The portrayal of women in modern Turkish literature


Abstract

The thesis is concerned with the position of women in Turkish society since the founding of the Republic in 1923, and the portrayal of these women in selected novels, short stories and plays of Turkish authors from 1922 until 1979. The thesis examines whether the subordination of women in society is ascribed in literary works to their supposed innate inferiority as women, or is shown to be a consequence of women’s circumscribed position and limited possibilities. It investigates literary interpretations of the concept of honour and shame and the nature of female sexuality, as well as analysing the portrayals of women in their different roles: from familial and domestic to independent and revolutionary. The study illustrates the extent to which literature appears to reinforce old ideas and expectations about women, and how much it tends towards a deeper analysis of character and behaviour. It identifies works which deliberately set out to increase awareness of and sensitivity to the injustices suffered by women, end to show women in roles which enable them to gain fulfilment as individuals end independence as a group. It is apparent that the increasing participation of women in public life and their entry into paid employment in particular have posed a threat to the old order of female domesticity, end the fear of the disruption that this might cause in society and in the family is a recurrent theme in literature. On the other hand there are also striking portrayals of outstanding women leaders as well as characterisations of more ordinary women struggling to maintain their integrity.

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