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### THE POWER OF MAN-MADE LANGUAGE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER\*

#### ТОПЛУМСАЛ ЦІНСІЙЕТ ІНШАСІНДА ЕРКЕК ЕГЕМЕН ДІЛІН ГÜCÜ

**Abstract:** Recent studies on language and gender have proved that language is not simply a system of words or signs shared by a group of people to establish communication and convey messages, but rather it plays an active and dominant role in creating a subjugated and subservient life for women. In fact, it is the man-made language that constructs the patriarchal ideologies imprisoning women into the 'no-choice choice' situations, where women are judged against a masculine standard. However, it is high time women stopped defining themselves in accordance with the appropriate behavior and language created by men and changed their submissive and secondary position. Considering those issues and basing its argument on post-structuralist feminist theories, this study aims to manifest the alternative ways for women to subvert and de(con)struct the patriarchally constructed gender norms and roles.

**Key Words:** Man-made Language, Patriarchal Ideologies, Gender Construction, De(con)struction

\* This study is based on the fourth chapter of the author's Ph.D dissertation. All translations from the Turkish works belong to the author unless otherwise noted.

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**Öz:** Dil ve toplumsal cinsiyet alanında yapılan en son çalışmalar dilin insanlar arasında iletişim kurmayı ve/ya düşüncelerini aktarmayı sağlayan basit bir ortak işaretler sistemi değil, aksine, kadınların yaşam alanlarını sınırlamada ve onların itaatkâr bir hayat sürmelerini sağlamada etkin ve baskın bir rol oynayan önemli bir araç olduğunu kanıtlamıştır. Aslında dil, erkek egemen ideolojilerin inşasını sağlayan ve eril kurallar bağlamında kadınları 'seçimsiz' durumlar içine hapseden erkek egemen bir yapıdır. Ancak kadınların kendilerini erkek egemen söylem ve dili tarafından oluşturulmuş bu tanımlardan kurtarma; itaatkâr ve ikincil konumlarını değiştirme zamanı gelmiştir. Bu bilgiler doğrultusunda ve post-yapısalcı feminizm kuramlarını temel alarak, bu çalışma, ataerkil ideolojiler ve söylemlerce oluşturulmuş toplumsal cinsiyet normlarının ve rollerinin kadınlarca nasıl yıkılabileceğinin ve yeniden nasıl yaratılabileceğinin olasılıklarını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Erkek Egemen Söylem, Ataerkil İdeolojiler, Toplumsal Cinsiyet İnşası, Yapısöküm

## 1. Introduction

*How hard it is for women to keep counsel! (Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, 2007, 1.4:65).*

*Her voice was ever soft, /Gentle and low, an excellent*

*thing in woman (Shakespeare, King Lear, 2007, 5.3:15).*

*She has brown hair, and speaks small like a woman (Shakespeare, Merry Wives of Windsor, 2007, 1.1:7).*

Fictional utterances cannot be read directly or cannot be assumed as reflecting the view of the author. Of course, it would be misleading to claim that Shakespeare might have agreed with the representations expressed in these texts. Nonetheless, their articulation in these fictional texts is the proof of the long-running, traditional discursive practice of disparaging women's talk, and constitutes a recycling of this discourse.

Feminist research from the 1960s onwards has expressed a critical and interrogative stance towards gender as an analytical category. Furthermore, feminist thinkers have raised critical questions about the fundamental role of language in constructing and representing gender. One field of research has tried to find an answer to the question of whether women and men speak differently exploring the nature of femininity and masculinity, and focused on how their associated ideologies are expressed in language. Another has exemplified how language plays an active and dominant role in the symbolic positioning of women as inferior to men. No matter what claims they have – biological essentialism or social construction – it is an undeniable fact that language both constructs and eternalizes that reality, sometimes in subtle and invisible ways but often in obvious ways. Women are often defined as deviant and incompetent, or made invisible through a variety of linguistic and social practices exposing the ideological construction of 'man'.

Thus, through language, which is our means of classifying and ordering the world, a view has been constructed in which males continue to be seen as superior, and females continue to be seen as inferior, therefore strengthening the myth and reinforcing the justification for male power. That is, once made, these rules establish the rationale and the validation for male supremacy by arranging the objects and events of the world. As Mary Daly stated in *Gyn/Ecology*, “patriarchy appears to be everywhere” (1990: 1), and the evidence can be found in many fields. For instance, as in the example of ‘master and mistress’, the female term has generally negative associations, whereas the male term is either neutral or positive. Another frequently used example is the so-called generic use of ‘he’ and ‘man’ to include women assuming that it is gender-neutral. However, whatever the writer’s intention is, the generic ‘man’ is not interpreted gender-neutrally. On the contrary, “people do tend to think male, and tend not to think female” (Miller & Swift, 1976: 21). Such usages prove how women have been socially constructed as ‘Other’, and how femininity is misperceived as masculinity inverted. Women are the ‘second sex’ and the sexist language has played a crucial role in propagating the position of males and their control over the production of cultural forms.

As a result, language, which is a medium for everyone to verbalize even the simplest mental processes, places women in an awkward position in which they cannot articulate their self and woman identity with the limited words of the male-dominated language. This was made for centuries ago, and unfortunately, it has been deeply embedded in every aspect of our existence. Though it is not easy to eradicate because of its long-established tradition, this myth must be de(con)structed since, in Virginia Woolf’s words, “... the very form of the sentence does not fit her. It is a sentence made by men; it is too loose, too heavy, too pompous for a woman’s use” (Woolf, 1979: 48). So, what is the reason lying behind all of those misconceptions? Why is “the language [we] speak made up of words that are killing [us]?” (Wittig, 1973: 113-114).

### **1. The Construction of the Man-Made Language Through The Early Works: Cultural and Linguistic Beliefs, Gendered Metaphors and Proverbs**

The history of society has been written from the male point of view since the beginning civilization. That is why it becomes ‘HIStory’ not ‘HERstory.’ In fact, this kind of labeling starts even before birth – from the moment when someone begins to be curious whether the expected child will be a boy or a girl. Then, it becomes a never-ending process that transforms an “it” into a “he” or “she” (Butler, 1990). From now on, they do not have the option of growing into just people, but into boys and girls.

Parents begin to approach infants more gently, and use more diminutives and inner state verbs when they learn that the baby, whose sex has not been certain before, will be female. They, especially fathers, choose different language patterns to call their daughters such as ‘angel, bambi, honey, pumpkin, sugar, cutie pie, and daddy’s little princess’. On the other hand, one can scarcely hear fathers’ calling their sons with these terms since it is thought that it is not a manly thing to do. They prefer more direct and strong words like ‘my man, king, champ, son, chef, buddy and monster face’. Gender is built into the very structure of the language, and kids learn to produce sex-differentiated behavior. Then, they gradually start to reproduce this cycle

with its gender inequality and its man-made language. For instance, one cannot find any biological reason for why women should behave coquettishly and men should behave boisterously, or why women should put make up and men should not. Thus, as Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) summarizes, naming someone as man or woman is constructed by the beliefs of that society about gender. It is not science, but the male-centered view of gender that provides its definition.

This reproduction of gender and gender-specific cultures creates two different domains as 'the world of girls' and 'the world of boys', in which they have to behave and speak in accordance with certain societal rules. In this world, girls basically learn that they should provide support, understand and give priority to the speech rights of others. Moreover, they all should know how to establish and maintain relationships of equality and closeness and criticize others with carefully selected words, and all in an acceptable way of speaking. On the contrary, for boys, speech is used for completely different reasons. These are for proving and certifying his position of dominance, and taking and maintaining the attention of the audience, particularly when other speakers have the floor (Maltz&Borker, 1982). Gradually, this asymmetry turns into strongly established binary oppositions, and then extends into many domains. One way or another, most boys and girls find out that the opinions and activities of men are highly esteemed, and they simply learn ways of being and doing things without considering any reasons behind them due to the power of convention – a convention which has been explicitly established relying on the grounds of male superiority.

There are countless patterns proving this superiority. For example, people automatically tend to say, 'Mr. and Mrs. Smith' or 'husband and wife' – not vice versa. The assumption of a man's name on marriage suggests that the woman is merely an extension of her husband or part of her husband's estate. Trying to keep the father's name seems to be a kind of protest against domination. However, it should not be forgotten that this also perpetuates an androcentric naming practice. Furthermore, when the word 'surname', the hereditary name passed from a man to his wife and children, is considered, one can easily realize that it is actually 'sir name'. Even these few instances demonstrate that language about women is neither a neutral nor a trivial issue, but something deeply political. The male-female hierarchy is inherent in the words and language that ignore, demean and define women narrowly (Henley, 1987). Nonetheless, much less attention has been directed toward this issue since these masculine generic forms have been accepted as just grammatical conventions. On the contrary, they function to disadvantage women by making them seem invisible and unimportant. One of the most convincing proofs of this controversial issue is the use of 'neutral or generic he'.

Though used to be inclusive of both sexes, 'generic he' and 'generic man' may not be interpreted generically. It makes women feel shut out, an inferior species, or even a nonexistent one. They are not a part of what is being described. There is considerable empirical evidence to suggest that the use of the generic man symbol is often accompanied, not surprisingly, by an image of a male. For example, Wood (1997) cited the experience of a mother having a 6-year-old daughter. When she asked her daughter why she called the stuffed animals 'he', her daughter immediately replied that there were 'more hes than shes'. Here, the use of generic expressions is seen to be preventing women from expressing and raising consciousness about their own experience.

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Another indicator of perpetuating men's dominance and exploitative behavior is the universal consent that maleness is the norm, and women are somehow the deviant versions of men. The only perspective that makes sense is the male one, so this kind of encoding divides the world up in a way that is more natural for men than for women. Good examples of this come from the terms 'foreplay' and 'sex'. While 'sex' is usually uttered to refer to an act defined in terms of male orgasm, the sexual activities during which many women have their orgasms are relegated to secondary status, referred to by terms like 'foreplay'. There are also other words that are far more frequently sexualized when they are applied to women, as compared to when they are applied to men. Dale Spender, citing Lakoff (2004), analyzes the example of 'professional'. Comparing 'he's a professional' and 'she's a professional', Spender concludes that the latter is far more likely than the former to be taken to mean that the person in question is a prostitute. Since males have had far more power in the society, the language created and shaped by them "reflects sexist, male-centered attitudes that perpetuate trivialization, marginalization, and invisibility of female experience" (Sheldon, 1990: 4).

This sexism in language and the male control over the production of cultural forms have also enhanced the use of gendered-metaphors through which the thoughts and words of the patriarchal culture is reproduced. At first, metaphors appeared to be a phenomenon that occurs at the level of the word, but in fact, they are "better regarded as systems of belief than as individual things" (Ortony, 1993: 33). Thus, a metaphor can be accepted as one of the building blocks of one's thinking, at both the level of language acquisition and language use, rather than as a literary form or a deviation from some supposedly literal language (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). When women are called by these metaphors, not only are their genders socially constructed, but their agency and identity are denied as well with the words imposing the male power. Not surprisingly, words that are used to describe women, such as terms of immaturity (babe, doll, baby bear), animals (bird, chick, kitten), food (sweetie pie, peach, pancake) and clothing (blue stocking, bit of skirt), have no power of agency. This kind of metaphorizing of the female body is based on the old sperm-meets-egg story. The egg is always passive, waiting for rescue by the sperm. Gerald and Helen Schatten relate the egg's role to that of *Sleeping Beauty*: "a dormant bride awaiting her mate's magic kiss, which instills the spirit that brings her to life" (1984: 51). The idea that sperm has to carry out a 'perilous journey' into the 'warm darkness' shows how gendered metaphors and stereotypes can easily and irrevocably impair one's thought, ideology and sexual experiences (Martin, 1991).

In addition to all these revealing negative cultural and linguistic beliefs about women that define their position and language, proverbs also function to shape gender and limit women's speech in accordance with the male dominance. There are various proverbs describing women's language to be inferior to that of men, and considering it as weak, uncertain and trivial: 'Men talk like books, women lose themselves in details' (China), 'Never listen to a woman's words' (China). 'The tongue is babbling, but the head knows nothing about it' (Russia). These are just a few examples of the patriarchal rules that Cameron (1995) refers as contributing to norms of 'verbal hygiene', teaching women and girls on how they have to speak. As well as proverbs, the opinions of the prominent figures in male-dominant fields, such as politics, literature, and art support and enhance the devaluation of women. Some of the most frequently

quoted lines are those used to scoff at and insult women, such as these, by Samuel Johnson: “A woman’s preaching is like a dog walking on his hind legs. It is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all” (cited in Boswell, 1966:214). And these of Winston Churchill, “A good speech should be like a woman’s skirt; long enough to cover the subject and short enough to create interest” (Goodreads, 2011, Quotable Quote).

To cut it short, these examples cannot be interpreted as the inevitable consequences of women’s nature, but they are the deeply rooted social sanctions engraved through language. In other words, it is this seamless connection that makes language so important to gender since language cannot simply be regarded as reflecting pre-existing categories, but as part of what constructs and maintains these established categories. The speaking subject, and in this case woman, is bound to language, and since the language is ideologically constructed, the speaking subject is also an ideological subject shaped by male power. To be able to demolish the destructive and subversive effect of language, a new reality, more congenial to women, must be created. The only way to achieve this for women is to create their own language, either by de(con)structing the terms and concepts already in use, or by originating a new language, with new words and new rules. Only in this way will women be able to break free from the constraints of male language and male thought, and to be able to articulate what is impossible to articulate with male words. Only in this way will they be able to get rid of the danger of losing themselves in wordlessness.

## 2. The Feminist Challenges and the Feminist Philosophy of Language

As clarified in the previous sections, nearly the entire history of gender has been created and performed in accordance with the self-admiring, self-stimulating and self-congratulatory masculine point of view, or in popular discourse, with the phallogocentric tradition. This tradition is indeed formed and internalized through language, which is man-made. Unfortunately, there is no getting beyond language or beyond the play of signifiers, because one thinks, feels and sees, or shortly exists, within the language into which s/he was born. That is, language governs and mediates one’s experience of her/him and the world. To be able to change or de(con)struct it is really difficult, as the language is wholly ideological. No one can deny that it involves systems of values and beliefs full of the numerous conflicting and dynamic ideologies operating at any given point in time in any given culture. For instance, like the example of ‘foreplay’ and ‘sex’ stated in the previous section, the use of the word ‘slut’ for a woman sleeping with many men, and the word ‘stud’ for a man sleeping with many women reveals and perpetuates the cultural belief that sexual relations with multiple partners should be a source of shame for women, whereas, it is a source of pride for men. This is because men have always been in a position to construct the myth of male superiority and make it accepted due to their power. Thus, everything is arranged according to this established system, in which the masculine parts of the social environment influence the mind and self-mechanisms with the help of its most powerful vehicle: the ‘man-made language’. In its structure and its use, women gradually enter into the meaning of patriarchal order and accept the inherently inaccurate reality. What is required is to change this reality and the language system through which women are deceived and misled.

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However, since these sexist codes of language claiming the male supremacy have been so internalized that even if the change is made, will the new terms become accepted as natural and stop seeming awkward to remember? In fact, in terms of language and equality, some critics warn against using different titles for men's and women's jobs when there is no difference in the work, because it is clear that the 'female' item of a male-female 'pair' is derogated in one way or another, as in the examples of majorette, stewardess, and usherette, and fishwife with respect to the masculine major, steward, usher and fisherman. Moreover, political and ideological correctness has risen in recent years to find the gender pairs and replace them with more gender-neutral terms such as police officer, chairperson, fire fighter, etc. Unfortunately, these terms could be nothing more than recommendations, but solely used as alternatives rather than replacements. As sexist language cannot be identified, controlled, and replaced, it will continually emerge and re-emerge in a variety of guises and genres.

Nevertheless, some women have realized that male superiority is a myth, and they have decided to deal with this knowledge in numerous ways. They started a new movement, known as 'second wave' of the Women's movement, in the late 1960s focusing on language and gender study. Since they no longer wished to give substance to patriarchal order and its integral component – the superiority of males, especially created and enhanced by man-made language – they created different rules that were not based on the assumption that the proper human being is a male one, and that female one is the negative category. As 'sexist language' could influence both thought and behavior, they particularly focused on the controversial issue of language. The American feminist Robin Morgan claimed strongly in *Going Too Far* that "the very semantics of the language reflect [women's] condition. We do not even have our own names, but bear that of the father until we exchange it for that of the husband" (1977: 106). Therefore, it was time they had started to construct a very different reality in which male superiority would no longer seem reasonable and the man-made language and its sexist codes would be seen as problematic, something to be eradicated as soon as possible, because gender is not something we are born with, and not something we have, but something we do and perform (Butler, 1990). This reality can be realized through feminist literary criticism characterized by "a resistance to codification and refusal to have its parameters prematurely set" (Fetterley, 1978: viii). Unfortunately, women entering into the literary field have to deal with lots of problems caused by the man-made language, through which their identity, body and gender are shaped. This field, which is an uphill struggle, also encompasses the problem of displaying life in literature, the trouble of women's psyche. Therefore, the problem of women pursuing the art of creation is closely related with the dynamic ideas such as language, body, self, identity, society, culture and history.

As a result, by scrutinizing on these issues, many feminist language researchers and literary critics aim to prove that men's power has been manifested in language and literature in a number of complex ways. They try to find answers to the questions of whether men and women use language differently in terms of biology, socialization and culture; or most importantly, whether women can get rid of the inherently oppressive aspects and chains of man-made language by creating new languages of their own.

### 3. Elaine Showalter and *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness*

One of the founders of feminist literary criticism in United States academia, Elaine Showalter is credited with her authentic views on feminist criticism. She is known basically for her provocative and strongly held opinions, particularly related with women and their relationships with writing. By providing a new record of women writers, Showalter helps other women understand why “despite prejudice, despite guilt, despite inhibition, women began to write” (1977: 36). In spite of the reasoning of John Stuart Mill, who said that women would always be imitators and never innovators since women lived in the same country with men and read their writings, Showalter insists on the self-awareness of the woman writer emerging through literature in every period. She accepts the fact that there has been a phase of ‘imitation and internalization’ of the long-established modes of the dominant tradition and its man-made language. This was followed by a period ‘protest’, demanding for autonomy against the social constructions. The last phase, ‘self-discovery’, is a new stage of self-awareness and a search for identity. Showalter assigns a systematic development to those three stages called “feminine, feminist and female” (1977: 13), and this evaluation has become a milestone for the subsequent women writers to recognize a need for self-assertion, rather than self-sacrifice, to be able to create their own literary criticism and history, in which they will freely explain the experiences and ideas about the body through their female language.

This self-awareness is “more like a set of interchangeable strategies than any coherent school or shared goal orientation” (Kolodny, 1976: 420). Black critics focus on a black feminist aesthetic dealing not only with racial but also sexual politics to protest the ‘massive silence’ against black and Third-World women writers. Marxist feminists study the relationship between class and gender as a crucial determinant of literary production. While literary historians desire to uncover a lost tradition, critics trained in deconstructionist methodologies, like French feminists, wish to ‘synthesize a literary criticism that is both textual and feminist’. Moreover, there is psychoanalytic criticism, arising from the ideas of Freud, where Lacan theorizes about women’s relationship to language and signification (Showalter, 1981). This disunity seems to be an obstacle to construct a theoretical field for feminist criticism, but in fact, it shows the refusal of narcissism of male scholarship. It is a kind of confrontation against the linear and monotype canons and judgments created by the male authority with the help of its man-made language. It is one of the most important features of the feminist critical theory: ‘the playful pluralism’ (Kolodny, 1976), questioning the validity of accepted conceptual structures.

Apart from raising self-awareness and enhancing self-discovery among the women writers, another important contribution of Showalter is to create the concept and practice of ‘gynocriticism’, defining and exploring the study of women’s writing chiefly to learn what women have felt and experienced. According to Showalter, the feminist critic must realize that a text produced within the framework of gynocentric criticism occupies a totally different status from that of androcentric criticism:

One of the problems of the feminist critique is that it is male-oriented. If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, and the limited roles women play in literary history, we are not learning what women have felt and experienced, but only what men have



thought women should be. (1979: 27)

Thus, gynocriticism has inaugurated a new period in the field of feminist literary theory trying to find an effective answer to the question of how women's writing had been different and how womanhood shaped women's creative expression (Spacks, 1976). In other words, it is the search of a 'muted' female culture to find her own voice, which is both womanly and powerful. Thenceforth, American, British and French feminist critics, though their ideas are totally different from each other in terms of biology, socialization or culture, have all turned their attention to the philosophical, linguistic and practical problems of women's use of language. That is, this controversial issue over language has been one of the most exciting areas in gynocritics, as it is the language that "has trapped as well as liberated [women]" (Rich, 2004: 237).

However, feminist critics and scholars who want to create a separate and self-assertive women's language are faced with a kind of paradox called "double-voiced discourse" (Lanser&Beck, 1979), embodying the heritages of the muted and the dominant. When a woman prefers to say 'I am the Queen' in an attempt to assert her difference from man by rejecting the word 'King', she also – somehow – accepts the fact that she is the queen who occupies the subordinate position to the king. Realizing this paradox, Showalter quotes Xavier Gauthier lamenting that "as long as women remain silent, they will be outside the historical process. But, if they begin to speak and write as men do, they will enter history subdued and alienated" (1981: 191). It is certain that the issue of women's language has its political as well as emotional aspects, but despite these difficulties and paradoxes, according to Showalter, there is still hopeful evidence that female tradition and female culture have been a center of concern inspiring women writers to take brave actions to state their independence. All they need to do is to:

[e]xpress mind and body. Rather than wishing to limit women's linguistic range, we must fight to open and extend it. The holes in discourse, the blanks and gaps and silences, are not the spaces where female consciousness reveals itself but the blinds of a 'prison-house of language [...] women have been denied the full resources of language and have been forced into silence, euphemism or circumlocution. (1981: 193)

Bearing all these facts in her mind, Showalter encourages all women to establish a visible world for themselves in which they will no longer be defined by the fallacy of masculine power and its repressive language. She, especially, focuses on women writers and persuades them to explore a new woman's language including the female creativity. According to her, these writers must present female sexuality and reproduction as positive forces to challenge the male-dominated traditional canon considering them as a biological trap or the binary opposite of the artistic creation. Briefly, the critics coming after Showalter owe her a lot, because through her pioneering studies, they now know more and do better.

#### 4. Gilbert and Gubar and *The Madwoman in The Attic*

*Alas! A woman that attempts the pen  
Such an intruder on the rights of men,  
Such a presumptuous Creature is esteem'd*

*The fault can by no virtue be redeem'd.*

(Anne Finch, cited in Gilbert&Gubar, 1984: 3)

In *The Madwoman in The Attic*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, aiming to define what it means to be a woman writer in a patriarchal culture, in which creation and 'masterly execution' has always been considered a kind of male gift, use the power of metaphors to present how female literary tradition has been ignored by the male writers who "father [their] texts just as God fathered the world" (1984: 4). Through the centuries, women writers have been imprisoned and kept from 'attempting the pen' since the "poet's pen is in some sense (even more than figuratively) a penis" (1984: 4). Thus, according to Gilbert and Gubar, the central question for feminist critics and writers is, "if the pen is a metaphorical penis, with what organ can females generate texts?" (1984: 7). In fact, this question still occupies the minds of masculinist and feminist theories, and the exact answer to it has not been found yet. However, no one can deny that the male metaphors of literary creation, attributing "the Phallus as 'transcendental signifier' and of the 'hymen's graphic' inscribed by the pen/penis" (Gilbert & Gubar, 1985: 516), have caused the feeling of anxiety in literary women readers and writers who were brave enough to dare enter into the male's sphere, where the man is the 'author(ity)'. As Edward Said puts it:

*Authority* suggests to me a constellation of linked meanings: not only, as the OED tells us, "a power to enforce obedience", or "a derived or delegated power", or "power to influence action", or "power to inspire belief", or "a person whose opinion is accepted"; not only those, but a connection as well with *author* - that is, a person who originates or give existence to something, a begetter, beginner, father, or ancestor, a person also who sets forth written statements. (2002: 74) (emphasis in original)

Underneath all these issues concerning 'author(ity)' lies the eternal act of creation, in which the Divine Creator is the sole origin and meaning of everything. With the influence of the dominant patriarchal ideology, the male writer over-identifies with the God Father, and declares himself as a "procreator and an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power" (Gilbert&Gubar, 1984: 6). In such an implicitly or explicitly patriarchal theory of literature, it is normal for a woman writer, who 'attempts the pen', to experience enormous anxiety. In fact, as being the daughters of Eve, causing the greater loss and fault since the Fall, women have no choice but to please "either men's bodies or their minds, their penises or their pens" (1984: 9). Though scarce in number, there have been always some brave women trying to show their creative power. However, when such creative energy appears in a woman, she is defined as freakish, deviant, and monster to be imprisoned, because this is essentially an 'unfeminine' characteristic. The pen must be in male hands and the woman must be 'penned in' his texts.

Gilbert and Gubar's enquiry shows that woman, who has been sentenced to confinement and dispossession by man, will now sentence herself to freedom with this monster woman, who is one of the terrible sorceress-goddesses such as "the Sphinx, Medusa, ... Kali ... all of whom possess duplicitous arts that allow them both seduce and steal male generative energy" (1984: 34). In short, by telling her own story, she will become a woman who defies the divine and literary authority. Nevertheless, the authors remind the difficult situation of the woman

writer under patriarchy, and accept the fact that she suffers from a debilitating “‘anxiety of authorship’ – a radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a ‘precursor’ the act of writing will isolate or destroy her” (1984: 49). In fact, this anxiety is something far more significant for the woman writer when compared to the male writer, because the author is already defined as male and the woman as his creature. Gilbert and Gubar, thus, raise a question, which cannot be answered exactly and this is one of the central problems of feminine literary criticism: According to these critics,

[i]f the Queen’s looking glass speaks with the King’s voice, how do its perpetual kingly admonitions affect the Queen’s own voice? Since his is the chief voice she hears, does the Queen try to sound like the King, imitating his tone, his inflections, his phrasing, his point of view? Or does she “talk back” to him in her own vocabulary, her own timbre, insisting on her own viewpoint? We believe these are basic questions feminist literary criticism - both theoretical and practical - must answer, and consequently they are questions to which we shall turn again and again (1984: 46).

As stated above, the woman writer trying to defy the literary paternity is between two fires: imitating the King – the male precursor, or remaining the Queen and insisting on making her voice heard. If she tries to be the King adopting his point of view, there is a danger of conscious or unconscious assimilation, and the direct affirmation or denial of the previous achievements, which causes the “anxiety of influence” – the “fear that he is not his own creator and that the works of his predecessors, existing before and beyond him, assume essential priority over his own writings” (Gilbert&Gubar, 1984: 46). This term is, actually, a kind of metaphor for literary paternity generated by Harold Bloom, who is a literary psycho-historian. Bloom analyzes the creative process in the writer/artist, a process that he calls “revisionist rereading” (1973: 43), and likens the relationship between the literary artist and history to the relationship of a son and a father by applying Freudian Oedipal structures into literary genealogies. According to Gilbert and Gubar, Bloom’s model of literary history, in which “‘a strong poet’ must engage in heroic warfare with his ‘precursor’” (1984: 47) is extremely patriarchal and male-oriented. They criticize his views with the following questions:

Where does the female poet fit in? Does she want to annihilate a “forefather” or a “foremother”? What if she can find no models, no precursors? Does she have a muse, and what is its sex? Such questions are inevitable in any female consideration of Bloomian poetics? (1984: 47)

Gilbert and Gubar’s answer to this question is that “a woman writer does not ‘fit in’” (1984: 48), but this should not be dissuasive for her. She, on the contrary, should keep becoming a distinctive Queen and trying to make her voice heard though “she seems to be anomalous, indefinable, alienated, a freakish outsider” (1984: 48). Clearly, when she writes, her language will be the speech of evil, and marginalized by being declared ‘other’. Moreover, to be able to find words to express her feelings and female experience with the man-made language will be challenging, and maybe, her words will stay unarticulated. Nevertheless, Gilbert and Gubar believe that every woman writer has such a thing named a “distinctive female power” (1984: 59), which must be expressed against the oppressive effects of the dominant patriarchal modes

of reading, and this “difficult task of achieving true female authority” can be managed by these women writers by “subverting patriarchal literary standards” (1984: 73). While decoding and demystifying all the disguised issues, these women writers will, most probably, be accused of being the ‘witch-monster-madwoman’. However, they should not desist from “telling all the Truth but tell it slant” (Emily Dickinson, cited in Franklin, 1998: 1263).

### 5. Dale Spender and *Man Made Language*

Dale Spender, a researcher, broadcaster and teacher besides being the author and editor of over thirty books, has created awareness by raising concern over the issues related with the rules and uses of language that promote a male view of the world. With her radical feminist analysis of language published in 1980, *Man Made Language*, Spender asserts the existence of the male control over language, and tries to prove that women have been systematically silenced through the forms of language. In fact, one can easily see how still relevant this highly influential text is today as much as when it was written. Take the example of a Turkish song named ‘*Bu Gece Barda, Gönüm Hovarda*’, which is frequently sung at the entertainment venues and football matches, the places associated with males. Its lyrics can be translated as follow: ‘That night at the bar, I am such a vagabond. / Let’s play the instruments and watch the girls dancing’. With that song, two messages are given. The first is the directly stated one based on the gender roles contributed to women by patriarchy itself. They must amuse and satisfy the needs of men with their bodies, dances and songs. The second is the implied one imposed by the structure of the language itself with its sexist words. Referring to an adult female, whether married or not, as a girl is considered derogatory or disrespectful in many contexts, because this implies that the person is not mature enough to be deemed an adult. This is why the phrases, ‘You are acting like a girl’ or ‘You are just a girl’ are considered reprimanding and insulting. On the contrary, in some cultures, referring to a never-married female as a woman may imply that she is sexually experienced, which would tarnish her and her family’s honor, because the term ‘girl’ is used to state virginity.

All these prove the exclusion of women from every field, especially the public sphere associated with males, as Dale Spender puts forth: “When they were dividing the world, males took for themselves the categories they could establish as productive” (1980:101). However, this exclusion is sustained not only by the patriarchal structures but also by its ‘man-made language’. As known, the concept that women are oppressed by language has become a commonplace among feminist critics, but what do they try to establish with this willful use of ‘man-made language’? In fact, Dale Spender, being one of these critics choosing this ambiguous and punning term as her book’s title, aims to demonstrate that the rules of grammar, the ideological choice of lexis, the sexist words, and also the judgments of academic literary criticism have trivialized and undervalued women’s language and creativity, denying them access to the only vehicle for communication and the power that communication brings. For her, people construct their reality according to rules formulated by patriarchal society, and the key to the system is the semantic rule of the male-as-norm. If the norm is male, then female characteristics are automatically wrong or negative, which is called the ‘negative semantic space’, where women are told every day that their experience and observations are meaningless or wrong. Spender asserts that it is “one of the most pervasive and pernicious rules that has been encoded” (1980: 3),

because once this norm has been constructed and sustained by those who control both the reality and talk – and in this case, those are the males – it is so difficult to eradicate its traces, which are deeply embedded in every aspect of our existence.

Spender's assertions about women's oppression through the man-made language, which shapes the vision and perception of people by creating a sexist world, articulate a form of social constructionism redolent of a strong version of the Whorfian hypothesis, the theory saying that language determines and greatly influences the modes of thought and behavior characteristic of the individual. Thus, her ideas are supported by a wide range of evidence from sociolinguists on language as social behavior. On the other hand, early post-structuralist critics have attacked her representation of language as a gender-biased system because of her determinist stance and insufficient acknowledgement of the fact that meaning can never be fixed. They find Spender's view of language as somehow constructed by a conspiratorial patriarchy and criticize her de-privileging the influence of social class and ethnicity on language, as Maria Black and Rosalind Coward note: "Spender's highly monolithic view of patriarchy and gender relations, and her emphasis on 'pre-given groups' gives us no real purchase on how ideologies participate in the production of groups and secure identification with the subject positions produced there" (1981: 72). However, these critics – despite their emphasis on social class and ethnicity - could not explain the oppression of black women, who are under the risk of double jeopardy: to be black and female. These black women are made insignificant and humiliated both because of their ethnicity and their gender. In other words, patriarchy and its man-made language label them as a "slave of a slave" (Beal, 1975: 2).

Rejecting these accusations, Spender continues to prove language as operating to the clear disadvantage of women and contributing to their being effectively silenced:

I would reiterate that it has been the dominant group – in this case, males – who have created the world, invented the categories, constructed sexism and its justification and developed a language trap which is in their interest. ... Males ... have produced language, thought and reality. Historically it has been the structures, the categories and the meanings, which have been invented by males – though not of course by all males – and they have then been validated by reference to other males. In this process women have played little or no part. (1980: 142 - 143)

For Spender, this rule can be de(con)structed through women's talk and consciousness. Thus, she thinks that a new inception has been made on this task of expanding the reality of the culture, and making the females' voice heard, but she does not underestimate the difficulties ahead: "The crux of our difficulties lies in being able to identify and transform the rules which govern our behavior and which bring patriarchal order into existence" (1980: 6). However, she keeps on struggling and tries to create a world where sexist assertions such as 'nagging women, chattering women, gossiping women' have been eradicated and "the talkativeness of women hasn't been gauged in comparison with men but with silence" (ibid, p. 42).

## 6. Conclusion

Contrary to the common belief stating that language is just a medium for creating, communicating, and storing information, recent studies on language, especially women's and gender studies, have proved that language is not simply a vocabulary shared by a group of

people, but it is a structure that constitutes meaning. It is the main force behind the construction and continuation of any ideology as Francine Wattman Frank has explained in her book, *Language, Gender and Professional Writing*:

Language combines the functions of a mirror, a tool, and a weapon: [It] reflects society ... human beings use it to interact with one another ... [and] language can be [used] by groups that enjoy the privileges of power to legitimize their own value system by labeling others 'deviant' or 'inferior.' (1989: 108)

In the light of such awareness, all values regarded as 'universal' have come into question and scholars and critics have focused on unveiling the hidden ideologies behind these 'universal values' that shape and limit one's interpretation of the world. They have realized that language not only reproduces ideologies but also perpetuates them, and eventually creates repressive attitudes and atmospheres, in which people are divided easily into oppressors and oppressed. Thus, by highlighting the significance of interplay between gender, language and power, this study has situated solidly in exposing how such concepts (re)construct, (re)produce and maintain the oppressive situation of women.

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