

## THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL PRESSURE ON GENDER ROLES IN THE NOVEL OF ADALET AGAOGLU, “UC BES KISI”

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### ABSTRACT

*This essay tackles with the questions of gender roles within the work of Adalet Agaoglu's “Uc Bes Kisi”, emphasizing the most essential finding that social pressure has been a predominant factor affecting different behaviours of characters. In such regard, both male and female characters have been forced to act in line with societal expectations rather than by their own wishes, in those contrary cases they have been isolated from society.*

**Keywords:** *Adalet Agaoglu, Uc Bes Kisi, gender roles, social pressure*

### ADALET AĞAOĞLU'NUN ÜÇ BEŞ KİŞİ ADLI ROMANINDA SOSYAL BASKININ CİNSİYET ROLLERİ ÜZERİNE ETKİSİ

#### ÖZ

*Bu çalışmada, Adalet Ağaoğlu'nun Üç Beş Kişi adlı romanındaki cinsiyet rolleri incelenmiş ve roman karakterleri üzerindeki sosyal baskının, karakterlerin davranışlarını etkileyen en önemli etkenlerden biri olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, romandaki erkek ve kadın karakterler kendi isteklerine göre değil, toplumun beklentilerine göre hareket etmeye zorlanmış, aksi takdirde toplum tarafından yalnızlığa itilmiştir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Adalet Ağaoğlu, Üç Beş Kişi, cinsiyet rolleri, toplum baskısı*

#### I.Introduction

Adalet Agaoglu is one of the leading Turkish novelists, playwrights, writers of short stories and essays at the moment. She was born in 1929. She graduated from French Literature Department at Ankara University. She began his career by writing plays. In the seventies, she began to write novels. She received many literary awards for her novels. The most important award of them was Turkish Presidential Award of Merit in 1995 (Direnc, 1998).

Uc Bes Kisi (translated into English as “Curfew”) is one of her most famous novels. It is about “the wounds the society inflicts upon the lives of the individuals” and “the laments of a society made up of wounded lives” (ibid). Uc Bes Kisi is a realistic and psychological novel. It can be said that it is a

successful example of the tradition of the pre-1980 social and critical novels. For this reason, this novel is a threshold text among Turkish novels on describing the period of 1980s (Koroglu, 2003, p. 79-81).

It consists of seven chapters and the narrator change in each chapter. The main characters of the novel who are Murat, Kardelen, Turkan Kaymazli, Neval, Ferit and Kismet tell what they lived in their chapters. The novel begins in early June at 11:00 PM and finishes at 02:00 AM because the curfew begins at that time. The characters in the novel have a feud with themselves. "Flashbacks and complex narratives reveal these individual lives: their histories, their frustrations and disappointments in the past, and their hopes, or hopelessness, for the future." (Direnc, 1998) There are three different cities in the novel. Murat, Neval Hanim who is his ex-girlfriend's mother, and Belgin who is Neval Hanim's sister live in Istanbul. Kismet, Turkan Hanim who is her mother, and Kardelen who is her close friend, are in Eskisehir. Ferit Sakarya who is Murat and Kismet's uncle, and Selmin who is Murat's ex-girlfriend, live in Ankara. In the end of the story, Kismet gets on a train which goes from Eskisehir to Istanbul because his brother, Murat, lives in Istanbul and she wants to get rid of her problems.

According to Oktay (1984, p.4), all characters in the novel except Ferit Sakarya have humanistic expectations such as happiness and freedom. However, their expectations are broken at the end of the novel (ibid). Koroglu (2003, p. 82) says that the names of the characters in the novel are ordinary Turkish names. Nevertheless, there is a relationship between the names of characters and their meanings. For example, "murat" means wish. He cannot reach his wishes. Similarly, the meaning of "kismet" is destiny and she beats his bad destiny at the end of the novel. Aytac (1999, p. 84) states that this novel is an important one because it creates a new intellectual character who is Ferit Sakarya. Agaoglu criticizes socialist intellectuals in Turkey by him. He is not a capitalist exploiter. He is an intellectual and enterprising business man. For this reason, this is a new character in Turkish novels.

This essay will analyse representations of gender and how society's expectations of "manhood" and "femininity" shape the characters' desires and actions in *Uc Bes Kisi*. First, this essay will present depiction of the female characters and their behaviours against the expectations of society. They think that women are created for men, they can deceive men easily, a housewife should know housework, they should give birth to male babies for their husband, and social pressure and rules in the society play an important role for their behaviours. Secondly, this essay will show how the male characters are depicted and what the expectations of the society from them are. According to them, their important duties are protecting women and earning money, the society's ideas about masculinity force men to behave for the expectations, they should want to have sex with women, men should be like Ferit Sakarya and

Ahmet Kaymazlı who are ideal men, sexual life is one of the most important issues in their life and according to them, women are sexual objects.

## **II. Analysis of female characters**

Firstly, the female characters in the novel think that women are for men. Therefore, they should be well-groomed women. Kardelen thinks that women's appearances always should be ready to meet men. For this reason, they should comb their hair. Also, they should put makeup to make them more attractive. In addition, they should wear their most beautiful skirts (Agaoglu, 2007, p. 82). Neval Hanim, who is Belgin's mother, tells Belgin that Belgin is slightly overweight. For this reason, she should be on a diet. According to Neval Hanim, a woman should invite men with her body without showing it (ibid, p. 253). Also, male characters think in a similar way. Ufuk, who is Kismet's ex-boyfriend, is angry because all men think that women are their gifts presented to the males. Similarly, women describe men as "goods" which are presented them (ibid, p. 36).

As a result, according to female characters in the novel, women should be good-looking because they should attract men's attention. If they do not have good appearances, men do not like them. Furthermore, the male characters in the novel want that women should be beautiful because they are creature for each other. It can be said that there are similarities between the ideas of women about men and the ideas of men about women. Both of them think that women have good appearances. If women want to attract men's attention, they should be pretty. Even if they are slightly fat, they should lose weight in order to capture men's attention.

Secondly, women think that they can seduce men easily. If they capture a man, they can learn his weakest point and they get what they want from men. Kardelen states that if a woman wants to kiss a man, she can do it easily. Also, she can seduce him. In addition, she can discover his weakest point and use it against him. Women like having sex with men. However, they do not like to get pregnant (ibid, p. 68). In contrast, some women can be deceived by men easily because they think that they are more intelligent than men. For this reason, they do not worry that men cannot harm them. For instance, when some men of lesser appearance offer to take Ulker to her house, she does not think about bad things and she supposes that men want to get married with her (ibid, p. 191).

Therefore, on the one hand, it can be said that women are overconfident about men because they think that deceiving a man is very easy because men so weak against women. On the other hand, men can deceive some women very easily because women do not think that they can be deceived by men. For this reason, it can be said that they have similar ideas. Both of them think that they can deceive easily each other.

Thirdly, they think that an ideal wife should be do housework very well. According to some men, their wives should wear scarf and pray for their dead

relatives and their sins. Also, they should wash their clothes. These kinds of men expect only those things from marriage (ibid, p. 176). According to Turkan Hanım who is Kismet's mother, in spite of the fact that Kismet is a very beautiful woman, she is not an ideal woman because she does not know how to do housework such as washing clothes and cooking. Also, unless she says to her that she should visit hairdresser in order to look well, she does not do it (ibid, p. 122). On the other hand, being a good housewife cannot be useful every time. According to Kardelen, Kismet's divorce is interesting because Kismet is a good housewife. She is good at washing clothes, ironing and making cakes. For this reason, she should not divorce her husband. Kardelen is surprised at this divorce (ibid, p. 78).

Hence, it cannot be said that doing housework is enough for a happy marriage. In spite of the fact that a woman is a good housewife, she can divorce because being a good housewife does not save a marriage.

Fourthly, according to men, women should give birth to male infants. If they have a son, they will be very happy and they can do everything for their sons. Similarly, Kismet's father organizes a groundbreaking ceremony and builds an inn in honour of his son who is Murat (ibid, p. 110). When Ahmet Kaymazlı, who is Murat and Kismet's father, learns that her wife gives a birth to male infant, he is very happy. According to him, male infants bring luck to their families. For this reason, women should give birth to male infants (ibid, p. 277). An ideal mother should raise her son by trying to understand him. Murat thinks that there is a difference between Kardelen and his mother. Kardelen is a mother that she adores his son and she raises her son by trying to understand him. However, Murat's mother internalises him with excessive love (ibid, p. 48).

It can be said that men want to be the fathers of his sons. For this reason, according to them, their wives should give birth to male infant. If they do it, they will like them more and they will be happy. Also, raising their sons by trying to understand them is an ideal way for raising sons.

Lastly, the female characters cannot do what they want because of social rules of the society. If they do them, they will regret. When Kismet goes to their old inn in order to meet with Ufuk, she is annoyed because she thinks that if someone sees her, he or she will describe her as a bad woman (ibid, p. 126). Kismet thinks that if other people learn that she and Ufuk kiss passionately, she will be a disgrace because all men will want kiss her and his family will throw her out of the house (ibid, p. 308). Even if Azra who is a feminist character in the novel wants have sex with her husband who is Gunduz before marriage, she cannot do it because of social rules in the Turkish society. Also, she does not change his surname after marriage, but the government does not accept her request (ibid, p. 188). According to Deniz who is Ferit's girlfriend, there should be sexual freedom in the society. For this reason, she has sex with Ferit easily. In fact, although she seems shameless, she is shy for

having sex with Ferit. Ferit thinks that the reason of being shy is the social rules in the society (ibid, pp. 215-216).

Thus, it can be said that social rules and social pressure on the people in the society is the most important matters. Even if the people refuse the rules, they will not feel free themselves because they are afraid of other people's reflections. Therefore, they want to live without breaking the rules. Even if they break the rules, they will not be comfortable because there will be the idea of culpability in their minds.

### **III. Analysis of male characters**

Firstly, according to the characters in the novel, the men's duties are protecting women and earning money by working for their families. According to Kismet, the most important duty of men is protecting women against the people who molest women. Also, men can carry very heavy bags easily because they are very strong (ibid, p. 37). According to Ferit who is Murat and Kismet's uncle, and Turkan Hanim's brother, the aim of a relationship between a man and a woman is not love because women wants from men that men should protect them (ibid, p. 193). According to Emin Bey who is Turkan's father, a husband's duty is earning money. He complains Ahmet Kaymazli and Ferit Sakarya to Turkan Hanim because they do not work in their farm. (ibid, p. 137)

Consequently, it can be said that women thinks that men are strong. For this reason, they should protect them and they should carry women's heavy bags. Also, Ferit thinks similarly. According to him, love is less important than the protection of women for women. They choose strong men because they want to be protected by men. Also, Emin Bey states that a man should earn money for their family and he should not do useless works.

Secondly, the society's expectation of the members of them can be different from the members' behaviours. For this reason, some members can stay outside of the society. Ferit's friends says to him that if he is a man, he should not be interested in music because he plays mandolin, listens to jazz music and tries to compose new songs. Also, he should fight with other men, show his masculinity and protect his family (ibid, p. 20). When Murat returns to his house from Istanbul with a guitar, his friends tell him that he is same with girls because they fight with other man and Murat plays guitar. According to them, a man should not be interested in music (ibid, p. 66). Kardelen is raped by some people. His brother who is Ozgur wants to kill those who rape her sister (ibid, p. 99).

Hence, the expectations of society about manhood force the members of it to behave for the society. If some members refuse it, they can be alone in the society. According to the society, men should be fight for their family because they should show their manhood. They should not be interested in music. Also, Ozgur want to show his masculinity by killing the people who raped her sister because their friends force him to this behaviour.

Thirdly, the male characters in the novel think that if a man is a real man, he should want to have sex with women, but he should not be a slave of a woman. According to Turkan Hanim who is Murat's mother, Murat is similar to women. He is a quiet man and he never hurt anyone. He does not want any women. He is unusual. For this reason, his mother is worried about him (ibid, p. 64). Although Murat wants to have sex with Selmin, he hides his purpose because he is ashamed to say his desire to her. His mother is anxious about his son. However, Ferit Sakarya who is Murat's uncle says that this situation is normal for a young man (ibid, p. 66). Murat becomes Selmin's slave. He does whatever Selmin wants. He lights her cigarette. He buys vodka for her. According to Murat, the most important thing is a smile from her. Turkan Hanim thinks that these behaviours are unmanly and Murat should not do them (ibid, p. 149).

For this reason, the expectations of the society from men are that they should want women. If they do not want to have sex with women, the other members of the society will not accept them as real men. Furthermore, they should not do what women they want. These behaviours of them cause to qualify as fake men by other people.

Fourthly, there is a comparison between Orhan Bey as an ordinary man and Ferit Sakarya as an ideal man. The comparison shows that how an ideal man should be. There are some differences between Orhan Bey who is Kismet's husband and Ferit Sakarya. In spite of the fact that Orhan Bey is a highly educated person, he does not respect for reading books by Kismet. He only thinks his appearance. On the contrary, Ferit Sakarya is respectful, funny and natural (ibid, p. 84). Ferit Sakarya is an ideal man. He is well-behaved. He is different from other rich people. Despite the fact that he has much money, he is clever, intelligent and friendly (ibid, p. 181). Ahmet Kaymazli is a well-educated gentleman. He does not make a mistake and he does not lie to anyone. He is honest. For this reason, Turkan Hanim and his daughters-in-law like him (ibid, p. 116). Kardelen likes to talk, discuss and communicate with Tahir. She does not like Murat because he cannot discuss with her, he only plays guitar and composes songs (ibid, p. 83).

As a result it can be said that according to women, if a man is respectful, funny, rich, intelligent and well-educated, he is an ideal man. Also, women should talk and discuss with their partners. If they can be like that, women like them.

Fifthly, according to men, sexual life is an important issue in their lives. They want to have sex freely. When rich business men go abroad, even though they are married, they are interested in foreign women without men. They do not want to get married with these women. However, they want to live a love life and have sex with them (ibid, p. 176). According to Kardelen, all men start their sexual lives with their neighbours. This is general issue in the society (ibid, p. 47).

Thus, it can be said that men attach importance to sexual life. They begin it with their neighbour women. After that, even if they are married, they interested in other women in order to have sex freely.

Lastly, men think women as sexual objects. When Selmin's mother and older sister see Murat and Selmin on the bed, they think that in spite of the fact that Murat is a novice and shy about women, he falls in love with Selmin and he wants to share his bed with her such as other men (ibid, p. 52). Murat realizes that his ideas about women are same with other men. Men think that all women are sexual objects for them and their chests, their legs and their arms attract men (ibid, p. 46).

Therefore, even if Murat have a different character from other men, he thinks having sex with his girlfriend. For this reason, it can be said that all men see women as sexual object and they want to have sex with them.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

This essay has shown that depiction of gender and the characters' reflections against the expectations of the society in *Uc Bes Kisi*. Firstly, this essay has examined the female characters in the novel. According to them, women are for men, men can be seduced by them easily, doing housework and giving birth to male infant is the most important issue in order to be an ideal woman for men, the social rules and pressure shape their behaviours. Second, this essay has analysed male characters. The male characters think that they should protect women and earn money for their families, the expectations of the society from men can try to shape their behaviours, the men's desires of having sex is important in order to show their manhood, an ideal men should be rich, intelligent, kind, funny, honest and well-educated, all of them think to have sex with women and according to them, women are sexual object.

In this novel, it can be seen that female and male characters are under the social pressure. For this reason, the expectations try to change their life styles. All characters are unhappy because they cannot do what they want.

As a result, if this situation is generalized, it can be said that social rules are the most important issues in Turkish society. For this reason, they interfere each other's lives. They want to change each other's behaviours. Although everyone is free, they do not live how they want. Therefore, the people in Turkish society should educate in order to remove the social pressure on people because education can solve all problems.

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