamics of colonial history, postcolonial feminism critiques Western feminist paradigms for their tendency to generalize female experiences and advocates instead for acknowledging the diverse cultural contexts of colonized regions. Third-world feminism, closely associated with postcolonial feminism, critiques Western feminism for its ethnocentric bias and disregard of the distinctive challenges encountered by women from third-world nations. This discourse underscores the

importance of addressing intersecting forms of oppression within feminist discourse and activism, recognizing the intricate power dynamics prevalent in postcolonial settings.

Fawcett (2013) defines Islamic feminism as a feminist discourse and practice rooted in the Qur'an, aiming for gender equality for women and men in all aspects of life. It emphasizes the Quranic principle of equality for all human beings and advocates for the implementation of gender equality across societal institutions, rejecting the public/private divide and envisioning a holistic umma where Quranic ideals prevail in every sphere.

The subsequent wave of feminist scholarship in the Middle East witnessed the influence of social science paradigms such as modernization theory and Marxism. While these paradigms aimed to address broader processes of social transformation, they often overlooked local cultural specificities in the production of gender hierarchies. There was a tendency to view traditional attitudes and practices as obstacles to gender equality, emphasizing the need for modernization and Westernization. However, feminist scholars within Middle Eastern scholarship began to critique these paradigms, advocating for a more nuanced understanding of local contexts and cultural specificities. They sought to engage with local institutions and processes to uncover the complexities of gender subordination within the region. This shift led to the development of more context-dependent and micro-level explanatory frameworks, challenging the universalist assumptions of earlier feminist theories. Moreover, the incorporation of feminist theory into Middle Eastern scholarship was mediated through various constituencies, including Western women working on the Middle East, Western-trained Middle Eastern women, and socially trained scholars. This selective integration of feminist concepts into the study of gender hierarchies reflected diverse agendas and perspectives. While it expanded the discourse on gender in the region, it also highlighted tensions between universal causes for the subordination of women and context-dependent explanatory frameworks (Kandiyoti, 1995, pp. 5-16)

In summary, feminist theories within Middle Eastern scholarship have evolved through distinct waves, each responding to colonial legacies and local socio-political contexts. While grappling with the intersections of feminism, nationalism, and modernization, feminist scholars have increasingly emphasized the importance of understanding and engaging with local cultural specificities to address gender inequalities effectively within the region. (Kandiyoti, 1995, pp. 5-16)

2.3.7. Turkish Women Rights and Representation

According to Diner and Toktaş (2010) ,the discourse surrounding Turkish women's rights and representation benefits from a diverse array of feminist theories, including Liberal Socialist Feminism, Modernization Theory, World Systems/Dependency Theories, Postcolonial Feminism, and Islamic Feminism.

These theoretical frameworks contribute nuanced perspectives to discussions on various aspects of gender equality in Turkey. Liberal Socialist Feminism underscores the importance of women's political and civil liberties, aligning with early feminist movements in Turkey that sought legal and political parity between genders. Modernization Theory sheds light on the impact of societal and institutional modernization on gender roles and women's status, particularly in the context of Kemalist reforms. World Systems/Dependency Theories analyze how global economic and political systems influence women's rights in Turkey, exploring economic dependency and global power dynamics.

Postcolonial Feminism delves into the enduring legacy of colonialism on gender dynamics, providing insights into historical colonial influences in contemporary Turkish society. Islamic Feminism sparks debates on reconciling feminist principles with Islamic values, shaping discussions on women's rights within an Islamic context, such as the headscarf debate. These theoretical perspectives foster nuanced dialogues on Turkish women's rights, encompassing themes like political equality, the impact of modernization on gender roles, global power dynamics, postcolonial influences, and the intersection of feminist principles with Islamic values.

Moreover, the evolution of feminist theories within Middle Eastern scholarship significantly informs the trajectory of the Turkish feminist movement across three waves. The first wave, aligned with Western movements, advocates for legal and political gender equality, tied closely to Kemalist ideology.

The second wave, amid ideological tensions due to Islamism and Kurdish nationalism, grapples with the evolving socio-political landscape and its implications for women's rights.

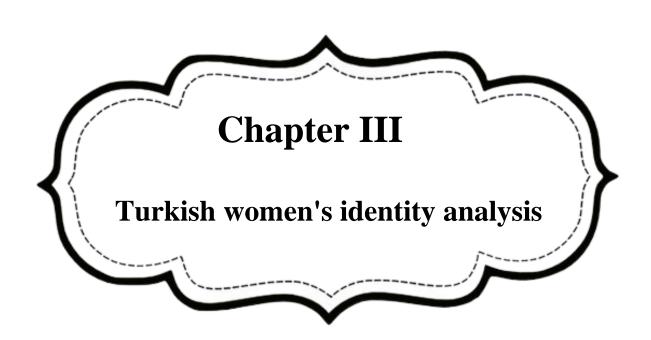
The third wave, influenced by Kurdish nationalism, political Islam, and globalization, witnesses the rise of international organizations and professionalized women's movements. Middle Eastern feminist theories contribute to understanding globalization's impact on the feminist agenda in Turkey and navigating challenges within the evolving socio-political context. In summary, the integration of feminist theories from Middle Eastern scholarship enriches our

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understanding of the complexities within the Turkish feminist movement, offering insights into its interactions with tradition, religion, and broader socio-political dynamics (p. 42-57).

Conclusion:

In summary, Chapter Two delves into the connection between Orientalism and Middle East feminism in Turkey. It examines how Orientalism, as a method of studying cultures, impacts power structures, discussing concepts such as the perception of others as different, romanticization, and domination .Simultaneously, the chapter explores Middle East feminism's portrayal of women's strength and power in Turkey, tracing the evolution of women's movements and analyzing feminist theories' responses to colonialism and local politics.



3.1. Introduction:

This chapter undertakes a critical analysis of Orientalist representations of Turkish women, focusing on identifying and critiquing prevalent tropes and stereotypes and their impact. The discussion then shifts towards Middle East feminist perspectives, examining key theories and concepts that challenge traditional narratives. Emphasis is placed on the transformative contributions of Zehra Arat within this discourse. Finally, the chapter explores intersectionality in shaping the identity of Turkish women, highlighting how various factors intersect to influence their lived experiences. Throughout, the aim is to unveil the complexity of Turkish women's identities, challenge dominant narratives, and celebrate transformative scholarship.

3.2. Deconstruction of Orientalist Representations:

Orientalist representations and tropes are often shaped around Eastern cultures, including Turkish women. These narratives construct singular, often biased portrayals that fail to capture the true diversity within these populations. As Arat (1999) highlighted, deconstruction offers a method to cover these one-dimensional narratives. It is the process of dismantling singular narratives to reveal the diversity within the subject population and the various images used to describe them (Arat, 1999, p. 5). Through deconstruction, scholars aim to challenge the stereotypes and biases inherent in Orientalist representations, fostering a more accurate and respectful understanding of Eastern cultures and the individuals within them.

3.2.1. Identification and Critique of Orientalist Elements:

Orientalism is depicted as a complex system of knowledge production that constructs the East as a monolithic "Other," perpetuating stereotypes, exoticizing cultures, and reinforcing power dynamics (Kiran et al., 2023, p. 754). Kiran et al. (2023) further discuss how the Western perspective on Eastern Literature often adopts an Orientalist viewpoint, resulting in the exoticization and romanticization of Eastern cultures and women, thus perpetuating cultural stereotypes and reinforcing existing power imbalances (p. 755).

The research conducted by Billie Melman, as cited by Kiran et al. (2023), delves into the impact of the Western gaze on English women traveling to the Middle East during the 18th and 19th centuries, revealing how it contributes to the perpetuation of Orientalist stereotypes and fantasies. Through the examination of their writings, Melman exposes the underlying power dynamics and gendered assumptions inherent in the Western perception of the East (Kiran et al., 2023, p. 755).

In the same vein, Sameha Alghamdi says that colonial orientalist representations of Eastern women that constructed them as oppressed, exotic, and disdained within their own culture are amplified and diffused (Alghamdi, 2020, pp. 84–85).

Alghamdi (2020) adds depth to the discourse by discussing the ongoing production of Orientalist knowledge and its shaping of contemporary perceptions of the Middle East, often resulting in biased and contentious depictions of Middle Eastern women (p. 14). While Said briefly addresses the portrayal of Muslim women in European discourse, he fails to fully acknowledge the pivotal role of gender in shaping Orientalist representations, Feminist scholars such as AbuLughod and Yeğenoğlu argue that gender and sexuality are essential components for understanding Orientalist discourse and its power dynamics as highlighted by Alghamdi's analysis (p. 25). Additionally, Yeğenoğlu's critique, as cited by Alghamdi (2020), challenges Said's assertion by underscoring the significant role of European female perspectives in shaping perceptions of Muslim women within Orientalist frameworks, thus perpetuating stereotypes and fortifying colonialist narratives (p. 25). Alghamdi (2020) further examines how Orientalism marginalizes Eastern women by contrasting them with morally superior European Christian women, reinforcing hierarchical structures and notions of male dominance and female submissiveness (pp. 107-129).

According to Alghamdi (2020), Orientalism effectively marginalizes Eastern women by contrasting them with morally superior European Christian women, thus dehumanizing and undermining their agency. European colonialists reinforced this perception by labeling Eastern women as exotic and oppressed, this misrepresentation strengthens the hierarchical structure of Euro-American society, reinforcing notions of male dominance and female submissiveness. Eastern women are often depicted as morally inferior, contrasting them with European Christian women and defining Western identity through this contrast (Alghamdi, 2020, pp. 107-129).and as victims of their culture and faith, Muslim women are often depicted in conflicting stereotypes, oscillating between being exoticized and oppressed, which reinforces further reinforcing European cultural superiority (Alghamdi, 2020, p.27). Traditional European narratives, including fictional writings and travel accounts mostly authored by men, commonly propagated the notion that Muslim societies mistreated women, viewing them as objects for sexual gratification (Ramli, 2011, pp. 264-265).

The veil has become a dominant symbol of Islam, oppression, and the perceived threat of Islam to Euro-American civilization. This representation of veiled women as subjugated, unenlightened, oppressed, silenced, and subordinated by the Islamic religion and

cultureperpetuates the narrative that Arab and Muslim women need to be rescued(Alghamdi, 2020, p. 14).

As our discussion initially centered around women in the Middle East, it's pertinent to delve into the specific portrayal of Turkish women. During the Ottoman period, representations of women held considerable importance and garnered widespread attention. Notably, stereotypical perspectives and commercial motives played a crucial role in the dissemination of the portrayal of Turkish women (Hüseyin, 2021). "'THE TURKISH WOMAN' is a cultural reference that has been engendered to describe the 'ideal' as well as the 'pitiful'" (Arat, 1998, p. 1).

Zehra Arat (1998) examines "the more salient tropes characterizing the eroticized representations of the women of Turkey in Western literature" (p.94). Arat (1998) delves into the eroticized representations of Turkish women in Western literature, particularly focusing on the portrayal of women in Turkish harems. She highlights how these women were often depicted as non-Turkish, with a tendency to be Christian or Circassian rather than Turkish. Also, she discusses the multiplicity and de-individualization of harem women, emphasizing their portrayal as a collective rather than individuals. Westernization and education were depicted as tools for differentiating and Westernizing these women. Additionally, she explores themes of idleness, indolence, and sexualization of harem women in orientalist discourse. She also touches on topics like lesbianism, personal grooming habits, and the diverse interpretations of sexuality in relation to Turkish women. Overall, she argues that the function of sexuality in orientalist discourse was not solely about colonization but also played a crucial role in defining Europe's identity and its perception of otherness (pp. 94-98).

Moreover, Ramli's (2011) exploration of the harem concept as a private area within a household where the residents expect privacy and respect from both visitors and family members. However, in contemporary European popular culture, the harem is often depicted as a space associated with sexual freedom, secrecy, and forbidden allure. This portrayal stems largely from a historical trend in 18th and 19th-century Europe, where there was an emphasis on the perceived enslavement of women, particularly in sexual terms, within Middle Eastern

and North African societies. Traditional European narratives, including fictional writings and travel accounts mostly authored by men, commonly propagated the notion that Muslim societies mistreated women, viewing them as objects for sexual gratification (Ramli, 2011, pp. 264-265).

3.2.2. Impact of Orientalism on Societal Perceptions:

The concept of orientalism refers to the way in which the Western world has historically depicted and perceived the "East" or the "Orient." It involves the portrayal of Eastern cultures, traditions, and people through a Western lens, often emphasizing exoticism, otherness, and stereotypes. Orientalism has had a significant impact on the visual cultural symbol of Turkey. Leyla Ersenkılınçkaya(2011) highlights how orientalism has led to the perpetuation of Eastern women of certain visual cultural symbols of Turkey, such as the imagery of the harem, Turkish bath, belly dancer, and other orientalized depictions.

Ersenkılınçkaya discusses how artists like Nil Yalter, kran Moral, and Glsn Karamustafa, who identify as feminist artists, have addressed the impact of orientalism on the visual cultural symbol of Turkey questioning the exoticized and dehumanized portrayal of the "other" in Western art.

In addition to Ersenkilinçkaya's analysis, Mahdi & Kareem (2017) shed light on how Western writers strategically utilize discourse to depict Eastern women, whose Otherness is continually defined and redefined for rhetorical and political purposes (Mahdi & Kareem, 2017, p. 39). Byron's "Turkish Tales" explore the theme of disobedient women within the harem, depicting them as both domestic and rebellious figures striving against their confined existence (Mahdi & Kareem, 2017, p. 38). Moreover, Ramli (2011) highlights the solidification of Orientalist portrayals of Eastern women as enslaved and sexually objectified within Ottoman harems, shaping Western depictions of Islamic societies(pp. 266-267).

Furthermore, Akman (2019) contends that the depiction of the harem as a carceral space in the narrative reinforces Orientalist stereotypes about Eastern societies, particularly regarding the treatment of women. By portraying the harem as a realm where women lack autonomy and are confined, the narrative perpetuates the perception of Eastern women as submissive and powerless. Additionally, by framing the harem as a zone solely for male gratification, the narrative exoticizes Eastern femininity, reducing women to mere commodities. This portrayal serves to bolster Western notions of superiority and morality, juxtaposing the presumed liberation of Western women with the perceived subjugation of their Eastern counterparts (para. 36).

Thus, through the examination of Rathborne's "Her Rescue from the Turks" from 1896, Akman's (2019) analysis underscores the enduring impact of Orientalist perspectives on Turkish culture and Islam during the era of imperialism. The novel reinforces stereotypes such as portraying the harem as a prison for compliant Oriental women, Islam as a "false religion" fostering base desires, and Turks as morally corrupt barbarians. This narrative reflects a Western sense of superiority that marginalizes Turkish Muslim culture. Exploring this provides

insight into how Orientalist representations persist in shaping societal perceptions and attitudes, exerting influence over Western cinema, pop culture, and literature. Numerous writers and poets have continually depicted Oriental women in ways that perpetuate distorted images of femininity. Despite the advancements of globalization, technology, and postcolonial theory, these outdated Orientalist stereotypes persist into the twenty-first century, largely unaffected by societal progress(Albaqawi, 2023).

Building upon these analyses, Albaqawi (2023) notes that both Orientalism and imperialism have grappled with the portrayal of women in the East. Kabbani succinctly captures this complexity, noting that "Europe's feelings about Oriental women were always ambivalent ones. They fluctuated between desire, pity, contempt and outrage" (Kabbani, Citation1994, p. 26 as cited in Albaqawi, 2023). Whereas, Leon (2023) argues that Orientalism distorts the reality of the Eastern world by presenting an idealized and romanticized version, perpetuating stereotypes about the status of women in non-Western societies (Leon, 2023).

Overall, Abu-Lughod et al. (2001) discuss the significant impact of Orientalist representations on societal attitudes towards Turkish women, perpetuating the idea of the "Oriental woman" as a passive and veiled figure (Abu-Lughod et al., 2001). These depictions can limit opportunities and perpetuate power dynamics that hinder gender equality and women's rights.

Consequently, the objectification and marginalization of Turkish women, as well as the perpetuation of gendered power dynamics, have influenced the way Turkish women are

perceived in terms of their sexuality and agency. By framing Turkish women within the context of Orientalist discourse, these representations have often overlooked the diverse experiences and agency of Turkish women, reducing them to a monolithic and homogenized image. This has had implications for how Turkish women are treated and understood both domestically and internationally (Abu-Lughod et al., 2001).

3.3. Middle East Feminist Perspective:

In the domain of Middle Eastern academic discourse, there has been a notable progression towards a more nuanced comprehension of feminist theories, as outlined by Kandiyoti (1995), evolving through various stages influenced by reactions to the intricacies of local socio-political environments (pp. 5-16). In recent decades, there has been a notable rise in the presence of women in various spheres, signifying a shift in power dynamics. This enhanced visibility has

contributed to a revised equilibrium, rooted in real lived experiences (Whitcher, 2005, p. 9). Over centuries, women in the Middle East have been actively involved in gender discussions and socio-political movements within their communities, spanning literary expressions, public participation, and the formation of women's groups dedicated to improving their status. Despite facing challenges such as low literacy rates and limited workforce participation, these women have actively challenged perceptions of identity and gender norms, shaping discourse and societal norms. However, amidst the backdrop of the Middle East's rising global importance, the discourse on gender has unfolded with limitations, inadvertently relegating women to passive roles in shaping their own identities and historical narratives (Whitcher, 2005, p. 23). Nevertheless, within the sphere of women's studies in the Middle East, there has been a notable evolution from simplistic dichotomies of modernity versus tradition towards a deeper understanding of gender dynamics, acknowledging the intertwining influences of social, cultural, and political factors. Despite obstacles, there is a growing acknowledgment of women's agency in challenging traditional gender norms and actively contributing to transformative societal shifts (Whitcher, 2005, p. 27).

3.3.1. Examination of Middle East Feminist Theories:

The portrayal of Middle Eastern women by the West as a homogeneous group is deeply problematic, considering the vast diversity across the over twenty countries that comprise the Middle East. Each nation possesses unique socio-cultural attributes that significantly

influence gender dynamics. Within this intricate web of politics, religion, and society, the discourse surrounding the "woman question" has been framed. Additionally, certain Western feminists have imposed Western notions of femininity onto Muslim feminists, often using these standards as a measure of modernity, disregarding the nuances of local socio-cultural contexts. These approaches hinder genuine dialogue about gender politics in the Middle East and overlook the active engagement of women in gender debates and socio-political movements. Throughout the region, feminist thought has flourished through various mediums such as literature, active participation in social and political spheres, and the establishment of numerous women's organizations. These endeavors have resulted in diverse outcomes, reflecting the complex realities of gender dynamics in the Middle East (Whitcher, 2005, p. 67).

Various strands of feminism exert distinct influences on gender dynamics in the Middle Eastern context. Western feminist thought, for instance, has imparted pivotal notions like gender, which have found resonance among Islamic and secular feminist circles in the region.

However, Western feminist ideology often carries the baggage of Orientalist and colonialist biases, depicting the Middle East and Islam as inferior to the West. In contrast, Islamic feminism pursues gender equality within the Islamic framework, endeavoring to reshape societal norms from within the religion itself, rather than rejecting it outright. Meanwhile, secular feminism in the Middle East adopts Western feminist principles and theories without the accompanying negative stereotypes associated with the region. This array of feminist perspectives contributes to a rich and intricate discourse surrounding gender issues in the Middle East (Vohra, 2023, p. 29).

While Western feminism has played a crucial role in advocating for women's rights in both Western and, to some extent, Eastern contexts, it has also faced valid criticisms, particularly concerning its treatment of Muslim women in the Middle East. This critique often stems from Orientalist and colonial biases, perpetuating traditional Western judgments about the "East" (Choudhury, 2009, p. 154; Vohra, 2023, p. 26). As Muslim women grappled with societal oppression, many initially sought liberation through Western feminism, attributing their struggles to Islam. However, recent trends in the Middle East reflect a shift, with women revisiting Islamic doctrines to assert their rights within the framework of their faith, propelled by societal pressures and a quest for cultural authenticity (Whitcher, 2005, p. 7). In this context, Islamic feminism emerges as a significant force in advocating for women's rights in the Middle East. It is deeply rooted in Islamic principles, drawing inspiration from the Qur'an (Hesová, 2019, p. 30; Vohra, 2023, p. 26). Islamic feminism challenges colonial influences and offers a distinct approach tailored to the Islamic Middle East, adapting to the religious diversity of the region (Vohra, 2023, p. 26). Through ijtihad, Islamic feminists critically examine and reinterpret religious texts, emphasizing gender equality within their cultural and religious framework (Hesová, 2019, p. 39; Vohra, 2023, p. 27). While acknowledging patriarchal biases in traditional interpretations of Islamic texts, Islamic feminists reject the notion that Islam inherently oppresses women or conflicts with modern values (Ahmadi, 2006, p. 36; Vohra, 2023, p. 27).

However, it's essential to recognize that Islamic feminism is not the sole feminist movement in the Middle East. Secular forms of feminism also exert considerable influence, prompting discussions about the distinctions between secular and Islamic feminist perspectives (Vohra, 2023, p. 28). Secular feminism prioritizes political equality, labor rights, and women's education over theological reform, acknowledging its compatibility with Islam and advocating for women's rights within the context of their religious beliefs and practices (ibid). Despite

perceived conflicts, there is potential for harmonious coexistence between secular feminism and Islamic feminism, mutually reinforcing each other's objectives within the region (ibid).

3.3.2. Turkish Women in Feminist Theories:

Al-Ali (2002) discusses Turkey's unique position in the Middle East due to its history of avoiding colonization. It highlights the distinct challenge of women's emancipation within Islam in Turkey compared to former colonies (p. 32). The mention of Kandiyoti's observation emphasizes how colonial powers' paternalistic role in advocating for women's advancement impacted societal perceptions of women's attire, behavior, and roles, which became symbolic battlegrounds between authenticity and independence versus perceived concessions or imitations of Western norms (Kandiyoti, 1987, as cited in Al-Ali, 2002, p. 32).

According to Al-Ali (2002), modernization in Turkey was closely intertwined with the adoption of Western principles and a departure from religious convictions under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. This shift marked a significant divergence from

traditional values and practices. However, within this context, Muslim women often find themselves perceived as lacking agency, their identity reduced to being "veiled, exotic, and oppressed by Islam" (Khan, 2005, as cited in Vohra, 2023, p. 26). This perception perpetuates a victim identity that further marginalizes Muslim women in the Middle East, rooted in Orientalist and colonial beliefs of Western superiority. Edward Said's concept of Orientalism highlights how Western perceptions have distorted the image of the Middle East, promoting the idea of Middle Eastern exceptionalism and perpetuating stereotypes of its supposed uncivilized nature (Vohra, 2023, p. 26). However, Gökalp's concept of an "original Turkish civilization" presented an alternative narrative, delineating Turkish nationalism from Islam (Al-Ali, 2002, p. 32). This perspective sought to reclaim a sense of national identity that was distinct from religious affiliations, emphasizing Turkey's unique historical and cultural heritage apart from its Islamic roots.

Al-Ali (2002) discusses also how women's movements in the Middle East face challenges when interacting with state structures, which can either support or hinder their activism. These movements balance between complying with and opposing existing systems, occasionally seeking to broaden political opportunities without outrightly rejecting the system. Turkish women employ a strategy of "residual acceptance," using available resources within the system to reshape prevailing structures and narratives. By engaging in both confrontation and

cooperation with state and political entities, Turkish women's movements have the potential to play a significant role in democratization efforts in the modern Middle East (p. 33).

"Since the late 1980s, we, as women involved in the new feminist movement in Turkey, pondered the conditions of womanhood and the mechanisms that sustain male dominance. We scrutinized and questioned everything that had been taught to us, including Turkish history. As a member of a feminist group, I was compelled to search for similar women's groups in Turkish history" (Aynur Demirdirek, 1998).

Middle East feminist discourse includes examining the history of the Turkish women's movement in the context of debates and contestations about the Ottoman and Kemalist legacy.

Traditionally, discussions about Turkish women have focused on the legal reforms introduced by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk after the establishment of the Turkish state in 1923, which are often viewed as a radical change and a total break with the Ottoman past. However, recent studies challenge this assumption and point to pre-Republican women's movements and

activists who struggled for their legal and human rights after the initiation of the modernization process of the Ottoman empire. Ottoman women were not merely oppressed but educated women did organize and embraced every opportunity to speak out and challenge existing gender relations. Special attention has been given to the writings of women in various journals, with the first magazine for women, Terakki-i Muhadderat, published in 1869, and a number of other women's magazines following. These magazines are remarkable not only because they were written and produced by women but also because their content points to an emerging feminist consciousness. Women's demands were initially discussed in the framework of Islam but later on, women started to raise secular arguments as well. Many of these demands can be understood in the framework of the drive for "modernization" which can be traced to the Tanzimat period (Al-Ali, 2002, p. 22).

In Turkey, women's movements have achieved notable success in mobilizing women across class lines, attributed to factors such as broad-based support from middle-class and lower-class women, alongside effective campaigns against discriminatory laws and violence. Turkish women's movements benefit from a historical context that promotes gender equality within Turkish nationalism (Al-Ali, 2002). This narrative has facilitated mobilization across social strata. Furthermore, Turkish women's organizations predominantly rely on municipal funding, fostering independence from external agendas, while state institutions like the "Directory for the Problems and Concerns of Women" provide institutional support, influencing

mainstream legislation. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's secularization efforts in Turkey have delineated Turkish nationalism from Islam, allowing for the promotion of women's rights within the public sphere. The Turkish Women's Movement, rooted in the late 1980s, initially questioned womanhood's conditions and challenged male dominance, tracing back to Ottoman women's activism (Al-Ali, 2002, pp. 23-30). Although Kemalist reforms aimed at improving women's legal status, they also reinforced traditional roles, sparking debates about their liberating effect:

"Factors that favor emancipation [...] have been, first and foremost, the modern legal system established by the republic, Ataturk's constant reminders of the necessity of giving women full citizenship status, socioeconomic development, a falling birth rate, new inheritance laws, the transformations of the extended family into a nuclear family compulsory and free education, urbanization, and the extension of communication networks" (Coşar, 1978: 138).

Even amidst obstacles such as institutional shortcomings and the quest for independence within patriarchal frameworks, the movement diversified, adopting secular and democratic values, encompassing various ideologies from Islamist to Kemalist (Al-Ali, 2002, pp. 23-30).

3.3.3. Zehra Arat's Exploration of the Turkish Woman:

Zehra Arat is a prominent Turkish feminist scholar who has made significant contributions to reshaping the image of Turkish women within the context of Middle East feminist scholarship. Her work focuses on women's rights, democratization, globalization, and development, with an emphasis on the human rights of women in developing countries (Vickrey, 2024d).

Zehra Arat explores the cultural construct of "the Turkish woman" and analyzes how it has been influenced by various ideological and political forces over time. In her edited volume, "Deconstructing Images of The Turkish Woman," "Deconstructing Images of The Turkish Woman" confronts the pervasive societal pressure to constrain women by delving into prevalent stereotypes about Turkish women. It covers various disciplines such as political science, economics, business, ethnography, history, and literature, drawing on the expertise of scholars from across the globe. Through their diverse perspectives, these scholars unravel the numerous images associated with Turkish women, shedding light on the complexities imposed upon them (Arat, 1999). They emphasizes the intricate nature of Turkish women's identities and their resistance to being pigeonholed into predefined roles.

3.3.3.1. Critique of Western Hegemony:

The book of essays titled "Deconstructing Images of The Turkish Woman," Arat offers critical perspectives on the portrayal of Turkish women, challenging Orientalist narratives and advocating for diverse feminist voices (Kiran et al., 2023, p. 755). Her work critiques the homogenizing language often used to depict women and delves into the impact of Western hegemony and colonialism on perceptions of women in Turkey and other "Third World" countries. By challenging dominant representations, Arat emphasizes women's agency in

shaping their identities. Overall, her goal is to deconstruct the multitude of images associated with Turkish women and expose the underlying ideological and cultural constructions.

3.3.3.2. Arat's contributions to reshaping the image of Turkish women:

Zehra Arat's contributions to reshaping the image of Turkish women within the context of Middle East feminist scholarship are multifaceted and significant. Through her work, she addresses various dimensions of gender dynamics and challenges entrenched stereotypes, thereby reshaping perceptions of Turkish women.

3.3.3. Challenging Western Perceptions:

Feminist literary analysis, as asserted by Kiran et al. (2023), has increasingly focused on the intricate relationship between Orientalism and feminism within Eastern literature, a subject of significant interest within academic circles (p. 753). Within this discourse,

Firstly, Arat's critique of Western hegemony and Orientalist narratives is a crucial aspect of her contribution. She scrutinizes the homogenizing language used to depict Turkish women and explores how Western influences have shaped perceptions of women in Turkey and other "Third World" countries. Arat argues that " by criticizing Turkish women's 'enslaved' conditions, orientalists justified Western colonial expansion, while Western missionary women privileged themselves, and Turkish reformists attempted to create a trained labor force and enlightened wives" (Arat, 1998, p.24). Additionally, Arat critiques Western approaches to modernization, highlighting how they perpetuated stereotypes about Turkish women and served their own interests. As noted by Irvin Cemil Schick (1998), "Sexualized images of Turkish women have long been a staple of European culture" (p. 83). Thus, by deconstructing Western-centric representations, Arat provides a counter-narrative that emphasizes the agency and diversity of Turkish women's experiences.

3.3.3.4. Engagement with Activism and Empowerment:

Arat's engagement with activism and educational initiatives further enhances her contributions. She not only conducts research but also actively participates in advocacy efforts aimed at advancing women's rights and challenging gender inequality. By collaborating with organizations and participating in policy discussions (Vickrey, 2024).. This commitment is

reflected in the increased political participation and activism among women, driven by the emergence of new groups and increased political competitiveness" (Arat, 1998, p. 18). Additionally, education was a priority for the founders of the Republic of Turkey, as emphasized by Arat (1998, p. 157). She highlights the early focus on education by the Republic of Turkey, underscoring its importance from the very inception of the nation. Demirdirek (1998) further supports this notion, stating that "Women, as the ones responsible for raising children, should be educated in order to enable the nation's progress and development" (p. 68). Through her multifaceted approach, Arat contributes significantly to empowering women and promoting their active participation in societal development." the emergence of new groups and the increased political competitiveness caused women's political participation and activism to increase " (Arat, 1998, p. 18).

3.3.3.5. Arat's Study of Diverse Feminist Movements:

"In the 1990s, all women's movements, whether Islamist, Kemalist, Socialist, Liberal, or Radical feminist, not only demanded women's right to work but also emphasized the need to gain and sustain an independent identity" (Arat, 1998, p. 28). Arat highlights the emergence of diverse feminist groups in Turkey during this period, all advocating for women's rights and the necessity of an independent identity, reflecting a response to the limitations of Kemalist reforms.

Among Ottoman women activists, Arat observes a spectrum of approaches to addressing women's issues. Some embraced the Muslim identity, seeking to reform the family within a religious framework, while others embraced secularism, questioning male privileges and domination (Arat, 1998, p. 27). This diversity underscores the complexity of women's activism in Ottoman society.

Arat also discusses the criticism faced by the resurgence of Islam and veiling, particularly from women who were the initial beneficiaries of Kemalist reforms and education. She notes, "Today, the rising popularity of Islam and the new veiling... are criticized for being anti-modern

and reactionary" (Arat, 1998, p. 27). Kemalist feminists, adopting a legalist approach, emphasize the protection and expansion of women's rights granted in Kemalist reforms, resisting Islamist movements perceived as threats to these gains (Arat, 1998, p. 28).

3.3.3.6. Arat's engagement with Islamic feminism:

Moreover, Arat's engagement with Islamic feminism offers a unique perspective on the intersection of Islam and gender. While critiquing traditional gender norms, Arat acknowledges the agency of Islamist women and explores how Islamic principles can intersect with feminist ideals to promote women's empowerment within Muslim-majority societies. She examines the practice of the new veiling, tesettür, among educated Turkish women, discussing its relation to a woman's attire and body in shaping her social role (Arat, 1998, p. 20). This approach resonates with Middle East feminist efforts to reconcile feminist principles with local cultural and religious norms, emphasizing the importance of context-specific approaches to women's empowerment and social change.

3.3.3.7. Empowering Women Economical Agency:

Underscoring the significance of women's economic autonomy in discussions aboutempowerment, Demirdirek (1998) notes: "How women's work outside the home brings economic independence and how important this is for women are frequently discussed' (p. 70)."

Arat's deconstruction of stereotypes and negotiation of public and private spheres are also notable contributions. She challenges predefined gender roles and explores how Turkish women navigate the intersection of public and private domains, highlighting the complexities of their identities and experiences. Turkish women, as described by Ayse Durakbasa (1998), " perceived themselves not merely as women but as individuals with significant social functions. Durakbasa underscores the empowerment and agency experienced by Kemalist women, who were encouraged to participate in public life and viewed themselves as crucial contributors to the nation-building project of Kemalism " (p. 152). Arat's transnational perspective expands the discourse on Turkish women's issues beyond national boundaries, emphasizing the interconnectedness of gender struggles across different contexts.

By integrating these perspectives, Arat's work contributes to a nuanced understanding of Turkish women's experiences, encompassing their economic empowerment and their roles in shaping the nation's social fabric.

3.4. Intersectional Dynamics of Turkish Women's Identity:

Intersectionality is a theoretical and methodological approach that helps researchers understand the multiple, multi-sited, and interlayered realities and social inequalities as a gendered experience (as cited in Muhanna-Matar, 2022, p. 774). In the same vein, Al-Ali (2002) emphasizes the diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts within the Middle East, challenging the notion of a uniform identity for Middle Eastern women. It highlights the complexity of gender relations, cautioning against generalizations and assumptions about women's movements in the region. While acknowledging shared understandings of gender, it critiques the tendency to essentialize Middle Eastern women's experiences solely through the lens of Islam. Fatema Mernissi's work is cited as an example of the evolving discourse on Islam's role in shaping gender dynamics, highlighting the heterogeneous nature of Islamic practices and the diversity among Muslim communities. Additionally, She underscores the intersectionality of identity factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, and religion, noting similarities in cultural and social codes among women from different religious backgrounds within the Middle East (p. 2).

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, gender, and sexuality, which create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. In the context of understanding the identity of Turkish women. Irvin Cemil Schick (1998) states, "identity itself only makes sense in juxtaposition to alterity" (p. 84), implying that Turkish women's identities are defined not only by their own characteristics but also by how they are perceived in relation to other factors.

"Davidoff argues that understanding the 'public sphere(s)' and the slogan of 'the personal is political' is central to the analysis of identity formation. According to her, key questions about the creation of identity have to be extended beyond family, home, and childhood, and the ragged frontiers between public and private must be recognized as a site where identity is formed (by ethnicity, race, and class, as well as gender)" (Ilyasoglu, 1998, p. 257

Ozkaleli (2019) asserts that Turkey encompasses diverse identities and cultures, advocating for their recognition through an intersectional approach

"Turkey's modernization has not led to the emancipation of individuals, and this fact is most apparent in the limitations that various gendered identities experience as well as the limited rights given to ethnic, religious, and other minorities, such as Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, and non-Sunni groups such as the Alevis, in addition to all the non-

religious experiences" (Karaveli, 2010, p. 91, as cited in Ozkaleli, 2019; Ozkaleli, 2019, p. 8).

Thus, examining the situation through an intersectional framework reveals the multidimensional nature of the endeavor for acknowledgment and empowerment. This underscores the imperative for a comprehensive strategy aimed at mitigating the intertwined inequities confronted by Turkish women.

3.5. The Role of Media, Literature, and Art in Perpetuating Orientalist Narratives:

Media, literature and art, and have historically played significant roles in perpetuating Orientalist narratives about women.

3.5.1. Media's Role:

According to Bakan (2013), "Mass media have become one of the most powerful institutional forces in society. Most aspects of life in contemporary societies and media have reciprocal impacts on each other to certain extents" (p. 129).

Grovogui (2013) highlights how the mass media, especially television, play a role in spreading distorted images of various cultures, religions, and ethnic groups by portraying them in stereotypical ways. Additionally, Shapiro (2009) and Gregg (1999) have emphasized the significant role of visual language in perpetuating stereotypes and forming generalized perceptions of "other" cultures and regions (Algaba, Tomé-Alonso, & Cimini, 2021, pp. 221–236). Bayraktaroglu (2019) delves into the portrayal of Turkish female characters in three James Bond films set in Istanbul—From Russia with Love (1963), The World Is Not Enough (1999), and Skyfall (2012). By scrutinizing these representations, she aims to discern how Turkish women are depicted over time and the implications of Istanbul's portrayal, particularly in relation to Turkey's changing geopolitical position vis-à-vis the Western world. Drawing on concepts such as costume theory, sexual objectification, post-colonialism, and the "male gaze," his analysis reveals the perpetuation of Orientalist narratives that emphasize Turkish women's exoticism, submissiveness, and adherence to traditional roles. This portrayal, influenced by Western perspectives, perpetuates stereotypes and objectification.

Media representations of Turkish women shape societal perceptions by reinforcing stereotypes, molding cultural norms, and influencing attitudes. These depictions construct narratives that often portray Turkish women as exotic, submissive, or traditional, perpetuating

Orientalist stereotypes and objectification. Consequently, this affects how Turkish women are treated and valued within and outside their communities. Moreover, focusing on narrow portrayals marginalizes diverse voices, limiting understanding of their complexity.

3.5.2. Literature's Role:

The Western construction of "the Orient" was shaped by various tools, including media, art, economy, academia, poetry, and novel-writing (Said, 1978, p. 15 as cited in Drott, 2016, p. 3). Said (1978), as cited in Drott (2016, p. 6), emphasized the role of literature in creating a paternalistic and fictional depiction of the East by the West. Through literary representations, the West has constructed a narrative that often portrays the East in a paternalistic and distorted manner (Drott, 2016, p. 6).

Said explored a range of sources and critically examined the works of numerous writers, including Hugo, Goethe, Nerval, Flaubert, Fitzgerald, Burton, Scott, Byron, Lawrence, and Barres (Drott, 2016, p.7). These literary representations reinforced the idea of the East as a place of otherness and exoticism.

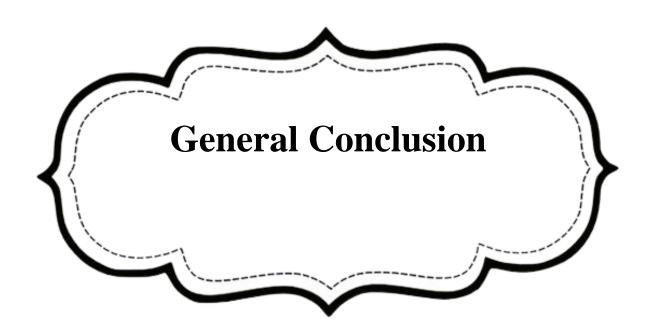
3.5.3. Art's Role:

Art, particularly Orientalist art, has played a significant role in perpetuating Orientalist narratives about Turkish women. Orientalist painters, such as Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres and others, depicted Turkish women in a manner that reinforced stereotypes and exoticized their culture (Zirrar, 2021). These paintings often portrayed Turkish women as passive, sensual objects of desire, typically seen in settings like harems or bathhouses. One of the key aspects of Orientalist art was its portrayal of Turkish women as entirely different from European women. While nudity was generally not acceptable for European women in art during the 18th and 19th centuries, Orientalist painters made an exception for Turkish women, depicting them in various states of undress. This reinforced the perception that women in the Orient were somehow more sexually available and less respected than their European counterparts. Moreover, Orientalist paintings often framed Turkish women within contexts that emphasized their supposed exoticism and sensuality, such as lush, colorful settings or surrounded by opulent fabrics and furnishings. These depictions served to reinforce the idea of the Orient as a mysterious and alluring place, populated by exotic women who existed solely for the pleasure of men (Zirrar, 2021).

3.6. Conclusion

ChapterIII: Turkish women's identity analysis

In conclusion, this chapter examined the Orientalist depiction of Turkish women, exposing common stereotypes and their impact. By examining Middle East feminist perspectives, notably through the lens of Zehra Arat's seminal work 'Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Women', it underscored the crucial role of challenging and deconstructing these narratives. Moreover, the exploration of intersectionality shed light on the intricate interplay of various factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality in shaping the identities and experiences of Turkish women.



General Conclusion

The comprehensive analysis of Arat's Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Women has illuminated the multifaceted story of Turkish women, caught between the opposing forces of Orientalist stereotypes and the growing movement of Middle Eastern feminism. It specifically aimed to examine the influence of these forces on the representation of Turkish women, with a focus on the transformative contributions of scholar Zehra Arat.

The research unfolded across three chapters. Chapter one delved into the historical and societal shifts reflected in Turkish literature, highlighting its role in perpetuating stereotypes alongside potential for change. This chapter laid the groundwork for understanding the context of Turkish women's portrayal and Arat's interventions.

Chapter two provided the theoretical foundation. It unpacked Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, exposing its role in constructing a dichotomous East-West relationship and reinforcing power dynamics. This exploration was followed by a historical overview and definition of Middle Eastern feminism, particularly its intersection with gender, culture, and Turkey's colonial history.

Chapter three brought these themes together, the chapter analyzed the multifaceted identity of Turkish women. It specifically focused on how Arat challenged Orientalist representations and empowered Turkish women through her work.

The analysis suggests strong support for all three hypotheses. The exploration revealed how Orientalist narratives perpetuate stereotypical images, often exoticizing or marginalizing Turkish women. Conversely, Middle Eastern feminism offers a powerful counterpoint, challenging these portrayals and advocating for a more nuanced understanding of Turkish women's experiences. Zehra Arat stands as a prominent figure in this movement, utilizing literature to deconstruct Orientalist stereotypes and empower Turkish women.

The research was guided by three central questions:

- 1. How has Orientalism historically shaped Western perceptions of Turkish women, and what impact has this had on their representation?
- 2. How has Middle Eastern feminism contributed to the reevaluation and redefinition of Turkish women's identities and roles in society?

3. To what extent do Zehra Arat's key themes and motifs challenge and subvert Orientalist stereotypes about Turkish women?

While this study hypothesized that:

- 1. Orientalism has significantly shaped perceptions and representations of Turkish women, with real-world consequences.
- 2. Middle Eastern feminism has empowered Turkish women, facilitating a more nuanced understanding of their roles and identities.
- 3. Zehra Arat's deconstruction of images of Turkish women serves as a significant critique of Orientalism, challenging and redefining Western representations.

The definitive confirmation of these hypotheses was through an investigation adopted an interdisciplinary approach, combining literary analysis, critical theory involved Orientalism and Middle Eastern feminist perspectives.

The study acknowledges limitations in which the research the research focused particularly on the Turkish context and the work of Zehra Arat.

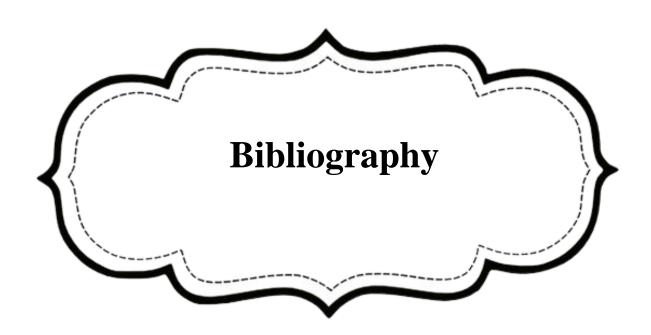
However, Literature often reflects dominant societal narratives, but there may be marginalized or silenced voices that are not adequately represented. Exploring works by less mainstream or minority authors could shed light on experiences that have been overlooked or underrepresented.

The implications of this research are significant. By challenging Orientalist portrayals, it contributes to a more accurate understanding of Turkish women and their experiences. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of including Middle Eastern feminist voices in shaping narratives about the region.

There are several avenues for future research. First, there is a need for more in-depth case studies that analyze specific literary works through an orientalist feminist lens, examining the representation of Eastern women and the power dynamics within these narratives. Second, engaging with Eastern feminist scholars and their perspectives is crucial for advancing the field. Collaborative research projects that bring together Western and Eastern feminists can foster knowledge exchange, mutual learning, and the development of more inclusive feminist frameworks. Lastly, exploring the intersectionality of gender with other social categories and identities is a promising direction for future research. By examining how gender intersects with

General Conclusion

race, class, sexuality, and nationality, researchers can better understand the complexities of Eastern women's lives and experiences.



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