

THE AMBIVALENT POLITICAL AGENCY OF INTELLECTUAL RELIGIOUS
WOMEN IN TURKEY: A CASE STUDY OF THE ABORTION DEBATE IN 2012

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

FEBRUARY 2015

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

THE AMBIVALENT POLITICAL AGENCY OF INTELLECTUAL RELIGIOUS WOMEN IN TURKEY: A CASE STUDY OF THE ABORTION DEBATE IN 2012

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February 2015, 148 pages

This thesis attempts at providing a critical evaluation of Universalist Eurocentric conceptualization of agency. Taking the abortion debate in 2012 in Turkey as an empirical case, the thesis analyzes the statements of religious women who are publicly known to be intellectuals. Abortion debate is commented around pro and con positions towards the abortion issue, which are reflected in the wider dichotomous categories of secularism and religiosity. Within this framework, Islamic discourse is taken nothing but patriarchal, and agency is assigned only on the part of resistance against this discourse. With an analysis of the statements of intellectual religious women, following the problematizations of Michel Foucault, Saba Mahmood, Asef Bayat, Chandra Mohanty, and Homi Bhabha, this thesis claims that agency cannot be reduced to resistance. For that purpose, three approaches to this notion is analyzed: compliant agency, pious critical agency and ‘devoted resistance’ approach to agency.

Keywords: political agency, post-colonial studies, intellectual religious women in Turkey, abortion debate, Universalist Eurocentric conceptualization of agency.

ÖZ

TÜRKİYE’DEKİ ENTELEKTÜEL DİNDAR KADINLARIN ÇELİŞİK POLİTİK EYLEMSELLİĞİ: 2012 KÜRTAJ TARTIŞMASININ BİR VAKA İNCELEMESİ

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Yüksek Lisans, Sosyoloji Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Okutman, Dr. Barış Mücen

Şubat 2015, 148 sayfa

Bu tez, eylemselliğin evrenselci Avrupa-merkezli kavramsallaştırılmasına eleştirel bir değerlendirme yapabilmeyi amaçlar. Türkiye’de 2012'deki kürtaj tartışması deneysel bir vaka olarak ele alınarak, kamusal alanda entelektüel olarak bilinen dindar kadınların bu tartışmaya dair açıklamaları analiz edilmiştir. Kürtaj tartışması, kürtajı destekleyenler ve karşı çıkanlar ikiliği üzerinden yorumlanarak, laiklik ve dindarlık gibi daha geniş ikili kategorileri yansıtan bir çerçeve sunmuştur. Bu çerçeve içinden, İslami söylem sadece ataerkillik üzerinden ele alınmış ve eylemsellik bu söyleme karşı direniş göstermeyle ilişkilendirilmiştir. Bu tez entelektüel dindar kadınların kürtaj tartışmasına dair açıklamalarının analizini, Michel Foucault, Saba Mahmood, Asef Bayat, Chandra Mohanty, ve Homi Bhabha’nın sorunsallaştırmalarını takip ederek, eylemselliğin direnişe indirgenemeyeceği iddiasıyla serimler. Bu doğrultuda, entelektüel kadınların açıklamalarını anlayabilmek için eylemsellik kavramına yönelik üç farklı yaklaşım analiz edilmiştir: itaatkâr eylemsellik, dindar eleştirel eylemsellik ve eylemselliğe ‘adanmış direniş’ yaklaşımı.

Anahtar kelimeler: politik eylemsellik, postkolonyal çalışmalar, Türkiye'deki entelektüel dindar kadınlar, kürtaj tartışması, eylemselliğin evrenselci Avrupa-merkezli kavramsallaştırılması.

To Emine Özcan ...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have contributed directly or indirectly to this study whom I am grateful for their considerable comments and supports. First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Instr. Dr. Barış Mücen not simply as a supervisor who contributed to this thesis by his guidance and invaluable critique, inspiring comments, but as a teacher whose courses taught me that the academia is a place of curiosity, critical thinking and asking questions. I also wish to thank Prof. Dr. Elif Ekin Akşit Vural who kindly agreed to participate in my jury and shared her valuable comments. I would like to thank to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fatma Umut Beşpınar Akgüner for her constructive advice and precious remarks on my thesis and for encouraging me to study at the Sociology Department at METU. Heartfelt thanks for our department's secretary Sündüs Aydın who has been there with her friendship whenever I need her.

With my warmest appreciation, I thank Elif Çakmak Er, Müge Atala, Elçin Yılmaz and Emrah Saraçoğlu for their help in translation of the data; and Barış Yıldırım for proofreading of the text. I have enjoyed sharing the time of writing this thesis with Burcu Başaran and Efe Can Göksaran. Their academic and morale supports are gratefully acknowledged. Thank you for sharing the burden of the writing and turning it into a process of self-discovery.

I owe gratitude to Gerçek Erdem who has encouraged me since the first days of its idea and helped me at every step of my thesis. Our discussions on notably political agency, resistance, the Third World, and the prolonged reading of *The Postcolonial Aura* have paved the way for the theoretical and political background of this study. I also want to thank him for helping me learn how to focus on studying while coping with the challenges posed by life. My thankfulness to him will always remain incomplete.

My sisters; Elçin Yılmaz, Hilal Eyüpoğlu and Seda Özcan, even though they are far away, their very presence gave me comfort and strength. They shared both my worries and my happiness during my thesis process. I would like to thank Reco Cemal Akgün for his constructive advices especially in the designing stage of the thesis. His belief in

me is precious. I hope that this study reflects our discussions to some extent. I also have to express my thanks to my dear friend and homemate, Sedef Beşkardeşler who patiently listened to me when I was lost. She carefully read my first drafts and gave valuable feedbacks. Very special thanks to Cemile Gizem Dinçer, Altan Sungur, Seda Günel, Haktan Ural, Yusuf Al, Aylin Ülkümen and Onur Aydın for their generous help and friendship. I thank all my friends for sharing feelings and thoughts as well as intimate spaces, the library-hours, the office room, books, music, stress, procrastination, enthusiasm, drinks and hope.

I feel deeply grateful to İlham Yılmaz who has been there for me with his friendship, support and understanding. He has shared his constructive suggestions on how to write a piece of text and challenged me with his opinions. When I despair, he remembered me to dream of and composedly hug a tree for healing. His existence is invaluable.

Moreover, I would like to present my gratefulness to my dear family whom I carry everywhere in my mind. My parents Emine Özcan and Mustafa Özcan deserve special thanks for their life-long attempt to understand me. My little beloved sister, Beyza Sultan, by being my joy of life, lightens the weight of the story.

I thank TÜBİTAK as my graduate education has been possible with the scholarship I got from there.

I cannot thank enough to feminists and all *Women who Run with the Wolves*, from whom I take courage. I especially thank to my sisters from Socialist Feminist Collective and Ankara Feminist Collective.

While this thesis was being written, a spectre is haunting the Middle East. We have witnessed the Kurdish Resistance in Kobane over tyranny. There have been tyrants and murders throughout history; but I believe in the end they always fall because there are people who change their frustration into anger, who object, who disobey, who yet maintain silence, who love and hope. I am grateful to all the indignant people of the world by whom I inspired to think and act.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis analyses the ambivalence of intellectual pious women in terms of the Universalist Eurocentric conceptualization of agency through a query of the abortion debate in 2012 in Turkey. Being generated and commentated around the pro and con positions towards the abortion issue, this debate had been one of the moments of producing the wider categories of secularism and religiosity. However, the abortion debate showed that there are dissenting voices from the intellectual religious women that cannot be framed solely as being submissive or resistant. My main problematic in this thesis is the reduction of abortion struggle to religious/ submissive and secular/resistant duality in which a universalized form of agency is expected from religious women, which consequently silence their agency.

Following Saba Mahmood (2009), I will argue that there are diverse forms of agency, rather than a monolithic and liberal sense of the concept. In this thesis, I will consider different approaches to the conceptualization of pious agency in the light of various studies that have dealt specifically with religious women's political agency. Through the intervention of intellectual religious women to the abortion debate, to inquire the notion of agency I will consider three approaches to this notion: compliant agency, pious critical agency and 'devoted resistance' approach to agency.

I will take the abortion debate in 2012 as an empirical case and I will analyze the statements of religious women who are publicly known to be intellectuals. Since intellectual religious women do not constitute a homogeneous group, I will analyze the public statements written by religious women who use Islamic discourse.

In understanding a new situation such as the abortion debate in 2012, Homi Bhabha's ideas on the political negotiation and his criticisms against to the "pre-given model or

paradigm” (1990, p.216) paved my way to do this study. As Bhabha argues, “negotiation is what politics is all about ... we do negotiate even when we don’t know we are negotiating” (ibid). He links the importance of negotiation to hybridity as such, “hybridity is precisely about the fact that when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them” (ibid). That is why I will focus on a public debate, namely the abortion debate in 2012, in which the cracks within the general structure of the discussions shows the ambivalent position of the intellectual pious women.¹

Opening up this ambivalent position is important to challenge especially the general reception of these women as being the passive conveyers of Islam. By questioning general dichotomies, this thesis will show certain effects of these women’s political agency on the wider feminist methodology. Postcolonial critique has been one of the theories that have challenged the overgeneralization of such categories and their consequences that assign women a passive position. I will address this question with my research by asserting that we cannot expect a totalizing form of struggle. On the other hand, my addressing will not invite to call intellectual religious women as acting perpetrators of change. Asef Bayat (2013) criticizes the “lack of a clear concept of resistance” and touches upon the issue that this deficiency often leads scholars “to overestimate and read too much into the acts of the agents” (p.55). My analysis aims not to fall into this trap.

To anchor my discussion on the approaches of intellectual pious women on the abortion debate in 2012, I will employ feminist poststructuralist and postcolonial critical theories that aim to challenge the Universalist understandings of western feminisms (Mills, 1998, p.99). Following the postcolonial critique through one of its crucial concepts, namely hybridity, which provides an understanding for the cultural and political ambivalence, I

¹ For the purpose of the thesis, I analyzed the pious columnists and well-known Muslim women’s declarations within the context of the abortion debate in 2012. I will frame those women as “intellectual pious women” since they do not comprise a homogeneous group but rather consists of pious women from different political backgrounds, different professions etc. so, I would like to specify that I use pious and religious interchangeably for *mütedeyyin* or *inançlı*. I will frame them in detail in the next chapters.

will analyze how the intellectual religious women's ambivalent position is constituted through an analysis of their contributions to the abortion debate. Bhabha refers to The Third Space where cultural diversity emerges. The Third Space is the liminality of negotiation and transformation. Bhabha searches not for the "pure" but "blurred" space in The Third Space (1994). Intellectual religious women, negotiate, contest and comply during the abortion debate, which is why the object of analysis of this thesis is relevant to challenge the perception of Muslim pious women within this dichotomous view.

While considering how intellectual religious women exhibit agency, it is crucial to note that how power² and resistance are perceived within this thesis. In this regard, Asef Bayat indicates in his book *Life as Politics* where he opens up a discussion of the nonmovements while analyzing the "agency and change in the Muslim Middle East."³ Bayat says that "Foucault's 'decentered' notion of power, together with a revival of neo-Gramscian politics of culture (hegemony), served as a key theoretical backing for micropolitics, and thus the 'resistance' perspective" (2013, p.41). According to Bayat "the notion of 'resistance' came to stress that power and counter power were not in binary opposition, but in a decoupled, complex, ambivalent, and perpetual 'dance of

² As indicated by Pieper, postcolonialism places the relationship between knowledge and power at the center of its query: "Poststructuralist, postmodern and postcolonial theorists depart from the Foucauldian assumption that there is an intimate link between power and knowledge, which is being translated into what then, will count as conventionally accepted perspectives on the empirical constellations under consideration"(Pieper, p.9).

³ Muslim Middle East refers in Bayat's work to the "societies in which religion seems to occupy a prominent position" (p.ix). Bayat focuses on "the diverse ways in which the ordinary people, the subaltern - the urban dispossessed, Muslim women, the globalizing youth, and other urban grass roots - strive to affect the contours of change in their societies, by refusing to exit from the social and political stage controlled by authoritarian states, moral authority, and neoliberal economies, discovering and generating new spaces within which they can voice their dissent and assert their presence in pursuit of bettering their lives"(ibid). see: Bayat, A. (2013). *Life as Politics How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. (2nd ed.). Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

control” (ibid). He furthers his line of thought by indicating that this way of perceiving power is based on the Foucauldian relational understanding of power.

In *Subject and Power*, Michel Foucault indicates that:

To approach the theme of power by an analysis of ‘how’ is therefore to introduce several critical shifts in relation to the supposition of a fundamental power. It is to give oneself as the object of analysis power relations and not power itself-power relations which are distinct from objective abilities as well as from relations of communication. This is as much as saying that power relations can be grasped in the diversity of their logical sequence, their abilities, and their interrelationships. (1983, p.219)

Taking into account the relational understanding of power, Foucault refers to “the multiplicity of force relations” (1978, p. 92). In other words, power is not a thing one can possess since Foucault does not conceptualize power by means of the juridicodiscursive model but by means of the model of war. In other words, the model of war between forces paves the way for subjects to be produced (Foucault, 1983, p.220). To put it more clearly, the warlike confrontation between forces opens up “a social clearing,” (Dreyfus, 2003, p.32) and through this way subjects are produced and subjective positions are defined.

Consequently, power refers to a confrontational process, whose modality is governmentality (Karademir, 2013, p. 387). Therefore, the forces within this relation do not attempt to destroy each other; rather, they govern each other by means of producing. From the modality of governmentality, Foucault asserts, “[w]here there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (1978, p.95).

Taking into consideration that power functions as governmentality in Foucault’s view, Aret Karademir (2013), in his article, following Foucault elucidates the relation of resistance with power as such:

Since power is governmentality, that is, since power produces the individuals it governs and conducts the conduct of them, Foucault suggests, resistance lies in

deconstructing and re-constructing the self, in creating new ways of life and new ways of being, in transforming the way in which one thinks, acts, and is. Therefore, inventing and re-inventing the self as if it is a work of art is not an aesthetic but a political occupation. Similarly, by self-transformation, Foucault does not understand a sort of aestheticism but what he calls ‘counter-conduct.’ (p.385)

So, resistance to power cannot be perceived as restricted to the violation of the law or to the withdrawal of bans. Rather, as Asef Bayat specifies, resistance is “consisted largely of small-scale, every day, tiny activities that the agents could afford to articulate given their political constraints” (2013, p.41). Such an articulation of resistance is handled in a variety of fields⁴ including women’s studies, and for this thesis, it sets light to the understanding of religious women’s agency. As Bayat indicates, such an intervention “to grant agency to the subjects that until then were depicted as ‘submissive women’” was important since the “resistance paradigm helps to uncover the complexity of power relations in society in general, and the politics of the subaltern in particular” (ibid).

This resistance paradigm is helpful for me to analyze intellectual religious women’s approaches to a particular event such as abortion debate since it points out that:

We may not expect a universalized form of struggle; that totalizing pictures often distort variations in people’s perceptions about change; that local should be recognized as a significant site of struggle as well as a unit of analysis; that organized collective action may not be possible everywhere. (ibid)

Sırma Bilge (2010) in her article *Beyond Subordination vs. Resistance: An Intersectional Approach to the Agency of Veiled Muslim Women* specifies that, “Following Foucault’s theory of power, poststructuralist approaches claim that the constituted subject is not interchangeable with the determined subject, since power is not synonymous with oppression/repression that constrains individuals’ freedom, because it is also productive”

⁴ Bayat gives an example from the study of an ethnographer, Lila Abu-Lughod that “how disenfranchised women resisted patriarchy by relating folktales, songs or by pretending to be possessed”. See Abu-lughod, L. (1990). The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women. *American Ethnologist*, 17(1), 41-55.

(pp.22-23). Then, she reminds the poststructuralist assertion holding that “subjects are always both constituted and constituting” (ibid).

Saba Mahmood forwards the discussion to a criticism against the liberal/humanist understanding of agency, which reduces agency to resistance. Mahmood questions pious agency and pious women’s performances in gender–traditional religious norms tending to be evaluated with a perception of viewing these performances as a form of agency (2005). Therefore, in line with Sirma Bilge’s point and Saba Mahmood’s insight, my aim is to discover and acknowledge alternative forms of struggles as Bayat suggests that “organized protest as such may not necessarily be privileged in the situations where suppression rules. The value of a more flexible, small-scale, and unbureaucratic activism should, therefore, be acknowledged” (Bayat, 2013, p.41).

In short, the subject matter of this study will be questioning the concept of agency. In accordance with the problematizations of Foucault, Bayat and Mahmood, the conceptual intervention of this thesis will be to argue that agency cannot be reduced to resistance.

In order to carry out an interrogation of agency, the object of analysis of this thesis will be examining the cracks of negotiation. To put it another way, I will not deal with pure positions of religious women; rather I will analyze their contributions to the public debate with a closer look at the cracks. The methodological intervention of this study is based on Homi Bhabha’s comprehension following his book *The Location of Culture*. Bhabha suggests that “renamings of the subjects of cultural difference do not derive their discursive authority from anterior causes – be it human nature or historical necessities –” (1994, p.313). For him, the problematic does not lie in an ontological cast and he indicates that “hybrid hyphenations emphasize the incommensurable elements – the stubborn chunks – as the basis of cultural identifications” (ibid). Following this argument, I argue that the statements of intellectual religious women in the abortion debate in 2012 can be evaluated as “incommensurable elements – the stubborn chunks” within the dichotomous understanding of the ban on abortion. Herewith, Bhabha’s argument provides a framework for the thesis.

Bhabha explains his point in this way:

What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, contingently ‘opening out’, remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of differences – where difference is neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between* – find their agency in a form of the “future” where the past is not originary, where the present is not simply transitory. It is, if I may stretch a point, an interstitial future, that emerges in-between the claims of the past and the needs of the present. (1994, p.313)

At this point, Bhabha’s mentioning “an interstitial future” while questioning the performative nature of differential identities is important for my thesis from two angles. First, his point is crucial in the understanding of intellectual religious women’s political agency in the sense that the intervention of those women in the abortion debate can be seen, with Bhabha’s terms, as “remaking the boundaries”. Considering the stances of pro-abortion and con-abortion, the significance of religious women’s statements is that their statements cannot be put on either side. Nevertheless, I want to emphasize that intellectual religious women do not constitute the only group that challenges the dichotomous positions of the abortion debate. Rather, the opponents and proponents of the abortion do not form a pure group.⁵ In spite of the fact that neither position forms strict boundaries, the statements of the religious women still have an importance in reflecting their exposition to “the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of differences” (ibid).

Secondly, it supports my argument that the abortion debate can be depicted as an interstitial space ‘where the past is not originary’ and ‘the present is not simply transitory.’ I use it in the sense that prior to this discussion in 2012; abortion issue has been discussed by/within Muslim pious women; however, abortion debate in 2012 was not a repetition of what has been said before on the issue. That is why it is an example to

⁵ Cindoğlu and Ünal in their article where they analyzed the abortion chronicles to discuss the “gendered nature of reproductive citizenship in contemporary Turkey,” argued that the opposition parties’ responses “display hybridity in their approach to abortion” (2013, p.22). The MPs of opposition parties “combine the advocacy of women’s right to abortion with a discourse that criticizes the AKP’s anti-abortion initiative without treating abortion primarily as an issue of women’s autonomy on their bodily integrity” (ibid).

show that religious women's view on abortion is not fixed in their previous statements.⁶ Since intellectual religious women's contribution to the debate challenges what has been said previously by religious scholars and by the religious women; hence, the past statements cannot be taken as originary to understand their agency.

While talking about the political agency of intellectual religious women in Turkey, one may need to consider the effect of Islamist movements. However, this does not mean that Muslim women's political agency is constructed just by the hegemony of Islamist movements. Indeed, there are "interstitials"/cracks (Bhabha, 1994) that Muslim women are differentiated from the discourse of the hegemonic patriarchal Islamist movement. For the purpose of this thesis, following Homi Bhabha (1994), I will argue that the differences and cracks that occur during the debate are important in the understanding of political agency of Muslim women. What Tanya Zion-Waldoks (2015) indicated on the issue of agency goes in line with Bhabha's point. Basing her argument on and inspired by Keneth Gergen (2009), Zion-Waldoks argues that "Thinking of agency as action within relationship" is especially beneficial in the "understanding negotiating multiple or intersectional endorsements" (2015, p.92). Zion-Waldoks explains her contribution to Gergen's account of 'agency within relationship' is that she adds "intercities" to the relationship for this understanding. Her approach is a proper ground for my analysis.

Therefore, in order to understand religious women's agency, it is crucial to analyze the cracks. For this reason, I will take the abortion debate in 2012 as a case and I will analyze the statements of religious women who are publicly known as intellectual women. Since intellectual religious women do not constitute a homogeneous group, I will analyze the public statements that are written by religious women who use Islamic discourse. I argue that there are diverse forms of agency, rather than the monolithic and

⁶ For a discussion on one of the previous perceptions on abortion of religious women, see the book of Nazife Şişman, who is one of the influential figures of veiled pious women in 1980s. Her book reflects a discussion at the intersection of body, women and religion. See: Şişman, Nazife (2006). *Emanetten Mülke: Kadın, Beden, Siyaset*. İz: Istanbul

liberal sense of the concept. In this thesis, I will consider different approaches to the understanding of religious agency in the light of various studies that have been dealt with religious women's political agency.

To conclude, in order to question the concept of agency I will deal with the cracks of the abortion debate in 2012 through the public contributions of intellectual religious women. For the questioning of the concept of agency, I will consider three approaches to agency through the intervention of intellectual religious women in Turkey: compliant agency, pious critical agency and 'devoted resistance' approach to agency.

1.1. The Research Interest: A Self-Reflexive Analysis of a Secular-Feminist

Reading of the Political Agency of Muslim Women

I politically positioned myself as a feminist and have been a member of Socialist Feminist Collective for 6 years. As a feminist, I always have an interest in "how issues of historical and cultural specificity inform the politics of feminist projects" (Mahmood, 2001, p. 202). In the process of this questioning, I have informed by the attempts of feminist scholarship to integrate sexual, racial, class and national differences. However, religious difference was not explored widely within this scholarship. Although the controversial relationship between feminism and religious traditions is mostly salient in the debates on Islam (ibid), I was not satisfied with the frame in which Muslim women were being discussed in Turkey. I have an urge to understand how religious differences make sense in feminist/political positioning. Moreover, as occupying a political position among those so-called "secular feminists", I would like to search the possible ways to get in touch/conversation with political religious women, so although I am not directly searching these possibilities within this thesis, it would be reasonable to indicate that this thesis initially emerged from my desire to understand religious women's political agency

and the possibility of a political dialogue between secular feminists and (intellectual, political, feminist, activist, journalist, etc.) religious women.

In qualitative research, the position of the researcher is an important part of the research process “either in terms of their own personal presence as researchers, or in terms of their experiences in the field and with the reflexivity they bring to the role” (Flick, 2007, p. ix). Herein, it is necessary to note that I had conducted in-depth interviews with four religious women⁷ as a preliminary research. While doing the preliminary research, before deciding on analyzing the newspaper columns of intellectual religious women, I observed that my position as a researcher during interviews changed considerably depending on to whom I was talking. I mean, for studying such a topic with a position of feminist identity conveyed to the interviewees a distance between the researcher and the interviewee.⁸ During the interviews, their reactions and responses to my questions underlied the difference between political positions of the researcher and researched. More clearly, during the interviews I had a feeling of impediment to build a rapport with the participant woman since she thinks/assumes that I will approach with an Orientalist bias towards religious women in terms of gender equality and religiosity issues. Although I did not enunciate whether I have a religious faith, somehow, my appearance or manners conveyed that I am not a Muslim pious. On the participants’ side, this message evoked an uneasiness, which caused them to explain how they are open-minded towards non-religious women and how they embrace feminist women (during the

⁷ I had an in-depth interview with the president of the Association of Capital Women's Platform (Başkent Kadın Platformu) Nesrin Semiz and a platform volunteer, Seda Kaya. I had a small talk with Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal via e-mail but because of her workload we could not arrange a meeting at that time. Lastly, I had an interview with a veiled university student Zehra Çalı (pseudonym name, upon request of her).

⁸ “The likelihood that an ethnographer might unselfconsciously take center stage when representing the fieldwork experiences, I think, in direct proportion to the spatial, temporal, and cultural distance of this individual from the host community at the time of such representation” (1991, p. 81). For a detailed discussion see: Tedlock, B. (1991). From participant observation to the observation of participation: The emergence of narrative ethnography. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 47 (1), 69-94.

meetings I voiced that I am a feminist). Those interviews were valuable and useful for me in terms of organizing my questions and deciding on where to start the fieldwork.

I decided to analyze the written texts of the women considering the aim of the thesis. I did not utilize further examples from Muslim women such as politicians, NGO volunteers, writers etc. on the issue of abortion other than those contributing to the abortion debate in 2012. Apart from its practical reasons, I would like to mention that it is a conscious preference due to my understanding of how political agency reveals itself. Firstly, I believe that agents act and speak accordingly what they champion and defend; thus, their beliefs and political bounds emerge in specific events. Following Bhabha, as I indicated above, I believe that “[n]egotiation is what politics is all about” (1990, p.216). Therefore, I rely on that by analyzing how women contributed to an event is important to see what has been said and not said. Because, what is not said is as important as what has been said. I mean that, for example, some religious columnist women did not voice any idea about abortion debate in spite of the fact that they regularly write on their column about current events. This gives an idea about to which extent a topic is important for them to write on. To illustrate, Fatma Karabıyık Barbarasoğlu had not touch upon this issue in her column in *Yeni Şafak* newspaper although she too often writes on her columns on current political and daily issues of Turkey. Secondly, the reason why I delimited the analysis data within the bounds of newspaper columns is that I would like to search what is publicly became known. Namely, I would like to deal with what politically has been produced and publicly promoted in a specific actual event by intellectual pious women, rather than what they think on the issue of abortion within their communities, parties or individual lives. Therefore, I did not include women who had not directly partaken in the discussions and spread their opinions about abortion.

I would like to add that it might be thought as a lack not to have face-to-face conversations with intellectual pious women who have contributed to the public debate on the abortion issue. It would have been useful to have face-to-face interaction in the forms of, for example, in-depth interviews in order to deepen and clarify their opinions. Nevertheless, for my thesis, the main point is not what those women exclusively think of

on the abortion issue, but how they intervene in the public debate and how they exhibit agency.

The importance of the researcher's position still plays a crucial role in analyzing texts considering the discussion on the self-critique by sociologist and anthropologists on their own disciplines. Researchers have approached in a self-critical way to their own practices in relation to the people they study. This reflexive criticism concerns the relations they establish with the "objects" of their works, as part of a general trend of criticizing objectivity, the claim of universality, of reaching single truths for social realities and positivism in social sciences (Tedlock, 1991).

In writing this thesis on a current debate about the limitation/ban on abortion in 2012, I am not explicitly adopted a pro-choice stance. Although I define my political stance as materialist feminist that takes into account the theories of patriarchal capitalism in exploring social life, this positioning does not require supporting a pro-choice stance without question, since feminists can be critical of it on various grounds such as ethical, political concerns, and ethnic difference⁹. The crucial point in the abortion debate was the attempt of the government to restrict the legal rights of women, which emphasizes the erosion of even formal liberal principles of citizenship. It would not be wrong to say that is only partly related to feminism. My focus is to understand how religious women approached to the abortion debate and how they relate this issue to women subjectivity, women body, and religious faith. Therefore, I am going further the pro-life / pro-choice duality in abortion discussion for an analysis of pious agency, which opens up a door to evaluate discourses that emerged during the abortion negotiation.

⁹ There are discussions on the relation of feminism and "the right to abort" discourse. For instance see: Morgan, L. M. (1996), *Fetal Relationality in Feminist Philosophy: An Anthropological Critique*. *Hypatia*, 11: 47–70.

As Saba Mahmood¹⁰ in her book indicates, “women’s participation in the Islamic movement in a number of countries (like Iran, Egypt, Indonesia and Malaysia) is not limited to the poor ... but also from the upper and middle income strata” (2001, p.226); a similar analysis is relevant for Turkey, too. Intellectual, educated religious women were mostly on the scene and their active support to Islamic parties or communities that seems to be contradictory to their own interests and programs concerning women’s visibility in public and political arenas, are questioned by feminists. As Sirma Bilge (2010) indicates “[h]istorically, most feminist writings have denounced religion as an intrinsically androcentric and oppressive institution” (2010, p.11).

I also had found complexities in religious women’s activities by thinking “at a historical moment when more emancipatory possibilities would appear to be available to women” (Mahmood, 2001, p.202), why do they have relations with Islamic movements. However, this point of view has its limitations to understand what kind of dynamics are at work in religious women’s political agency. At this point, Orit Avishai’s caution is illuminating for me since she shed attention on “[r]ather than asking why women comply” [to conservative religions], she considers agency as “religious conduct and religiosity as a constructed status” (2008, p. 409). So, with this perception, religious conduct to gender-traditional religions may be constructed as compliant agency. Such compliance has its own dynamics as Mahmood calls attention to.

My interest in feminist discussions of the agency of religious women is influenced by “the tricky location the religious subject occupies in feminist analytics and politics” (Bilge, 2010, p.11). For instance, intellectual religious women in Turkey take my attention since I have been reading their articles in newspapers and watching them in the

¹⁰ As Samuli Schielke (2009) indicates Saba Mahmood’s work on the Egyptian women’s piety movement is “closely aligned with the work of Talal Asad (1986; 1993; 2003) and Charles Hirschkind (2001; 2006).” See: Schielke, S. (2009). Being Good In Ramadan: Ambivalence, Fragmentation, and the Moral Self in the Lives of Young Egyptians. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 15(1), 24-S40.

TV programmes on a wide range of topics that are not necessarily related to religion. Although their arguments are sometimes in line with Islamic groups, they cannot be taken as a group of women reflecting the power's political position or the Islamic communities' discourses. Therefore, there is a controversial dynamic and it needs specific analysis to understand their agency, resistance and complying.

Therefore, both theoretical and political reasons urge me to study feminist accounts of conceptualization of agency. My questions are in line with Sirma Bilge's guide of inquiry that is as such:

(1) In what way does the figure of the veiled woman help us rethink the normative liberal account of human agency informing most feminist interpretations? (2) Is it possible to redefine the concept of agency so that unaccounted-for forms of agency can be considered? (2010, p.11)

Here, Bilge's "unaccounted-for forms of agency" is reminiscent of the agency of the intellectual pious women. Bilge continues by indicating that the concept of agency¹¹ needs to be explored when it is framed with respect to a humanist model of personhood and she argues that "poststructuralist critique of the humanist subject¹² and the feminist theory of intersectionality" provide "a path for a critical theory of agency" (ibid). At this point, Saba Mahmood's (2001) argument is pathfinder for me.

¹¹ Sirma Bilge discusses briefly how agency has been grappled within classical sociology which constitutes the main axis of the targeted criticism:

[I]ndividuals are represented as being in relation to something external to themselves called system/structure/society; they are either determined by the system (structural-model, e.g. Durkheim) or they act upon it (action-model, e.g. Simmel, Weber). The structural-model argues that structures self-generate and determine the very nature of individual consciousness, whereas the more individualistic/liberal-oriented action-model claims that structures are abstractions created by individuals and cannot determine the action of their makers (Rapport and Overing, 34). Agency is central to the action-model, which attempts to grasp individuals' capacities to act independently of structural constraints, or against them. Intrinsic in this questioning is a humanistic conception, linking agency to concepts such as rationality, willful action, individual autonomy and moral authority (Davies 55). (Bilge, 2010, p.12)

¹² The poststructuralists' efforts have reduced the impact of the authority of the humanist account of agency in the 1990s, by creating "disquiet within some strands of feminism about the political consequences of poststructuralist subject-deconstruction" (Bilge, 2010, p.13).

Drawing from Saba Mahmood's opinion, Samuli Schielke explains Mahmood's argument as such:

[R]ather than positing a liberal autonomous subject as a natural starting-point of the study of religious and moral subjects, we need to look at the creation of an ethical self through embodied religious practices and accept that there are religiously and culturally preconditioned moral subjectivities that differ from those prescribed by liberal and feminist theory. (Schielke, 2009, p.35)

That is why, by writing this thesis, I would like to summon "an expansion of a normative understanding of critique" (Mahmood, 2009, p.44), which is substantially widespread among many progressives and feminists- including myself. At this point, Saba Mahmood's intervention on the issue of criticism is what I rely on:

Criticism, in this view, is about successfully demolishing your opponent's position and exposing her argument's implausibility and its logical inconsistencies. This, I would submit, is a very limited and weak understanding of the notion of critique. Critique, I believe, is most powerful when it leaves open the possibility that we might also be remade in the process of engaging another's worldview that we might come to learn things which we did not already know before we undertook the engagement. This requires that we occasionally turn the critical gaze upon ourselves, to leave open the possibility that we may be remade through an encounter. (2009, p.45)

While dealing with religious women, following Mahmood's position, I argue that the progressive- liberal assertions should be criticized. Notwithstanding this position, I would like to mention that, my attempt to understand the political agency of religious women does not put forward in order to advocate the religious women's arguments or life perspectives. At this point, I would like to make clear that Asef Bayat (2013) criticizes the lack of a clear concept of resistance¹³ and touches upon on the issue that

¹³ Bayat furthers a question as "Does resistance mean defending an already achieved gain ... or making fresh demands (to 'advance its own claims'), what I like to call 'encroachment'?" (Bayat, 2013, p.44) According to him, these strategies are different from each other and this distinction is missing in much of the resistance literature. "Although one might imagine moments of overlap", he argues that "the two strategies, however, lead to different political consequences; this is so in particular when we view them in relation to the strategies of dominant power" (ibid).

this deficiency often leads scholars “to overestimate and read too much into the acts of the agents” (p.55). Because of such an approach, almost any act of the subjects potentially perceived as one of “resistance”. The very crucial criticism of Asef Bayat is that:

Determined to discover the ‘inevitable’ acts of resistance, many poststructuralist writers often come to “replace their subject”¹⁴. While they attempt to challenge the essentialism of such perspectives as “passive poor,” “submissive Muslim women,” and “inactive masses,” they tend, however, to fall into the trap of essentialism in reverse— by reading too much into ordinary behaviors, interpreting them as necessarily conscious or contentious acts of defiance. This is so because they overlook the crucial fact that these practices occur mostly within the prevailing systems of power. (Bayat, p.55)

Furthermore, Saba Mahmood criticizes exactly that reasoning, namely reducing agency to resistance. Following Mahmood’s criticism, Sirma Bilge elucidates this problem as such: “While [postcolonial] literature provides an essential antidote to previous hegemonic accounts obliterating subjectivities and experiences of subordinated groups, the conception of agency it circulates is deficient, for it reduces agency to resistance (Mahmood), which is only one of the many configurations that agency may take” (2010, p.19).

Therefore, keeping in mind Bayat’s momentous criticism and Mahmood’s intervention, this thesis will not glorify the statements of intellectual religious women within the abortion negotiation as an exemplary of resistance. I aim to offer the ambivalent position of women in the politics. Therewithal, I am not on a position to assert to abandon any struggle against what it considered to be unjust such as Islamist fundamentalism. I believe that such a position would not be very different from mirroring the “teleological certainty that characterizes some of the versions of progressive-liberalism” (Mahmood, 2009, p.45); or being an extension of seeing non-western movements with Western eyes

¹⁴ “Replace their subject” is a term cited by Bayat from Manal M. Eid, “Informal Economy in Madinat al-Nahda: Resistance and Accommodation among the Urban Poor,” Master’s Thesis, American University in Cairo, 1998, p. 88.

(Mohanty, 1991, p.55), or falling “into the trap of essentialism in reverse - by reading too much into ordinary behaviors, interpreting them as necessarily conscious or contentious acts of defiance” (Bayat, 2013, p. 55).

Mahmood suggests that non-liberal movements¹⁵ (such as pious women’s mosque movement that she studied) might transform our political and analytical certainties in the process of encounter with those subjects. Namely, the story and dynamics of the religious women’s activity might have something to teach us beyond “what we learn from the circumscribed social-scientific exercise of ‘understanding and translating’” (ibid).

In order to analyze the intervention and contribution of pious women to the public debate on abortion issue, Mahmood’s suggestions pave the way for my study in terms of the conception of agency. First, she argues, “[w]e think of agency not as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create” (2001, p. 203). For an analytical purchase such a conception of agency, she deals with the participants of the Mosque movement that she worked with in Cairo “through an examination of the cultivation and performance of gendered Islamic virtues” (ibid). Departing from here, she proposes,

In analyzing this material, I hope not only to parochialize the normative subject of feminist theory as desirous of freedom from relations of domination, but also to rethink the conceptual relationship between desire and self-making, performance and the constitution of the subject, and moral action and embodiment in feminist debates. (Mahmood, 2001, p.203)

¹⁵ With the use of the term “non-liberal movements”, Mahmood means the women’s political activities stemming from the religious ideas and traditions. Therefore, it seems that she used “liberal” as secular and emancipatory.

I would like to mention Saba Mahmood's invitation in which she describes the urge that underlines the political position of this thesis:

We must embark upon an inquiry in which we do not assume that the political positions we uphold will necessarily be vindicated or provide the ground for our theoretical analysis, but instead hold open the possibility that we may come to ask of politics a whole series of questions that seemed settled when we first embarked upon the inquiry in the first place. (2009, p.45)

Moreover, Tanya Zion-Waldoks (2015) suggests that "religious compliance is not always diametrically opposed to gender resistance" (p.92). Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in her influential essay *Under Western Eyes Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse*, argues that to a great extent Western feminist¹⁶ research on Third World women "discursively colonizes the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the Third World, thereby producing/re-presenting a composite, singular 'third world woman' - an image which appears arbitrarily constructed, but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of Western humanist discourse" (Mohanty, 1991, p. 53). In this regard, Mohanty directs attention to how there is a tendency to depict the Third World women as victims of male domination, supposed traditional cultures and religions. She argues that in these characterizations, history and difference are not thoroughly regarded by Western feminism, rather Western feminism operated as a standard model in which the Third World is evaluated.

¹⁶ Mohanty clarifies what she means with her use of "Western feminism" as such, "Clearly Western feminist discourse and political practice is neither singular nor homogeneous in its goals, interests or analyses. However, it is possible to trace a coherence of *effects* resulting from the implicit assumption of 'the West' (in all its complexities and contradictions) as the primary referent in theory and praxis. My reference to 'Western feminism' is by no means intended to imply that it is a monolith. Rather, I am attempting to draw attention to the similar effects of various textual strategies used by particular writers that codify Others as non-Western and hence themselves as (implicitly) Western" (p.334). At this point, I would like to make clear that throughout the thesis, I will use the term "Western feminism" in the sense that Mohanty stated. For details see: Mohanty, C. (1984). *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*. *Feminist Review*, 12 (3), 333-358.

Moreover, in one of her articles *Beyond Subordination vs. Resistance: An Intersectional Approach to the Agency of Veiled Muslim Women*, Sirma Bilge, a sociologist who studies the articulations of gender, sexualities and ethnicity, indicates that:

The increased entrenchment of the gender-and-sexuality frame, laying an ideological ground on which issues of citizenship, social cohesion and the limits of diversity accommodation are debated, and ‘failures’ of multiculturalism demonstrated, is evident within the West. Cross-national comparisons indicate its pervasiveness in the construction of Muslims as essentially different from liberal Western subjects and of their culture as inherently sexist and homophobic (Phillips and Saharso). (2010, p.10)

Along the same vein, the authors of the introduction article of the special volume of *Gender and Society Journal* on the marginalized status of gender within the sociology of religion, Avishai, Jafar, and Rinaldo (2015) inform that there is a variety of theoretically advanced studies about gender and religion that are promising for the gendered analysis of religion is sociology. Recent studies¹⁷ of gender and Islam deal with how religion patterns new forms of gendered agency. By doing so, these researches contribute to new articulations of religion, everyday life, and modernity (2015, p.11).

With this insight, my study aims to approach the abortion debate analyzing the statements of intellectual religious women in order to understand how religion and gender are interrelated and form each other in terms of agency. In this line of thought, pious women’s newspaper statements will be examined to trace how they exhibit agency.

¹⁷ The prominences of these studies are from Ahmed (2011), Deeb (2006), Hafez (2011), Mahmood (2005), Schielke (2009), and Schulz (2012).

1.2. The Field

“...in one way or another, things said say more than themselves.”¹⁸

As for my sources to carry out the analysis of the statements of intellectual religious women in the abortion debate, I searched all the Turkish newspapers that can be reachable through the internet. The debate had started May 25 2012 and intensely continued until the end of June 2012, though the debate did not end throughout the year. As the women have been writing on a variety of newspapers, in order to trace the negotiations from different perspectives, I only focused on what has been said on the current abortion issue and by whom. Therefore, while determining which texts will be my source of analysis, I did not limit the source of articles and declarations to specific newspapers in terms of their political stances. In other words, I followed what Foucault specifies on the way of eliciting the discourse:

The central issue, then (at least in the first instance), is not to determine whether one says yes or no to sex, whether one formulates prohibitions or permissions, whether one asserts its importance or denies its effects, or whether one refines the words one uses to designate it; but to account for the fact that it is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said. (1978, p. 11)

Therefore, for the understanding of intellectual religious women's political agency, I did not focus on the clues that are on the surface such as supporting abortion ban or opposing to the legal restriction within a pro/con dichotomy. Instead, as Rosalind Petchesky (1984) indicated early on, the abortion struggle must be seen as condensing a wide range of social conflicts. Therefore, by searching out through different sources such

¹⁸ Foucault, M. (1972). *Archeology of knowledge and the discourse on language*. Newyork: Pantheon Books (p.110).

as newspapers, interviews and TV open session programmes I aim to reveal who does the speaking, the approaches and positions from which the religious women enunciate, the institutions that impel or encourage women to speak about the abortion issue and which sources collect and distribute the ideas that are spelled.

Hence, after collecting all the relevant newspaper columns, firstly, I read through them by looking for evidence of a statement on pro-choice, anti-choice or neutral slant, supporting the abortion ban or not, and of evidence of any topic related to women's agency in the abortion decision process. This framework provided me a first step to gather all the data together. When I read the collected data, the first-hand analysis demonstrated that the texts are varied in their main concerns from PM's style of wording the debate with the analogy between the Uludere massacre and abortion; from women's health matters to the foetus's right to life; the intervention of Religious Affairs into the issue to devout government representative men's approaches¹⁹. I underlined the most aforementioned issues in order to realize what the general frame of the devout women's involvement in the debate is. I then circled each entry and coded for themes. Although my main concern was to understand the political agency in which intellectual religious women occupy, it is significant to analyze what is at stake in the construction of the abortion issue by those women. According to James Paul Gee, "politics" means "anything and anyplace where human social interactions and relationships have implications" for the way in which individuals or communities believe to be "a source of

¹⁹ On a general scale, abortion issue was discussed from a variety of aspects. For example, whether fetus can be seen as a living being? Whether the decision of abortion should be taken by only woman or the potential father should also include in the decision process? The notion of "abortion is right" was also a discussion point that it does not rest on the same lines with other human rights as health or education. Moreover, some people, including feminists, view abortion as women's alienation from their own bodies and reproductive capacities, while others assert that the liberalization of abortion encourages men's sexual irresponsibility at the expense of women's health. Therefore, it was not just an issue of banning or not to banning abortion.

power, status, or worth²⁰” (2001, p.2). Therefore, politics reveals itself in the interactions and negotiations.

Magazine articles, web pages, and television programs on the topic as relevant material was sought, read and analyzed for the study. 30 intellectual religious women have been analyzed as a primary data. 18 women have written a newspaper article on the abortion issue; there are 33 newspaper articles in total. 7 women, Emine Şenlikoğlu, Leyla İpekçi, Feyza Akınerdem, Hüda Kaya, Hülya Şekerci, Filiz Işiker and Berrin Sönmez, do not have an newspaper column but they expressed their opinion by giving interviews to the reporters in various newspapers and magazines. Therefore, seven women have statement/declaration on abortion debate within news. 6 women Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, Esra Elönü, Cihan Aktaş, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Fatma Bostan Ünsal, and Kadriye Avcı Erdemli have given interviews (11 interviews in total) to the reporters that I analyzed as my primary data.

I reached 6 videos, viz., open sessions TV programs in which abortion was discussed with religious women, Sibel Eraslan, Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal and Cihan Aktaş were seen as opinion leaders in this issue. Among these programs, Esra Elönü’s TV production that she invited some guests to talk on women was considerable. [See Appendix A]

33 articles, 7 declarations and 11 interviews have been coded and analyzed for this study in order to reflect the intellectual religious women’s approaches to the abortion debate in 2012.

Newspaper articles become more prolific than as they were in 1980s and 1990s, since the increasing involvement of Islamic women in public space and intellectual arena after 2000s (Özdemir, Yeni Şafak, 9 May 2006).

²⁰ By “worth”, he means “‘street smarts,’ academic intelligence, money, control, possessions, verbal abilities, ‘looks,’ age, wisdom, knowledge, technology, literacy, morality, ‘common sense,’ and so on and so forth through a very long list indeed.”

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ABORTION DEBATE

2.1. The Case: The Abortion Debate in 2012 in Turkey

The former Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a statement on abortion²¹ at the Fifth International Parliamentarians' Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD (International Conference on Population and Development) Programme of Action organized in Istanbul on May 25, 2012:

I consider abortion as murder. Nobody should have the right to allow this. Either you kill a baby in mother's womb or you kill it after birth. There is no difference.²²

His claim was based on the assumption that any abortion operation is similar to killing a person. Abortion right has been put under attack in Turkey in May 2012 by Prime Minister's repeatedly saying, "I see abortion as murder" (Istanbul Feminist Collective,

²¹ The word *kürtaj* comes from the French word *curettage* that is originally a particular method of abortion. The meaning of abortion is explained as "The expulsion of a fetus from the womb by natural causes before it is able to survive independently". This term is used equivalent to end pregnancy. In Turkish, the word *kürtaj* refers to "abortion upon request" in everyday language; however, it is equivalent to "induced abortion" in English. On the other hand, in medical terminology, "abortion" is used to refer *düşük*, which means, in everyday language, "spontaneous abortion". Moreover, "Induced abortion" is used to refer *isteğe bağlı düşük*. In the process of the scanning of newspapers for my research, in news and columns, the word *kürtaj* exclusively used to refer "abortion upon request". Even when consulting with doctors, the journalists use the term *kürtaj* instead of "abortion upon request". Over politicians and the public, again, *kürtaj* is used to refer "abortion upon request", and it is understood without any hesitation on the meaning of it. Therefore, I will use "abortion" through the thesis except it needs a distinction from "spontaneous abortion". <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/abortion>

²² Abortion is 'murder,' says Turkey's PM. (2012, May 26). *Hürriyet Daily Newspaper*. Retrieved from: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/abortion-is-murder-says-turkeys%20pm.aspx?pageID=238&nID=21665&NewsCatID=338>

2012, June 4). Then, at the Third Women's Branch Ordinary Congress of AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi—Justice and Development Party)²³ on May 26 2012, he again made a statement:

I am talking to some groups and media members who oppose to what I've said. You constantly discuss 'Uludere'. Every abortion is an Uludere. You kill a child in the womb of a mother before he was born. What's the difference? We have to struggle against this altogether. We have to know that it is an insidious plan to eliminate a nation from the world stage.²⁴

He associated abortion with the mass killing in Uludere,²⁵ the village in Turkey's Iraqi border where 34 Kurdish civilians were killed by a military airstrike a couple of months

²³ Justice and Development Party, abbreviated JDP in English and AK PARTI or AKP in Turkish, has developed from the tradition of Islamism. However, AKP officially abandons this ideology in favour of "conservative democracy". The party has 327 members of parliament, viz., the largest party of Turkey. Its current leader, Ahmet Davutoğlu, is Prime Minister, while former party leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is now President. See for updated information: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justice_and_Development_Party_\(Turkey\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justice_and_Development_Party_(Turkey)). The political continuity of this political tradition was as follows: "MSP (National Salvation Party, 1972–81), RP (Refah Partisi - Welfare Party, 1983–98), FP (Fazilet Partisi - Virtue Party, 1997–2001), and SP (Saadet Partisi - Felicity Party, 2001–). AKP emerged from within the FP when the latter was closed by the Constitutional Court on the ground that it was engaged in activities against the constitutional principle of secularism" (Coşar, Yeğenoğlu, 2011). AKP's founding members were named as the 'reformists.' For details see: Coşar, S., & Yeğenoğlu, M. (2011). New Grounds for Patriarchy in Turkey? Gender Policy in the Age of AKP. *South European Society and Politics*, 16(4), 555-573.

²⁴ "Every Abortion is Uludere". (2012, May 28). Bianet Newspaper. Retrieved from: <http://bianet.org/english/english/138659-prime-minister-every-abortion-is-uludere>

²⁵ Uludere (in Kurdish *Qilaban/ Roboski*) is a village in the province of Şırnak, Turkey. In an attack on Wednesday December 28, 2011, in the Kurdish area between Turkey and Iraq, Turkish Armed Forces killed 34 Kurdish civilians near Uludere. With the pretext of "fighting against the PKK terrorists," Kurdish civilians who were cigarette smugglers have lost their lives. The Uludere massacre, also known as the Roboski airstrike, Şırnak massacre or Roboski massacre took place near the Turkish-Iraqi border. Two Turkish F16 jets fired at a group of villagers, acting on information that PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) militants were crossing the border. It has been said that the unmanned aerial vehicles flying over the terrain was "mistakenly" evaluated as a group of guerillas of PKK. This assault on Kurdish civilians by the Turkish air force is yet another example of the Turkish government's misguided policy on Kurdish issue. According to Grand National Assembly of Turkey Human Rights Investigations Commission's Report, it was alleged that there was not any intent of the institutions of the state in the Uludere event (27.03.2013, Commission Report). In order to shed light on the Uludere massacre and justice, a campaign titled "Justice in spite of Borders" was launched on 20 February 2012; however, although it has been more than two years now, the perpetrators were not addressed and judged. For details see: http://gbad.org/wiki/pedia.aspx?u=Uludere_airstrike

ago (Istanbul Feminist Collective, 2012, June 4). By this statement, he implied that abortion is nothing but murder (Cindoğlu & Ünal, 2013, p.22). Following these statements of the former prime minister²⁶, Health Minister Recep Akdağ indicated that the Ministry was endeavoring a new law regulation that would prohibit abortion and caesarean operation, adding that if necessary the state would take care of babies born because of incidents of rape (Istanbul Feminist Collective, 2012, June 4). The new regulation on abortion was greatly rebuffed respecting the government's policies and discourse that is to impose motherhood as the primary task of women, to equate women with family, and to insist on the secondary, submissive role of women (ibid). Throughout 10 years of AKP ruling,²⁷ there have been attacks against women. Thence this rebuff was also against Erdoğan's long urged demand for women to have at least three children to keep the workforce of the country young and dynamic (Cindoğlu & Ünal, 2013, p.24).

Until 2012, there was neither an organized anti-abortionist movement nor a women's movement to mainly support abortion in Turkey. At the same time, although it was legal, abortion was getting increasingly inaccessible, especially in public institutions in the last

²⁶ Most of the columnists, politicians, activists have directed their attention to this comparison by pointing out that PM had deliberately associated abortion to Uludere with an intentional aim to shift the ground of the political agenda from Uludere massacre to abortion issue since the government was taking unfavorable reactions on Uludere with a strong public demand. Some evaluated this explosion of PM as a clumsy initiative to efface the Uludere massacre. For instance, a feminist scholar and editor of *Amargi* Feminist Journal Aksu Bora, directs the attention on the importance of the determining the country's agenda by the government. She asks, in her article in *Amargi* journal, "What do you say about that abortion became the most important part of the agenda in ten days which had not been a matter of discussion on the agenda before?" (Bora, 2012, June 6).

²⁷ With the election victory of the AKP in the general elections of 2002, their coming to power was met with indignation by the secularists, whose fears centered on women's condition. There were discussions around the issues of women's veiling, the treat of young girls' education, and women's public presence. As Coşar and Yeğenoğlu mentions, "Due to its emergence from within the Milli Görüş Hareketi (National Outlook Movement), which has been the main representative of political Islam in Turkey since the 1970s, the party is claimed to have 'hidden intentions' of putting an end to the secular state and social structure of the country. Conversely, the AKP government's policy outputs laid the grounds for assessments that characterized the party's fine-tuning of its Islamist past and Muslim present with liberal democratic principles" (2011, p.555). Although that fear of "Turkey's becoming Iran" was not come true strictly, women's condition did not improve as well.

10 years (Toksöz, 2011, p.82); likewise, it is simultaneously being degraded in the social imaginary by the politician's interventions. Abortion was legalized in Turkey in 1983 without serious public pressure, women's street struggles or debates. Moreover, the legalization from the government had not called forth any anti-abortion reactions at that time. Before the legalization of abortion in 1983, against all odds abortion was commonly practiced both in self-induced forms and in the form of illegal operations by doctors or non-professionals (Tezcan, Carpenter-Yaman, & Fişek, 1980). Whether legalized or illegalized by governments, abortion has been a social reality practiced by women through history.

Abortion has been legal since 1983 on the condition that pregnancy is less than 10 weeks. However, the legalization was not because abortion was seen as an intrinsic right of women for taking control of their own bodies. Rather, it was partly because of the objectification of women's bodies for the sake of population control, and only to a small extent because it was seen as a problem of public health in order to lessen women's deaths due to abortion under unsecure conditions (Akın, 2012, p. 331). Perceived in this way, legalization did not bring much for women in 1980s. Women's decisions remained submissive to the male dominance and to neoliberal reductions in public health services. As they could not reach freely and widely to contraception in the lack of contraception policy for men, they also could not reach cheap and secure abortion.

Before 2012, when there was manifestly no anti-abortionist policy movement yet, the former Prime Minister Erdoğan has insistently stated that he wants "all Turkish women have at least three children." Therewithal, Health Minister, Recep Akdağ,²⁸ declared that "yes to reproductive health, no to family planning." These can be translated as the government is demanding Turkish women to become pregnant (and not to end the pregnancy) with the target of having at least three children. On a similar basis, a series of articles condemning abortion had been published in the Directorate of the Religious Affair's Journal. Moreover, in certain private hospitals, abortion had been stopped

²⁸ Recep Akdağ had been Health Minister between 18 November 2002 and 24 January 2013.

whether by the conscientious objection of doctors or with no relevant reason (Toksöz, 2011, p.5). Namely, although abortion was legal since 1983, health service for abortion for women was not easily accessible and has not been promoted by the government although no laws have been modified for restricting abortion.

The former Prime Minister Erdoğan's first mentioning on abortion restriction was greeted with surprise in public since there was not any current situation that needs to open up an abortion debate. On the other hand, according to Ayşe Böhürler, who is a founder member of the AKP, abortion was discussed with "right to life" discourse within their party formerly. In her column in *Yeni Şafak* Newspaper, she indicates that:

This fraction started to concern about this issue in 1997 along with the pro-life (anti-abortion) campaigns of groups such as Catholic associations and Mormons. Women from Life Foundation²⁹ most of whom were medical staff pioneered in this campaign. Various videos and texts are borrowed from Catholic associations. Female physicians held an informative campaign reflecting our beliefs and considering the scientific data and new medical discoveries within this scope. This issue was widely discussed among us during 2000's and was concluded. We referred to the opinions of some religious scholars such as Hayreddin Karaman upon the recent medical findings.³⁰ (2012, June 9)

Similarly, Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal³¹ enunciates that Life Foundation had put abortion in their agenda:

Life Foundation founded by doctors was carrying a campaign against abortion for years in İstanbul. Sare Davutoğlu (Foreign Affairs Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's wife) was also in that group. They were talking about the ways to

²⁹ Life Foundation (Hayat Vakfı) is a health and social services foundation. They provide rehabilitation studies by giving psychological support to children and mothers, social activities for children and organizing family education programmes for women. This foundation is known its ally with the power party's ideology on women and family. <http://www.hayatvakfi.org.tr/>

³⁰ Hayrettin Karaman is one of the Islamist figures of Turkey who is well known as a modern era's fetwaist. He is a journalist of *Yeni Şafak* Newspaper and is known as proximity to the ruling AKP – Justice and Development Party.

³¹ She is a theologian and literature writer, and columnist in *Taraf* Newspaper and *Radikal* Newspaper.

discourage women about abortion in various meetings. I do not know if they had any legislative proposal. (2012)³²

However, Fatma Bostan Ünsal who involved in the establishment process of AKP and worked as Vice President in charge of Human Rights, stands at another point arguing that abortion debate is not a “natural debate” since they had not discussed abortion in AKP’s party programme:

I have been in the party for 12 years, we have never discussed about this issue, it is included neither the party programme nor election manifesto. If it is such an important matter -because nothing can be more important than “murder”- we should have concerned about it, but we did not.(2012, June 9)³³

All these quotes can be evaluated as the background scene that the declaration of Prime Minister in 2012. It can be said that it is controversial whether AKP had been planning explicitly to restrict abortion or not. As Böhürler argues that, the abortion issue had been negotiated within the government party in 2000s, and later it was ended. However, Fatma Bostan Ünsal argues the opposite in the sense that for 12 years of membership of AKP, she had not witnessed that the abortion was within the party agenda. At this point, Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal’s argument is meaningful that she indicates that the lobbying activities of AKP on the restriction on abortion were held by the *Hayat Foundation*. So, it can be said that although the government party had not explicitly state that they are against to abortion, according to Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal they had spread the word by means of foundation activities. At this point, it is useful to consider Didem Ünal and Dilek Cindoğlu’s article, *Reproductive citizenship in Turkey: Abortion chronicles*, in which they state that although their study dwells upon politicians’ public statements,

[I]t may be hard to generalize these views as representative of their parties’ political position on this matter. This is in part because there is a lack of well-developed party positions on abortion shared with public; rather the party

³² Şefkatli Tuksal, H. (2012, June 6). Uludere’de kürtaj yok, çocuk cesetleri var.Interview conducted by Özlem Çelik. Retrieved from: <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25355706/>

³³ Bostan Ünsal, F. (2012, June 9). Kürtaj yasağına karşıyım. *Taraf* Newspaper. <http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/kurtaj-yasagina-karsiyim.htm>

leaders' comments are quite fragmented and unclear...Although the AKP has been in power since 2002, none of the MPs from the party had declared such an interest before. (2013, p.22)

Therefore, it can be said that the declarations of MPs are their individual stances rather than the AKP's explicit party politics. Considering some oppositional statements against the Prime Minister's anti-abortion declaration within the party, it can be seen that not all the members of the AKP stand on the same political trend. For instance, a woman Member of Parliament of AKP, Nursuna Memecan, stated that she is against the restriction of abortion.³⁴ This point is important for my analysis since I am not dealing with the analysis of the parliaments of AKP. My analysis will cover the intellectual religious women and in order to insert their arguments in content I will refer to the individual religious government representative men. Therefore, the responses of intellectual pious women towards these representatives should be taken in a perspective that they challenge not necessarily the AKP, but religious men who contributed to the abortion negotiation.

While continuing to write this thesis, a study was conducted by Çağla Kubilay, titled as "The Abortion Debate from the Perspectives of Islamic-Conservative Female Writers: A Critical Analysis". In her article, Kubilay analyzes the columns and published interviews about the debate held one-month period as a method to evaluate the topic. She argues that "[i]n this debate, two major opposing groups occurred: a group focused on the right of the embryo to gestate and be born on the one hand and the other focused on women's rights to control their body" (2014, p. 387). Kubilay focuses on the Islamic-conservative female writers' approach in two perspectives: one is against men in Islamic community supporting ban on abortion and second the opponents of ban by using the slogan "my body my right". She signifies two poles of pro and con positions of the debate and asserts that the religious women's position seems not to be set on either side. This

³⁴ Memecan, N. (2012, June 8). Yasak Zararlı. *Hürriyet* Newspaper. Retrieved from: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/20717875.asp>

noncompliance of women to two poles of the debate comes into prominence; that is why she analyses the approaches of Islamic-conservative women's essays.

Her argument is in line with my starting point for the analysis of the religious agency in the sense that religious women do not comply with the opposite ends of the abortion debate. However, her study ends with a description of the approaches in two perspectives. One is the struggle against the Islamic men who support the ban on abortion. The other is the struggle against the women who support the freedom of abortion (p.390). In the epilogue, she evaluates the approaches of religious women as being closer to the ones who support the ban on abortion. She argues that although Islamic-conservative women writers are openly opposing to the ban, they are closer to "the arguments of the sections who want to ban abortion" on the ground of their attitude towards the issues such as belief in the entrustment of body to God, focus on the right to life of the fetus and the leaving the decision of women's bodily integrity to others with some acceptable grounds (p.415). By this argument, she falls into the underestimation of the agency of religious women. In that regard, my study differentiates from Kubilay's research although both of us analysed the religious writers' columns and published interviews on the abortion debate.

Abortion debate in 2012 has sparked a conflict between secular and religious circles since the debate was improved because of religious approaches mainly with the contributions of MPs and the head of Religious Affairs³⁵. The conflict turned into a polarization source among a wide range of circles and was debated by intellectuals, media, political parties, women's organizations, feminists and by medical doctors. This thesis project will enable to analyze this general conflict which is important to show us that abortion is not just an issue to be dealt with from a pro/ con perspective; rather, it is important in terms of the discourses emerged out of abortion negotiation that shows us traces to understand political positions whom contributed to it. The debate was

³⁵ Such as Health Minister Recep Akdağ, Mayor Melih Gökçek.

significant in terms of taking attention of various groups with different reasoning. There were opponents and proponents of the right to abortion for women; however, the negotiation raised manifold points to discuss. I would like to go in search of the different voices of religious women and to show how religious women commented to the abortion debate. Therefore, my analysis will not deal with how religious women function between these two dichotomously constructed camps as Çağla Kubilay's research. My focus is on the discussion of agency through the intervention of religious women to the abortion debate.

As Bhabha argues, "negotiation is what politics is all about" (1990, p.216). For Bhabha:

We do negotiate even when we do not know we are negotiating: we are always negotiating in any situation of political opposition or antagonism. Subversion is negotiation; transgression is negotiation; negotiation is not just some kind of compromise or 'selling out' which people too easily understands it to be. (1990, p.216)

Following Bhabha's claim, abortion debate in 2012 can be taken as a negotiation that shows us the cracks in which we can catch the intellectual religious women's political agency.

Moreover, Chandra Talpade Mohanty suggests if "Third World women's issues are analysed in detail within the precise social relations in which they occur," then pictures that are more complex emerge (Weedon, 2002, p.5). Abortion debate in 2012 is a precise event in which we can see that emerging complex pictures where the cultural and political space of intellectual religious women rest. Weedon narrates Mohanty argument as such, "[T]hird World women, like Western women, are produced as subjects in historically and culturally specific ways by the societies in which they live and act as agents" (ibid). In line with Bhabha's and Mohanty's accounts, the abortion debate in 2012 as being a precise public event provides an understanding for a discussion of pious agency

2.2. The emergence and current state of intellectual religious women in Turkey

Many studies on Muslim women focused on veiling by presenting it primarily as a symbol of oppression, and Muslim women's agency is rarely touched upon (Freedman, 2007, p.31). The authors of the introduction article of the special volume of *Gender and Society Journal* on the marginalized status of gender within the sociology of religion, Avishai, Jafar, and Rinaldo (2015) indicate "While sociologists who work on gender and religion do engage with the interdisciplinary literature, it is not widely cited by sociologists of gender or sociologists of religion. For example, the engagement with the scholarship on gender and Islam is often restricted to discussions of veiling" (2015, p.12). Since the veil is perceived as an "over-determined signifier", it "deployed to illustrate the 'clash of civilisation', women's oppression in Islam, the fundamentalist peril and the pitfalls of multiculturalism" (Bilge, 2010, p.10). Muslim women's struggles within their specific religious and political environments are not adequately highlighted. Rather, "the oppressed Muslim women" were portrayed as victim with a link to veiling without emphasizing the complex meanings associated with the veil (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Esposito, 1998; and Shirazi, 2001); and veiling is linked to modesty and seclusion in Western texts. However, El Guindi (1999) points out that veiling in contemporary Arab cultures is largely about identity and privacy. Over and above, it may mean autonomy and/or resistance. For instance, Elisabeth Özdalga, in her ethnographic research on veiled women's identity in Turkey, underlies that veiling should not necessarily be taken as a symbol of submission to Islamic patriarchy but rather a modern form of agency (Özdalga, 1998).

As Abu-Lughod indicates although third world women have been perceived mostly as weak and passive conveyers of the tradition, it should be seen that women responds in various hidden ways in which they resisted (1990, p.42). Abu-Lughod argues that veiling must not "be confused with or made to stand for, a lack of agency" (2002, p. 786). Supporting her argument, Asef Bayat enunciates that the veiling "has been represented not in simple terms of submission, but in ambivalent terms of protest and co-optation –

hence, an ‘accommodating protest’. Indeed, on occasions, both veiling and unveiling were simultaneously considered as a symbol of resistance” (Bayat, 2007, p.42). By ignoring this aspect, the framing of Muslim women, by the dominant Western way of thought, remained as oppressed victims who needs Western women and men to rescue them; against which Keya Ganguly argues that such a framing represents a “benevolent recuperation of the colonialist agenda” (1992, p. 74). Postcolonial scholar Spivak (1988), also, comments on this as “white men saving brown women from brown men” (p. 297). That kind of rationalization of salvation rhetoric that assumes Western superiority over third world women has to be challenged (Abu-Lughod, 2002, p. 788).

Critical feminist scholars³⁶ have revealed how colonialism constructed its ‘superiority’ with a contradiction to the ‘inferiority’ of non-Western cultures that Western subject prioritizes the patriarchal practices of non-Western cultures and interferes to rescue them with the ‘modernizing’ enterprise of the colonial rule (Abu-Lughod 2002; Ahmed 1992; Mohanty 1984; Spivak 1988). So, it is pointed out that taking Western feminist values as a norm in assessing the experiences of third world women or Muslim women might not be helpful to improve their situation (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Mohanty, 1984). Rather, third world women need to be taken in consideration with their distinct individual experiences, admitting that there have their own culture-specific and socially constructed contexts.

³⁶ Feminist postcolonial theorists are not a unified group (Mills, p.98). Nevertheless, it can be said that they have a common reaction towards the mainstream postcolonial theory’s lack of addressing gender issues and against the universalising tendencies within Western feminist thought. Postcolonial feminist theory’s influence on postcolonial discussions cannot be undermined in this respect. Critical feminist scholars have added a dimension to focus on women who are in different national and cultural contexts apart from white, middle-class English-speaking women. Further, white feminist thinkers were forced to rethink who they are speaking for when they speak of “women”; therefore, it has made them to subject to study the very act of “speaking for” and on behalf of someone else. Moreover, the question of gender in mainstream postcolonial theory has been neglected until those criticisms; so feminist postcolonial theorists pushed postcolonial thinkers to consider gender dimension. This paved the way to a more crucial point that postcolonial feminist theory is established as a form of analysis instead of simply being seen as a critique of Western feminism or postcolonial theory” (Mills, 1998, 98-99). Mills, S. (1998). *Postcolonial Feminist Theory*. In S. Jackson & J. Jones (Eds.), *Contemporary feminist theories* (pp. 98-113). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Moreover, Homi Bhabha's ideas on the political negotiation and his criticisms against to the "pre-given model or paradigm" (1990, p.216) in understanding a new situation is crucial. First, he claims that "[p]olitical negotiation is a very important issue, and hybridity is precisely about the fact that when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them" (ibid). By criticizing the Left's (read as progressivists) timid traditionalism in which a new situation is always tried to be read in terms of some "pre-given model or paradigm," Bhabha condemns this way of thinking as "a reactionary reflex, a conservative 'mindset'" (ibid).

This reactionary reflex and secular fundamentalism against Muslim women reveals itself in many situations in Turkey. As a representative case, the discussion on the family concept between Hüda Kaya and Gülfer Akkaya was significant subsequent *The Conference on Family* that was organized by The Foundation of Henrich Böll Stiftung as titled "Is a different family concept possible?"³⁷ Hüda Kaya who is a well-known figure among pious women in Turkey has written an article³⁸ in *Özgür Gündem* Newspaper³⁹ on the issue of family by directing criticism towards the participants of that conference and towards "some" feminists in the sense that family is undermined in their discourse. Kaya claimed in her article that some feminist understandings could not properly evaluate social facts as a result of that they, like Turkish Kemalists⁴⁰, have not faced with

³⁷ The conference was held on 9-10 November 2013. The conference questioned whether an alternative way of living is possible outside of family and traditional understanding of family as a concept was meant to be redefined.

³⁸ Kaya, H. (2013, November 25). *Özgür Gündem* Newspaper. "Türkiye Feminizmi ve Aile Karşıtlığı". Retrieved from http://www.ozgur-gundem.com/index.php?haberID=89799&haberBaslik=T%C3%BCrkiye+feminizmi+ve+aile+kar%C5%9F%C4%B1tl%C4%B1%C4%9F%C4%B1&action=haber_detay&module=nuce&authorName=H%C3%B Cda+KAYA&authorID=851#.UpNNI09Ib4c.twitter

³⁹ *Özgür Gündem* (Free Agenda) is a Turkish newspaper which reports on the Kurdish-Turkish conflict.

⁴⁰ Here, Hüda Kaya refers to Kemalist heritage that stands back to face its structure which internalized the Westernization ideals. In short, Kemalist women adopted the ideology of Kemalism which is in fact was the state ideology. It may be helpful to remember that the Kemalist movement had two major assertions regarding women, one is nationalism and the other is modernization (Göle, 1991). See: Göle, N. (1991). *The Forbidden modern*.

their existing structure. This article drew responses from secular and feminist circles, and one of the reactionary replies has written by Gülfer Akkaya⁴¹ who is a feminist and journalist in *Birgün* Newspaper. However, Akkaya's critical reply⁴² was mainly concentrated on Hüda Kaya's religious identity, not on the issue of family and the conflict on it⁴³. By taking Muslim woman as a monolith category, Akkaya positions all Muslim women in a state that they cannot be free from men and patriarchy; they are doomed to captivity of Muslim men that there is no resolution for women and Muslim women cannot face with Muslim men. This can be inferred from her question to Hüda Kaya: "How women will be liberated and ruptured, without facing with Muslim men, with Sharia law and its sexist reasons?" (Akkaya, 2013). Tanya Zion-Waldoks (2015), in her article *Politics of Devoted Resistance*, with reference to Towa Hartman (2007) states that: "Insisting their piety is not (only) about strategic 'choices' refutes lingering implications that women's best interests lie in 'liberation' from religion" (2015, p.76). Namely, searching the religious women's liberation in their 'liberation from religion' is problematic. Such a search of liberation is framed as internal "feminist Orientalism"⁴⁴ by Joyce Zonana (1993, p.594).

⁴¹ Gülfer Akkaya is a feminist, socialist and a Kurdish Alevis. She is a graduate student in Mimar Sinan Sociology department and she has recently published a book on Alevi women: "Sır İçinde Sır Olanlar". She has two published books, a book "Unutulmasın diye... Demokratik Kadınlar Derneği" in 2008; and in 2011 "Sanki Eşittik, 1960-1970'li yıllarda devrimci mücadelenin feminist sorgusu".

⁴² Akkaya, G. (2013, December 3). Biz aile dışındayız, siz orada ne yapıyorsunuz? *AKODER*. Retrieved from: <http://akoder.net/feminist-bir-talep-olarak-aile-yikilsin-evlilik-yasaklansin-diyoruz-biz-aile-disindayiz-siz-orada-ne-yapiyorsunuz/>

⁴³ It is helpful to comprehend the aura of the discussion by noting down that apart from Gülfer Akkaya, Karin Karakaşlı and Nazan Üstündağ had written newspaper essays on the issue. However, Karakaşlı and Üstündağ's comments were disparate from Akkaya's reflex. See for details: Karakaşlı, K. (2013). http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal2/neyi_muhafaza_ediyoruz-1163658

⁴⁴ *Feminist orientalism* is defined by Joyce Zonana as a "rhetorical strategy (and a form of thought) by which a speaker or writer neutralizes the threat inherent in feminist demands and makes them palatable to an audience that wishes to affirm its Occidental superiority" (as cited in Hosford & Wojtkowski, 2010, p.17). Zonana, 1993, p.594). for details see: Hosford, D., & Wojtkowski, C. (2010). Gendering the Orient. In *French Orientalism Culture, Politics, and the Imagined Other*. (pp. 11-23). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Pub.

The problem lies in that, although Hüda Kaya is a divorced woman, that is, she can be evaluated as challenging men's hegemony in her private life with her decision of divorce⁴⁵, Akkaya does not consider her subjectivity while criticizing the category of Muslim women. This perspective resonates with the progressivist Kemalist paradigm⁴⁶, which also I criticize and try not to fall in its traps. In this negotiation, Akkaya does not refer what has been said on the issue of family, rather she directly insulted Hüda Kaya's religious political identity. This way of approaching to Muslim women (and to any political group) blocks the possibility of communication. It is necessary to listen to those minor voices, so a conversation can start. As I already referred to Saba Mahmood, this conversation does not limit the possibility of criticism. Listening does not mean that you justify the position that you listened.

At this point, it is crucial to remember Mir-Hosseini's question that she posed on the "double exploitation" of Islamic feminist women in the Muslim world. Taking religious/ Muslim/ Islamic feminist women⁴⁷ into consideration, Mir-Hosseini asserts that no matter their feminist knowledge is fed by European feminism or Persian values, women in Iran are predominantly exposed to incriminatory questionings on the basis of various

⁴⁵ As Jelen Brigitte argues an increasing number of educated veiled women are "choosing to remain single, divorcing, or even adopting children alone, thus significantly challenging traditional gender roles" (2011, p. 308). Brigitte, J. (2011). Educated, independent, and covered: The professional aspirations and experiences of university-educated hijabi in contemporary Turkey. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 34(4), 308-319.

⁴⁶ By the depiction of "Progressivist Kemalist paradigm", I wanted to imply that Kemalist paradigm requires ideological and intellectual premises of Turkish modernity that can be summarized as secularism, republicanism and gender equality Meta narratives. (p.26). See: Göle, N. (1991). *Modern Mahrem: Medeniyet ve Örtünme*. Istanbul: Metis

⁴⁷ There is a debate around the naming of religious feminists. With an underlying theoretical and teleological premises and explanations, while some use Muslim feminism, some prefer to use Islamic feminism by explaining their stance. See: Güç, A. (2008). İslamcı Feminizm: Müslüman Kadınların Birey Olma Çabaları. *Uludağ üniversitesi ilâhiyat fakültesi dergisi*, 17(2), 649-673. And Moghadam, V. (2002). Islamic Feminism and Its Discontents: Toward a Resolution of the Debate. *Signs*, 27(4), 1135-1171.

facets of their identities. Namely, their Muslim identity is often questioned by secular fundamentalism: “their Muslimness is perceived as backward and oppressed, yet authentic and innate; their feminism is perceived as progressive and emancipated, yet corrupt and alien” (Mir-Hosseini, 2000, p. 9). Likewise, Zion-Waldoks (2015) points that: “Since both religious conservatives and secular feminists often treat religious feminists’ stance as oxymoronic and inauthentic, they practice *dual* resistance—towards patriarchal religious norms and (secular) feminism’s othering of religion” (p.76).

Although, Hüda Kaya does not identify herself as feminist (whether Islamic or not), considering her political position that she had taken part in veiling struggle in Turkey and her intervention to the issues related to women, she can be taken as a figure negotiating gender issues. So, Mir-Hosseini’s claim on the “double exploitation” and Zion-Waldoks’s “dual resistance” may be helpful to understand what she faced by the criticism of Gülfer Akkaya since Akkaya’s argument goes in line with what Mir-Hosseini directed attention. Moreover, Akkaya’s arguments are reflecting the essentialist and ahistorical understanding of Islam/religion. What is at stake in the discourse of her criticism towards Hüda Kaya is that Hüda Kaya is not taken as an individual woman but viewed as a representative of women under Islam law, to wit: the discourse against religious women does not aim at a negotiation about women’s political agency *per se*, but professedly demonstrating Islam as misogynist.

Mir-Hosseini states that:

Though adhering to very different positions and scholarly traditions and following very different agendas, all these opponents of the feminist project in Islam share one thing in common: an essentialist and non-historical understanding of Islamic law and gender. They fail to recognize that assumptions and laws about gender in Islam – as in any other religion – are socially constructed, and thus open to negotiation and historical change. (2004, para.8)

The ones who sustain the secular fundamentalism overlook the issue of religion that religion is not enforcedly a chain of dogmatic doctrines that cannot be changed through time. As a matter of fact, religion can be dynamic even in gender issues owing to critical

yet constructive approaches to religious norms. Actually, intellectual religious women's position can serve for such a criticism.

It is argued by Elifhan Köse, in her article *Veil in the Construction of Religious Femininity* that the secular education in the universities was effective for the construction a Muslim agency of religious women which is particular to the middle class. During 1970s and after, religious women who were university graduates involved to Islamic intellectuals by reading European literature and using it effectively in the name of Islamic life style. Since religious women encounter with the secular way of life and secular education as well as continue their faith and knowledge in Islam, their Islamic identity is constructed differently comparing to the ones who are not graduate of university (2011, p.836).

After the 1980s, as distinct from the previous religious woman experiences, we are now talking about a different -“familyless” and “deterritorialized”-woman generation coming from the provinces to metropolitan cities for having a higher education; leaving their families behind both locationally and intellectually and being in a search for a distinctive Islamic identity. (Köse, 2011, p. 836)

Most of the veiled women participating in identity struggle are pointed out to be first women of their families having a higher education (Ilyasoğlu, 1994, p.11). The stories of becoming Muslim subjects of Islamic intellectuals who had a university degree in 1980's were shaped by the identity struggle they had to have to be able to participate in universities wearing a headscarf (Köse, 2011, p. 837).

The 1980s was a significant period for veiled women since they started to be active in politics, in election campaigns for Islamic parties (for example the Welfare Party) for local and popular elections. Their participation in political life has challenged the perception of 'passive' Muslim women in Turkey. The Islamist women challenged the widespread notions of secularism, democracy and national identity in Turkey. According to Saktanber (2006), their discourse went through a transformation in time that the demand for right to veil was appeared to be a demand within a discourse of human rights and freedom of religion. Saktanber argued that: “their demands for an egalitarian and

just society are no longer grounded in Islam and Islamic values. They have begun to embrace the Universalist values of modernity regarding human rights, democracy, and the rule of law” (2006, p. 27). Islamist women’s appeal to human rights, democracy and the law was crucial that Yeşim Arat (1998) argued that “the appeal to secular universal human rights and equality can be important means to fight patriarchal subordination because it does not lend itself to manipulation in the name of divine rule and faith” (p.127-128).

In the early 1990s, Islamic women’s situation was important since the university students were demanding for their rights to veil; namely, veiled women were acting against the ban on the veil through demonstrations and hunger strikes around universities. Consequently, they became ‘visible’ in public sphere (Ilyasoğlu, 1994, p. 16). According to Nilüfer Göle (1991), Islamist women were articulated to public sphere, which in turn caused a ‘violation’ of the gender relations in the private sphere. She argued that Islamist women use the public space as an opportunity that previously “was constructed for Kemalist women in the Turkish Republic.” However, with a difference from Kemalist women, religious women had to transform the private sphere in terms of gender relations; so that they would be able to make a change in the public sphere. Göle indicated that this transformation in the private sphere was not due to the Islamic framework. Islamist women’s identity made possible to be visible in the public along with some restrictions within ideological and religious boundaries (p.182).

Nilüfer Göle’s (1991) study of young Islamist women in Turkey has been viewed as one of the leading works that is on gender and Islam. According to Avishai, Jafar, and Rinaldo (2015), Nilüfer Göle was influential by her study in which she argued that religious women practice agency “in their choice to veil and submit to Islamic discipline” (p.9).

In recent years, scholars have focused on religious movements and women’s movements as they have emerged as political actors in public sphere around the world. However, Avishai, Jafar and Rinaldo (2015) argue that although these movements have been in the

focus of scholars' researches, only a few sociologists⁴⁸ have turned their attention to subjects such as gender in religious social movements or religious nationalisms and gender (2015, p.9). By referring to the works of Jeffery Basu (1998) and Mahmood (2005), the authors denote that:

These studies are notable for their interdisciplinary nature, examining the intersections of religious movements, feminist discourses, and globalization. Importantly, they show how women in politicized religious movements express agency in unexpected or controversial ways; here, too, interdisciplinary work has been key. (Avishai, Jafar, & Rinaldo, 2015, p.9)

Therefore, the 1990s constitute a new period in the feminist history of Turkey. Whilst in 1990s feminist movement of Turkey transformed into the institutionalization process, various women's groups emerged to defend their identity through religion and ethnicity besides womanhood. For instance, Kurdish women are one of these woman's groups that emerged in the 1990s and challenged the mainstream feminist movement in Turkey (Özcan, 2011, p. 43).

In Turkey since 2002, in the organization of AKP, which is in force departing from a traditional Islamic "national vision" action and constituting a "conservative democrat" identity, "professionalism" discourse politically incorporating the more educated middle class has been established and it is more efficient than Refahyol (Tuğal, 2010). That tendency for professionalization is also valid for "new Muslim womanhood".

According to Göle:

Up-to-dating dynamics drew a new type of Islamic intellectual profile. Islamic intellectuals most of whom having a secular and modern university education background created a legitimacy for themselves by furnishing themselves not only with Islam but also western world and its thinkers. Interpretation of Islam is especially varies in Turkey where there is no ulema in power. Women are especially important among this group of young Islamic intellectuals who identify themselves by referring both to divine and scientific knowledge. (Göle, 2008, p.12)

⁴⁸ Such as Charrad (2001), Moghadam (2003); Rinaldo (2008); and Salime (2011) can be named among these scholars.

Intellectual women's importance among those young intellectuals is due to women's contribution to the interpretation of Islam. As women participate in the interpretation of religion, they "challenge the limits of legitimate knowledge and rupture the monopoly of information which belongs to the clergy and men" (p.13). Göle's assertion may seem too disputed today since she made her claim before 2000, viz., before the power of AKP government. Now, considering 12 years of AKP rule, is this assertion is still valid for religious women? Intellectual religious women's efforts to the reconstruction of religion in Turkey cannot be undermined; their interpretations from a women's perspective is challenging for Muslim men and clergy. However, is intellectual religious women's influence really a "rupture" for clergy and for Muslim men as Göle claimed? I will discuss this point in this study, for now Göle's claim is helpful to understand the new profile of Islamic intellectuals. From a similar place, Elifhan Köse, in her book *Telling the Silence* signifies that "it is possible to interpret the changes occurring in the discourse of women within Islamism after the 1990 as a change in fault line that is occurring in the patriarchal discourse, rather than a rupture" (2014, p. 9). Both views argue that the change in the discourse of religious women cannot be named as a rupture from the previous patriarchal discourse. Instead, they interpret the transformation in the language of women as a new path within patriarchal discourse.

Moreover; Didem Ünal, in her paper that is presented at the Global South Workshop, Mexico City, *Belonging in 2000's Turkey: Religion and Gender Equality in Islamist Women Intellectuals' Discourses*, argues that "the thought of Islamist women intellectuals in Turkey remains as a subject that has not been carefully studied so far and waits to be thoroughly investigated" (2013, p.2).

Cihan Aktaş, being one of the major figures in terms of intellectual and theoretical background among intellectual religious women, also uses 'intellectual Muslim woman' image in her writings. Aktaş indicates that the expression 'traditional' has ever been used in Islamic discourse because of the fact that there is an ambiguous boundary between cultural/traditional and religious/Islamic (1992). In this respect, she argues that if one wants to theorize the Islamic woman's image, it should start from the disavowal of the

image of the ‘traditional woman.’ Her opinion stems against the implication that Islam is the same with what is traditional and oppressive for women. However, for her, Islam is not necessarily traditional.⁴⁹

Scholars who have researched about Muslim women in Turkey used ‘Intellectual Muslim women’ image. For example, according to Ayşe Güç, “towards the end of the 20th century, intellectual Muslim women has started to discuss the women problem in the Muslim world by taking into account the Western feminist discourse” (2008, p.649). Moreover, it is worth noting that during the writing process of this thesis, I came across with a web site of religious women titled as *Intellectual Women’s Movement of Turkey*⁵⁰. This movement consists of religious and veiled young women whose aim is to provide intellectual accumulation in the academic studies with the pioneering of the faith values. They indicate that TEKH is a project counselled by Dr. Gülsen Ataseven and under the supervision of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who is the prime minister of Turkey at that time. The information about TEKH on their web page gives information about how they act and where; according to their information text, they will act by separate commissions’ as Law and Justice, Women and Family Commission, External Affairs Commission, and Commission of Culture, Literature and Art. This movement can be seen as an initiative to prevail the targets of the government for women. The use of “intellectual” within the movement’s name is not a coincidence. It appears to go in harmony with the government’s aim to create a new image of intellectual Muslim women who are designated as the modern “girls” of the conservative Islamic government. Therefore, this movement and its members differ from individual

⁴⁹ Aktaş indicates that Islam is not necessarily traditional. She defends her argument by the picturing the ways in which the construction of the intellectual Muslim women occur such as being in the public domain and involving in the social, intellectual and academic spheres and joining political activities. Thus, she aims to complicate the notions attributed to modernity and traditional. See: Aktaş, C. (1992). *Tesettür ve toplum: Basörtülü öğrencilerin toplumsal kökeni üzerine bir inceleme*. İstanbul: Nehir Yayınları.

⁵⁰ “Türkiye Entelektüel Kadın Hareketi” (TEKH). For details see the web page of TEKH: <http://www.tekhareketi.com/yonetim-birimlerimiz>

intellectual faces that I analyzed in this thesis with regards their political position as a group.

It is important to signify that religious women in Turkey do not prefer to use Islamist to define themselves. Hilal Kaplan who is a journalist in *Yeni Şafak* Newspaper explains her position in this regard, as such:

Performing all the social-political deeds inspired by Islam is already an obligatory religious duty for Muslims. To name it as “Islamist” implies that this understanding of duties can be taken in parenthesis. This does not only awaken such an implication, but also leads to a number of consequences like every discursive formation. The most important result is that it marginalizes the efforts to dominate Islam’s mottos in the social- political fields.⁵¹ (2012, August 14)

Correspondingly, Feyza Akınerdem who is a sociologist, veiled, religious woman indicates that “religious” is a newer emphasis on her behalf since she finds the emphasis of the term religious much neutral. She says, “It was an attribute that I used in the meaning of people who have religious practices, are close to religion, and try to live the religion, but in the recent period this also happened to be a politicized word. At the present time I feel like that Tayyip Erdoğan disfranchise this naming from our hands; transformed religiousness into a political symbol and in the moment when a concept gains a symbolic value, I start to hesitate while talking via that concept” (Akınerdem, 2012, p. 87).

I will not use “Islamist” to refer religious women in this thesis for two reasons. Firstly, this naming has negative connotations in the history of Turkey; that is to say, it is used to label women as the tools of Islamic men or as the victims of backward tradition. Secondly, the intellectual religious women do not accept and use this name to refer

⁵¹ The original version of the quote in Turkish is: “Toplumsal-siyasal tüm amellerini İslâm'dan ilham alarak gerçekleştirmek zaten Müslümanların üzerine farzdır. Ancak bu farızayı 'İslâmcı' sıfatıyla tanımlamak, aslında bu amel anlayışının paranteze alınabilir bir yükümlülük olduğu intibamı uyandırır. Uyandırmakla da kalmaz, her söylemsel oluşum gibi birtakım sonuçlara da yol açar. Bu sonuçlardan en önemlisiyse İslâm'ın düsturlarının toplumsal-siyasal alana hâkim kılınması gayretini marjinalleştirmesidir.”

themselves. Moreover, overdominantly Muslim pious women's political activity is considered within the debates dominated by religious views such as veiling, the right to be elected,⁵² employment in the public sphere, etc. However, I would like to see how religious women would perceive and approach to a topic that is not only related to religion.

Therefore, the reason why I have analyzed the public debate on abortion is to consider how religious women intervene into a public debate that is not solely related to religious faith such as abortion. Who will contribute to such a topic that is not directly related to the Muslim pious women? How will religious women intervene in the public debate? How will they produce their discourses on an issue that intersects all women, not only Muslim women? Starting from these questions, my focus was not on the women within Islamist or Islamic movements. I did not analyze the Islamist movements, communities in spite of the fact that pious women's arguments may have close links to them.

Moreover, religious women do not identify themselves as Islamist feminist. Although some of the intellectual religious women are closely interested in women's issues, they do not adopt a Islamist feminist agenda.

According to Elifhan Köse's analysis of the religious women writer's literary works, religious women writers claim that they are not Islamist feminists; rather they claim to be consistent in anti feminism (p.10). For all that, according to Köse when religious women have to refer to their choice between different waves of feminism, it is seen that they are especially close to the First Wave and post-feminism literature (p.10).

⁵² The case of Merve Kavakçı is a representative of the right to be elected. Merve Kavakçı who was elected as an MP from Virtue Part (Fazilet Partisi) for the Parliament in the 1999 elections. Necmettin Erbakan who was a radical Islamist politician (of the former Welfare Party) has promoted her. Merve Kavakçı was the first women who entered in the Parliament with her veil. During the swearing ceremony in the parliament on May 3 1999, Kavakçı's entrance was perceived as a protest against the state and greeted with counter-protest by the member of the parliaments of DSP and MHP (both parties are right-wing). The prime minister from DSP, Bülent Ecevit made a critical talk that made Kavakçı had to leave the parliament. For detailed discussion of the Merve Kavakçı affair see: Shively, K. (2005). Religious Bodies and Secular State: Merve Kavakçı Affair. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 1(3), 46-72.

For instance, Feyza Akınerdem in a talk of feminist organization clarifies this point. The feminist group of İstanbul Amargi had organized feminist discussions on several topics in 2012 and they released two volumes based on these discussion and presentations. Feyza Akınerdem made a presentation on “Religious women and Feminism”, according to her:

And in Turkey the arena of Sunni religious women, even though not referred to like this, I think, corresponds both to areas of Islamic Feminism and Postcolonial Feminism. Because religious feminists in Turkey struggles with Kemalism, which says religion oppresses women in absolute terms and women can liberalize only by getting modernized, in one hand and may be struggling with Kemalist feminism on the other hand. On the other side, both women are trying hard to study, work, and get out of home and struggles with a normative area where Islam and tradition come side by side like questioning the duties for husband at home. Accordingly, arena of religious and feminist women in Turkey is not like in countries where Sharia provisions are applied and struggle is against ulama and state’s applications about Islam; a more different, more varied area. For example heritage and divorce rights are arenas for feminists against modern state and law, not of Muslim feminists in Turkey. The reason for this is that Turkey is not a state that is based on provisions of Islam. (Akınerdem, 2012, p. 86)

Aynur İlyasoğlu in her book *Disguised Identity*, argues that on the ground that women’s issues are negotiated in the public space, Islamic women tend to open space for themselves to voice their arguments (1994, p. 54). Moreover, Didem Ünal in her presentation paper, *Belonging in 2000’s Turkey: Religion and Gender Equality in Islamist Women Intellectuals’ Discourses* indicates that “the 1990s and especially the 2000s have witnessed the emergence of the veiled women writers as influential public figures in different realms such as literature, journalism, politics and activism” (2013, p.3). Hence, I argue that newspaper articles that were written by Islamic women have become important means to express their opinions; in other words, they utilize their arguments on a variety of issues such as women’s status, feminism, human rights, and Islamic community.

The abortion debate in 2012 is crucial to the project in which realm intellectual religious women deal with the abortion issue and to the negotiations that frame their perspectives. The structural factors that shape these frames will offer an insight into the analysis of

religious women's statements. Here, it is insightful to refer to what Feldman mentions on the conditions that shape subjectivities:

Posing the question of what we can know requires thinking carefully and broadly about rule making and religious and other expectations regarding social behavior, including the forging of compliance sanctions and rights. Thus, to understand the conditions shaping identities and subjectivities, we need to appreciate, as a complement to evidentiary materials available directly from women [who act in particular ways], the normative assessments and regulatory practices that historicize and contextualize their everyday lives. (p.306)

Feldman's point shows that the materials that are accessible directly from women who act in particular ways are crucial "to understand the conditions shaping identities and subjectivities". By relying on Feldman's opinion, newspaper articles and declarations of intellectual religious women will be assessed for the study.

Along with the diversity in religious interpretations, Aynur Ilyasoğlu (1994), in her book, *Disguised Identity*, stated that:

In the mental world of the today's Islamists, it is more salient to have a political ground that is shared by other political discourses in place of the idealization of the Islamic Golden Age⁵³. Today, for an Islamist, the Golden Age loses its intellectual utopic power and becomes important in the individual faith. Yet, the daily and 'worldly' perspectives are composed based on the issues discussed in public. (p.90)

Following Ilyasoğlu's account and considering the abortion debate in 2012 as a hot topic discussed publicly, the approaches of the intellectual religious women are significant and meaningful to disclose their political agency. Thereupon, I will analyse their intervention

⁵³ The Islamic Golden Age, *Asr-i Saadet*, refers to the period during "the history of Islam when the Muslim world was politically united under caliphates, experiencing a scientific and cultural flourishing". See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_Golden_Age. The Golden Age is like a kind of utopia of Islamism. According to Göle (1996), the utopia of Golden Age is different from the typical understanding of utopia; for instance, while the Marxist utopia signifies a classless 'future', the Golden Age refers to the past. Islamists consider it as a lost period which can be called back again. At this point, the utopia of the Golden Age is an ideological dynamic search for the past to be called back. See: Göle N.(1996). *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

through the perceptions on female body, autonomy, evaluations of Muslim pious men, the power, government representatives, and the counter arguments of feminists in terms of the negotiations around the abortion issue.

CHAPTER 3

COMPLIANT AGENCY

In search of investigating the ambivalent political agency of intellectual religious women, in this chapter, I will engage with how religious women's agency can be compliant with religion concerning their intervention to the abortion debate. Since this thesis project argues that pious agency should not be taken within the dichotomization of resistance and submission, this part of the thesis will engage with a case that is an example to subvert this dichotomization. "Agency is typically defined through intention and autonomy and those are characteristics not typically used to describe religious women" (Burke, 2012, p.122). Avishai subverts this account of agency, since she examines agency as religious conduct. Compliant agency, against the common understanding of agency through autonomy and intention, formulates compliance as agency through paying "attention to the cultural and institutional contexts that shape compliance" (2008, p.409). So, Avishai proposes "a conceptual shift from the paradox frame that assumes, a priori, that agency and religious adherence are incongruent to the 'doing religion' frame that builds on interactionist, performative, and postcolonial theories of agency" (2008, p. 410). Hence, she locates agency in observance in the sense that pious women's experiences with conservative religions may "exhibit agency that is grounded in observance" (ibid).

The intellectual religious women's statements on the Islamic perception of use of contraceptives and their approach to the "my body is mine" slogan comprise an example to their compliant agency. Since this thesis aims to show that the pious women's agency cannot be understood within liberal notions, this chapter will try to examine how intellectual religious women's statements can be understood by Avishai's conceptualization of agency as "doing religion" and Burke's concept of compliant

agency. For this end, in the first section I analyze the statements on the Islamic perception of use of contraception as unconditional observance. In the second section of this chapter, I examine religious women's understanding of body based on Islamic approach through the feminist slogan "my body is mine". I argue that their statements are examples for the compliant agency approach.

Pious women's agency has been an important issue within social sciences as discussed and reviewed by for example Orit Avishai (2008), Kelsy C. Burke (2008), and Sirma Bilge (2010). The focus of recent researches had started to be dealt with women as actors rather than taking them as passive conveyers of male-dominated social institutions. As summarized by Burke (2008), the approaches to the agency of women in gender-traditional religions (among them we can simply count Islam, Christianity, Judaism) can be framed under four subheadings. Those are resistance agency, empowerment agency, instrumental agency, and compliant agency. It is suggested that it is not always relevant to understand religious women's agency through the first three approaches concerning the conditions in which pious women comprehend and actualize their religious beliefs. Burke elaborates why these three approaches to agency were met with dissatisfaction and why they pursue "compliant agency" in turn:

Scholars of compliant agency show how many women practice their faith without challenging religious institutions, striving for empowerment, or seeking non-religious advantages (Avishai 2008). This approach to agency draws from postcolonial and post structural theories to challenge that agency mustn't be equated with the classic liberal perception of man's freedom (see Bhabha 1994; Foucault 1990). Defining agency through autonomy, these scholars argue, makes invisible workings of power that make autonomy impossible to achieve. It is inappropriate to require autonomy in order to recognize agency, especially for persons living outside a western context. (Burke, 2012, p.128)

At the outset, as discussed in the introduction of this thesis, Saba Mahmood (2005) criticizes resistance agency because of its exclusion of compliant women from being actors and for encompassing, to favor "a classical liberal notion of freedom" that is politically and theoretically problematic for Mahmood. For Mahmood, this freedom notion "does not apply to women living outside of a Western context". Moreover, in the

words of Tanya Zion-Waldoks: “The scholarly focus on resistance agency has been criticized for conflating the terms, and rejected for its underlying submission/ resistance dichotomy” (2015, p. 76).

In light of these criticisms, scholars tend to focus on the pious women’s performance in gender-traditional religious norms with a perception of viewing these performances as a form of agency (Mahmood, 2005). On a similar basis with Mahmood’s comprehension, Orit Avishai (2008) ponders women’s experiences with conservative religions paying attention on women’s agency “as religious conduct and religiosity as a constructed status” (p.409). Her effort aims to transform the question from “why women comply” into how women “observe, negotiate, and make sense of regulations” of religious norms through paying “attention to the cultural and institutional contexts that shape ‘compliance’” (ibid).

Avishai gives an account of dominant sociological frames to emphasize her point:

Dominant sociological frames do not ground agency in the lived experiences of *believers* (see Smith 2007 for a similar critique that leads to a phenomenological explanation of religiosity). Based on my respondents’ narratives, I suggest a theory of agency that is grounded in observance. However, my data suggest that agency is more complex than merely ‘being’ religious: Religiosity entails a project of ‘becoming’ through practice against the image of a secular Other. (2008, p. 423)

Avishai proposes the concept of “doing religion” for the understanding of pious women’s agency (2008).

Her approach to agency underlies subjectivities as a form of agency, proclaiming that “doing religion” approach is more consistent with religious subjects’ experience of complying for religious ends (Zion-Waldoks, 2015, p.76). In that vein, Kelsy C. Burke (2012) draws from Orit Avishai’s conceptualization and extends her quarrel with “resistance, empowerment, and instrumental agency,” and places Avishai’s concept “doing religion approach under a broader category of compliant agency”(Burke, p.123).

According to Kelsy C. Burke,

One lesson learned from the compliant agency approach is that one woman who liberally interprets sacred texts about women's proper role within her religion does not exhibit more agency than another woman who interprets those same texts in a way that uphold gender-traditionalism. Rather, both women draw from their experiences and everyday life in order to exhibit agency through the practice of interpreting. (2008, p. 128)

Herein, Burke suggests that there is no hierarchical relation between the liberal and religious interpretations of sacred texts in terms of exhibiting agency. In other words, she opposes assigning agency only to the liberal interpretation of sacred texts. Instead, comprehension and translation of religious texts by religious women upholds agency since "women draw from their experiences and everyday life". As Avishai says "the doing religion frame is indebted to Mahmood's claim" that docility can be a way of expressing agency, Saba Mahmood's concern was on "the docile conduct as self-authoring project" (Avishai, 2008, p.413). However, Avishai approaches to this idea by mainly focusing on the construction of religiosity.

By giving reference to Orit Avishai Burke says that women display agency "when they 'do religion,'" no matter their motivation is to exhibit agency or not. Her study deals with Orthodox Jewish women living in Israel to show how they "create palatable narratives of assent that allow them to conform to *niddah*, instructions for sexual purity," and they do not feel oppressed (p.419). Avishai's account proposes to the researchers that instead of searching for "non-religious advantages that motivate pious women," it is necessary to consider that "their religious practices are ends in themselves" (p.413). Avishai clarifies her position as such:

Drawing on the idea that subjects operate, perform, and become within power relations and normative expectations, I use the term 'doing religion' to make two arguments. First, I argue that doing religion is a mode of conduct and being, a performance of identity - not only a purposeful or strategic action. I further suggest that even when viewed as a strategic undertaking, religion may be done in the pursuit of religious goals- in this case, the goal of becoming an authentic religious subject against an image of a secular Other. (2008, p.413)

It is crucial to note the difference between the “doing religion” / compliant approach to agency and the other aforementioned approaches. The most prominent commonality of the “resistance, empowerment, and instrumental approaches to agency” is that they bound up with a concept of autonomy; expressly, such approaches to agency claim that a persons “act for themselves” (Burke, 2012, p.128). On the other hand, the perception of agency as autonomy is not sufficient “when faithful individuals do not strive to be completely autonomous – they strive to act not for themselves, but for a divine God” (ibid).

In this chapter, the statements of intellectual religious women on abortion with a link to contraceptives and on “my body my decision” slogan are examined to explain how their statements can be framed as compliant agency. For an analysis of these statements, both conceptualizations of agency, viz. “doing religion” and “compliant agency” is functional. Therefore, I will use both concepts interchangeably.

Yet, there are criticisms to compliant agency approach in the sense that this attitude widens the description of agency so that the diversified manners of religious conduct may be called as agency. Namely, this critique reminds us the risk of evaluating all actions taken by pious women as agency, which may cause to blur the definition of agency or render it as useless (Burke, p.128). Just like Asef Bayat’s call for attention to the risks of overemphasis on resistance while dealing with the actions of non-western societies (2013, p.55), the overemphasis on seeing every act as agency needs to be considered while studying pious women. Burke reminds us Bronwyn Winter’s warning to the scholars that “scholars must be wary of inadvertently legitimizing religions that limit the range of possible actions taken by women by only focusing on what those women can do (their agency) instead of what they can’t” (ibid). Accordingly, it is necessary to put that compliant agency has a weakness in the sense that “it does not recognize when actions are not agentic” (ibid).

At this point, considering the compliance of women to gender-traditional religions, especially within the context of Islam, the debates on Islamism and political Islam need

to be pointed out. It should be noted that in this thesis, my focus is not on the Islamic movements⁵⁴ although in today's Turkey, Muslim pious women's political identity and agency cannot be considered independent from the transformation of the Islamic movement. The effect of Islamic movement in the construction of Muslim women's political identity cannot be undermined; since I approach to Islamism as having always been in contact with the power and have been formed by political powers as a historical source (Asad, 1986). In other words, I am not dealing with Islam and Islamism as ahistorical, and a body of doctrines⁵⁵ with an Orientalist reflex. However, by virtue of the argument that "religious women may be agents rather than simply acted upon by religious institutions and doctrines" (Rinaldo, p. 827), this study is meaningful to consider the public effect of women to the debate.

As argued by Zehra Yılmaz in her article, *New Forms of Representation of Women in the Global Islamic Movement: The case of Turkey*, Islamic women's movement has not thrived outside political Islam. At the same time, it has been interacted with Islamic organizations, parties, and communities; over and above the Islamist movement has been developed/constructed by the religious women who involved in these communities and structures (Yılmaz, n.d., 794). Yılmaz argues that Muslim women's identity is intertwined with the hegemonic discourse of the Islamist movement. In this sense, Muslim women are a part of the mechanism of the Islamist discourse which is effective

⁵⁴ The term Islamic movements refer to the contemporary collective action whose ideology was shaped during the late 1970s "by Iranian Revolution and by the Islamist thinkers around the Muslim world such as Abu-I Maudoodi in India, Sayyid Qutb in Egypt, Ali Shariati in Iran and Ali Bulaç in Turkey" (Göle, 1991,p.141).

⁵⁵ According to Asad Islam is not a fixed social system, but rather, from an anthropological viewpoint, a relationship with certain foundational texts and a particular historical narrative of their origins. See: Asad, T. (1986). *The idea of anthropology of Islam*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University.

Moreover, as Samira Haj indicates in an article, tradition "is not -as Orientalist scholarship would have it- a set of unchanging doctrinal or cultural givens" (Haj, 2002, p.335). See: Haj, S. (2002). *Reordering Islamic Orthodoxy: Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Wahhiib*. The Muslim World, 92(3-4), 333-370. Retrieved September 1, 2014.

in constructing hegemony since Muslim women's representation in politics have occurred within the development of Islamist movement in Turkey (ibid).

However, this does not mean that Muslim women's political agency is constructed just by the Islamist movements. Indeed, there are "interstitials"/cracks (Bhabha, 1994) that Muslim women are differentiated from the discourse of the hegemonic patriarchal Islamist movement.

To that end, it cannot be argued that Islamist movements are the primary factors for the political identity constitution of religious women. At the same time, it should also not be overlooked that they are constructed with relation to another. Inasmuch as, Zehra Yılmaz indicates that when the gender perspective is set apart from the Islamist movement, there remains very little left to distinguish Islamist movement from other power struggles (2013, p.8). Herein, the emphasis is on the different subjectivities in postcolonial theory that provides a useful reference to understand Muslim women's agency. Considering the case of intellectual religious women in Turkey, on the one hand they are acting on their own in a variety of newspapers, organized in women associations and journal circles, putting forward their demands for instance, "If there is no veiled candidate, then there is no vote"⁵⁶. On the other hand, Muslim women are directly or indirectly have links to the political Islam, for example having roots related to Welfare Party to which women had been actively worked for the election campaign in 1988 having outcomes for women's politicization. For example, Zehra Yılmaz in her unpublished PhD thesis, *Globalized Islam and Islamist Women in Turkey* argues that Islamist movements and Islamist women also tend to construct their cultural construction in the Third Space that Bhabha

⁵⁶ For the elections in 12 June 2011, "Women Meetings Group", which was consisted of Muslim women, organized a campaign titled "if there is no candidates wearing headscarves, there is no vote in". See: <https://basortuluadayyoksaoydayok.wordpress.com/> The target of this campaign was to enable a veiled women candidate to become a possible MP. Moreover, KA-DER had started a campaign to increase the number of women in the parliamentary at that year and Muslim women supported that campaign too. However, AKP offered 472 male candidates and only 78 women candidates among whom only a woman candidate was veiled. However, the critic point was that the veiled candidate's ranking and offered city were almost impossible for her to be selected.

has proposed (Yılmaz, 2013, p.81). Yılmaz's thesis focuses on how Islamist women's movement articulates to the power and in which terms it is excluded from the power, in this respect, Yılmaz argues that "postcolonialism will be a source to explain the Islamist women's possibilities of 'empowerment / liberation' in between the resistance and integration to the male power" (p.39).

Besides, some religious women have political commons and relations with the government party AKP. Howbeit, I would like to stress that not all pious women share the same ideological stance with the Islamic movement. Indeed, some of them clearly separate themselves from the government (i.e. Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal) and from Islamist communities (i.e. Esra Elönü) concerning the Islamist movements transformation after 1990s in Turkey and in the world.

Therefore, intellectual religious women and Islamist movement are in interaction in terms of political activities. While analyzing how religious women exhibit agency, the transformation of Islamist movement provides an understanding. Nevertheless, in this thesis, I do not consider the transformation of the Islamist movement as an analysis category. To that end, this study does not deal with the religious women who are acting in the Islamist movements by means of political parties, *Cemaat* (Islamic communities) or associations and journals. That is I studied the debate on abortion in 2012 by holding out how religious women exhibit agency. My focus is on how the intellectual pious women exhibit agency in a specific public debate.

This chapter will discuss the pious women's agency which can be 'complicit in' or 'subversive against' the patriarchal gender system. Remembering that Moghadam stands up for an analysis to direct attention to women's active role as shapers and doers of social change in order to avoid structuralist rigidity, (2003, p.27). She argues against the recurrent inclination to attribute the low status of women in the Middle East to religion, viz., Islam. She presents why the deference to the commands of Islam cannot be the fundamental reason of the subordination of women in the region (2003, p. xi-xii).

Informed by these discussions, in this chapter, pious women's agency will be discussed. Some of the statements of intellectual religious women can be framed as examples of compliant agency. In the following sections in this chapter, I will try to explain some statements of women that create instances for the compliant agency of religious women.

3.1. Compliant Agency: Unconditional Observance through the Perception of Use of Contraception

According to Elifhan Köse, in her book *Sessizliği Söylemek: Dindar Kadın Edebiyatı (Telling the Silence: The Literature of Religious Women)* religious women authors⁵⁷, basing their arguments on the discourse of “creation,”⁵⁸ oppose to the modern feminism's political struggle on abortion which supports the “my body is mine” slogan (Köse, 2014, p.89). For Köse, religious women “are aloof for not only abortion but also birth control techniques which break connection between sexuality and reproduction” (ibid). Köse supports her argument by a reference to the book⁵⁹ written by a religious woman Nazife Şişman.⁶⁰ Şişman stated “because in modern pregnancy, with the help of birth control techniques the connection between sexuality and reproduction, that is, continuity of generation is broken and ‘plastic sexuality’ as Giddens expressed is created” (Şişman, 2006, p107, as cited in Köse, p.89). Drawing from Şişman's assertion, Köse makes an inference that religious women do not support using birth control by women.

⁵⁷ Köse analysed the literature works of Cihan Aktaş, Fatma Karabıyık Barbarosoğlu, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Sibel Eraslan, whose newspaper essays are analysed for this study. Apart from these names, Köse included two authors as Nazife Şişman and Sevim Asımgil to her research.

⁵⁸ Here, creation means *fitrat* in Turkish.

⁵⁹ Şişman, Nazife (2006). *Emanetten Mülke: Kadın, Beden, Siyaset*. İz: Istanbul

⁶⁰ However, during the abortion debate in 2012, Şişman did not declare any public statement on the issue.

However, according to my findings from the religious women's contributions to the abortion debate in 2012, contraceptives are glorified as a solution to unwanted pregnancies with a reference to the Quranic verses and Hadits⁶¹. Moreover, the laying the burden of contraception on women's shoulders is questioned, and men's irresponsibility in contraceptives is interrogated, which is discussed in Chapter 4 in this thesis.

First, it is important to put that religious women are commenting publicly on the abortion issue during the debate. The public intervention of pious women is crucial since it is assumed that religious women do not draw close to speak about the so-called private topics in the public (Köse 2014, p. 1, İlyasoğlu 1994).

Theologian Prof. Dr. Beyza Bilgin has commented on abortion issue when asked her views on attitudes about abortion and the statements of the Prime Minister for *Bianet* Newspaper⁶². Beyza Bilgin expresses her confusion with the statements of Prime Minister and continues her declaration by bringing out the topic of the ways to prevent abortion:

I did not get anything from them (refers to the statements of the former PM). However, I can tell you what Islam says about abortion. The following is Prophet Mohammed's advice: (for birth control) planning and prevention. The period which is called pre-Islamic period of ignorance, men were doing it themselves. The Prophet did not advise them not to do it. On the contrary, there is a verse that Prophet recommends it in this regard.⁶³

⁶¹ Hadith means the verbal expressions of the utterances or the actions of the Islamic Prophet Mohammed. In other words, it refers to the corpus of the reports of the teachings, deeds and sayings of the Prophet.

⁶² Theologian Prof. Dr. Beyza Bilgin has commented on abortion issue in *Bianet* Independent Communications Network. The journalist Çiçek Tahaoğlu has asked to several Muslim opinion leaders that what their views on attitudes on abortion and what they think on the Prime Minister's remarks. See: "Müslüman kadınlar kürtaj hakkında ne düşünüyor?" Retrieved from: <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/138699-musluman-kadinlar-kurtaj-hakkinda-ne-dusunuyor>. 30.05.2012

⁶³ The Turkish version of the quote is: "Ben bunlardan bir şey çıkaramadım. Ama İslam'da kürtajla ilgili neler var, size onu söyleyebilirim. İslama göre, çocuğun istenmediği durumda ne yapılır? Hz. Peygamberin tavsiyesi şudur: planlama yapmak ve korunmak. Cahiliye denen İslam öncesi dönemde bunu

Ulama have fatwas on abortion. Just as the church decides [on behalf of people] in Christianity, Ulama does this task in Islam. Ulama draw upon the ninth verse of Surat As-Sajdah, which tells about how Allah creates humans.⁶⁴

Planning is allowed anyway as Allah creates whatever He likes. But if an unwanted child is fertilized, that is, if it is fertilized despite protection and the family is not ready, then Ulama says ‘Allah has stages of creation.’ The formation of a child has stages in the mother’s womb until the spirit is blown [to life].⁶⁵

Beyza Bilgin’s account serves us that in Islam if the family would not want a new child, the caution should be taken beforehand, means contraception is advised. While the main question by the journalist to Bilgin was concerning whether in her opinion abortion is permissible or illicit, she chooses to direct the issue to the contraceptives in the pursuit of religious goals.

Herein, it is necessary to put that the debate over abortion has always been controversial among Muslim scholars and authorities regarding ethical dilemmas surrounding abortion as jurisprudential topics such as family planning and birth control (Aramesh, 2007, p. 30). Ruth Miller in her study in which she analyze the Ottoman and Turkish reproduction, sexuality, and citizenship, indicates that unlike classical Catholic practice which rarely tolerates abortion or contraception, “classical Islamic law for the most part allows both” (2007, p. 366).

erkekler yapıyordu. Peygamber de onlara bunu yapmamalarını söylemiyor. Tam aksine bu konuda bir ayet var.”

⁶⁴ In Turkish: “Kürtajla ilgili olarak ise Ulema’nın fetvaları var. Hristiyanlıkta nasıl kilise karar veriyorsa, İslam’da da bu işi Ulema yapıyor. Ulema, Secde Suresi’nin 9. Ayet’inden yararlanmış. Burada Allah’ın insanı nasıl yarattığını anlatıyor.”

⁶⁵ In Turkish: “Planlamaya zaten izin veriliyor, çünkü nasıl olsa Allah istediğini yaratır. Ama istenmemiş bir çocuk olursa, yani korunmaya rağmen olmuşsa ve aile buna hazır değilse, Ulema demiş ki, ‘Allah’ın yaratış safhaları vardır. Ruh üfleninceye kadar çocuğun teşekkül etmesinin anne karnında safhaları var.”

At the same time, in Islamic thought, there are different approaches to the timing of ensoulment of the fetus, as Hessini informs most religious scholars were on the wavelength that:

Abortions were allowed if pregnancies ended before ensoulment of the fetus, described as occurring between 40, 90 or 120 days after conception, depending on the school of thought. Usually, a justifiable reason is needed for terminating a pregnancy, e.g. to protect a breastfeeding child, socio-economic concerns or health reasons... Early Muslim theologians supported contraception as long as both partners consented. (Hessini, 2007, p.76)

From Hessini's quote, we can comprehend that the use of contraception is supported by early Muslim theologians. What theologians said on the issue of contraception is important in the sense that during the abortion debate much emphasis put on the importance of contraceptive methods to prevent accidental pregnancy with a link to what Islamic thought suggests on this issue. In other words, apart from the issue that whether abortion would be prohibited or not, the debate in 2012 also enclosed the possible precautions to prevent accidental and unwanted pregnancy, viz. to prevent abortion. Endeavouring to prevent the incidence of unintended pregnancy is an important part of the strategy to reduce the abortion rates (Dabash & Roudi-Fahimi, 2008, p.3).

In light of this information, which shows us there is no monolithic approach to issues of abortion and contraceptives, considering the statement of Beyza Bilgin, it is seen that she draws her conclusions from the Islamic doctrines to express her opinion on the abortion issue. She attributes her opinion directly to the sayings of Prophet and Quranic verse to convey what is appropriate for birth control and abortion. Her statement is an example to show that religious women approach to the abortion issue with a religious observance. Avishai suggests the term "unconditional observance" (2008, p. 416) to explain such narratives of religious women. Unconditional observance is one of the categories that she posits to explain how women "do religion" concerning the "regulation of sexuality through laws and customs surrounding menstruation (niddah)" (p.410). When pious women adopt a religion and conduct their behaviors accordingly, if

they exhibit little conflict about the laws and customs of that religion, Avishai delineates it as unconditional observance among “doing religion” approach.

One expression of unconditional observance reflected in the statement of Kadriye Avcı Erdemli⁶⁶, who is the Deputy Mufti of Istanbul Province. She reflects that:

According to Islam, once pregnancy starts, the embryo is a different person than its mother. Therefore, it has the right to live independently of its mother’s or someone else’s will... For this reason, unless there is a need that is legitimate according to religion, violation of the embryo’s life, that is, aborting or miscarrying it is considered murder regardless of the gestation period... Only a life-threatening situation which is sure to happen can be considered a need that shall be taken into account; however, people can use contraceptive measures so as not to get pregnant. There is no objection.⁶⁷

According to her, abortion is not acceptable unless there is a life threat. She bases her argument on her belief that the fetus immediately becomes a person with the start of the pregnancy. She leans on this interpretation of Islam and suggests to people complying with this proposition. Afterwards, she indicates that people can apply birth control to prevent pregnancy; there is no objection in Islam. Considering contraceptive methods, there are no bans or restrictions in Islam since some *Hadiths* reveal that the Prophet advises it. This approach of Erdemli can be framed as compliant agency in the sense that her reflection of religion and suggested religious conduct goes in line with the

⁶⁶ Kadriye Avcı Erdemli is the only female deputy mufti of Istanbul, and in Turkey, there is only 11 female deputies. Avcı was significant in her facilities within Religious Affairs. She had examined 3 thousand mosques with 60-persons delegation in order to specify the deficiencies for the use of women. Avcı was accused of her such activities for the good of Muslim women by Mehmet Şevket Eygi, columnist of Milli Gazete (National Newspaper). Eygi claimed that some women within Religious Affairs are behaving as “Amazons of Islam” by indicating that such “feminist” women are “ruining religion with women” (in Turkish, *dini kadınlarla bozmak*). See the interview of Hazal Özvarış with Kadriye Avcı Erdemli: <http://t24.com.tr/haber/diyanetin-basina-ne-zaman-bir-kadin-gecebilir,186417>

⁶⁷ “İslam’a göre gebeliğin başlamasından itibaren cenin, annesinden ayrı bir şahsiyettir. Dolayısıyla annesinin veya bir başkasının iradesine bağlı olmaksızın yaşama hakkına sahiptir...Bu itibarla dinen meşru bir zaruret olmadıkça, gebeliğin hangi döneminde olursa olsun, ceninin hayatına tecavüz, yani çocuğu aldırma veya düşürme cinayet sayılmış... Sadece kesin bir hayati tehlike bu konuda nazara alınması gereken bir zaruret teşkil edebilir. Ama insanlar gebe kalmamak için doğum kontrolü yapabilir. Bunda bir mahzur yok.”

unconditional observance. Her opinion on abortion does not exhibit any conflict with the custom and laws of the religion.

3.2. Compliant Agency Of Religious Women through Their Statements on “My Body Is Mine” Slogan

According to pious women who approach to the body on the ground of Islamic laws, the slogan “my body is mine” is not acceptable. Ayşe Böhürler, Cihan Aktaş, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal and Filiz Işiker indicate in their newspaper columns that it is not possible for religious women to accept the secular approach to the body.

Ayşe Böhürler, who is a columnist in *Yenişafak* Newspaper and also a founder member of the AKP, responds to the abortion struggle by pointing out the “My Body My Decision” slogan. She indicates that:

Conservative women never said and will never say “our body belongs to us”. They would of course not use this slogan special to the liberty movement that was started by feminism against the perception of woman of Christian faith. This is against to both their beliefs and values.⁶⁸ (2012, June 9)

Here, Böhürler defends the position that conservative women have never indicated that “our body belongs to us” unlike what feminists did against to the women’s perception of Christian faith. She refers to the well-known slogan “My body, my choice” which was put forth by Western feminist activists during their abortion struggle. The feminist

⁶⁸ The original version of the quote in Turkish is: “Muhafazakâr kadınlar asla “bedenimiz bizimdir” demediler ve demeyecekler de. Feminizmin Hristiyan inancının kadın algısına karşı başlattıkları özgürlük mücadelesine özgü bu sloganı elbette kullanamazlar. Bu onların inançlarına da, değerlerine de aykırı.” Böhürler, A. (2012, June 9) “Darbeleri Araştırma Komisyonu’nun başında iyi ki bir kadınvar!” *YeniŞafak* Newspaper. Retrieved from: <http://yenisafak.com.tr/yazarlar/AyşeBohurler/darbeleri-arastirma-komisyonunun-basinda-iyi-ki-bir-kadin-var/32751>

activists' discourse of defending the right in order to possess their body was due to the assault of the church on the woman's body. Böhürler's statement goes in parallel with the claim of Elifhan Köse who researched the religious women literature from the perspective of sexuality and the body. Köse claims that religious women, by the discourse of "creation,"⁶⁹ oppose to the modern feminism's political struggle on abortion that supports "my body is mine" discourse (Köse, 2014, p.89).

When we return to what Böhürler indicates in her speech about the seculars' focus on the body, she thinks that such a discourse is peculiar to Western feminist discourse as a reaction to the Christian faith. For her, conservative (read as religious) women have not adopted this discourse, and she emphasizes that they *will not adopt* in the future too. She bases her idea on that the discourse of "my body" is contrary to their beliefs and values.

According to Islamic understanding of human body, Esendemir argues that body is seen as a carrier of the soul that is blown by the God (as cited in Kubilay, 2014, p. 408). Therefore, it is not possible to use human body contrary to God's will since human body is entrusted to God.

While Islamic thought offers such an entrustment approach, the slogan "my body is mine"/"my body belongs to me" is contrary to the Islamic understanding of entrustment of body to God. As Böhürler reminds in her speech, when we consider the discourse of "*Women's right to choose*" which was very common in the USA during the abortion debates in the 1960s, choice does not mean merely a woman's right to control their reproduction. Rather, the choice discourse advocates women's control in the decision of "when and whether to have sex, when to be pregnant and when and whether to have a child" (Gordon, 1990, p. 405).

Herein, it is necessary to remember that, Linda Gordon, in her book *Woman's Body, Woman's Right* in which she provides a history of birth control in the USA, promotes that "pro-abortion-rights lobby fixed on *choice* as a slogan" (1990, p.406). Through this

⁶⁹ Here, creation means *fitrat* in Turkish.

discourse, civil libertarian commitments are called upon, and with the women category as subject, the autonomous decision making of women is emphasized rather than the abortion operation itself (ibid). Moreover, pro-choice activists generally use the terms such as “individual liberty,” “reproductive freedom” and “reproductive rights” in order to advocate that if women are not ready to handle the responsibilities of raising a child, she should have the right to decide on her own to give birth or not.

This secular account is not adopted by the intellectual religious women since they believe that women cannot easily decide to interfere with their body by abortion operation as a result of the entrusted/ created comprehension of human body. This attitude can be commentated in the light of Burke (2012) that pious women interpret the “sacred texts in a way that uphold gender-traditionalism,” (p.128) rather than interpreting in a liberal/ secular way. The intellectual religious women’s approach to the body is an example to Mahmood’s “docile conduct.” Therefore, in line with the argument of Avishai, “women exhibit agency when they ‘do religion’” (Burke, 2012, p.128). Furthermore, the crucial point lies in Böhürler’s comparison between Christian faith and Muslim belief in terms of the understanding of body. On a similar basis, she links Western feminist discourse as a reaction to Christianity; in other words, she emphasizes that Western feminists’ approach on body has close bound with Christianity though it stems from as a reaction to it. She distinguishes Muslim women’s beliefs and values on the ground of its differences from Christian faith and Western feminist discourse. This corresponds with Avishai’s proposition that “religiosity entails a project of becoming against the image of a cultural Other” (2008, p. 427). Avishai says the construction of religiosity is as important as the docile conduct. Here, Böhürler constructs the Muslim women’s beliefs from a position that is against the Western feminist discourse, which is the secular other in the words of Avishai.

This comprehension of body can also be observed in the statements of Cihan Aktaş⁷⁰. She indicates in her essay⁷¹ in *Taraf* Newspaper that:

There should be a limit to the motto “My body is mine” and abortion, which can be a life-saving intervention, should be saved from being a technique of forming a dead babies’ society.

...

Exalting an extremely lyrical (and peaceful) womanhood, Turkey-type feminism at the same time chooses to see the womb merely as an organ that is open to be freely scratched with an ideological reflex. (2012)

Of course, I know the majority of women endure abortion with pain. Abortion means an agony that many women will suffer for a whole lifetime. In this sense the slogan ‘abortion is our right,’ in my opinion, primarily expresses a reactionary and even a resentful meaning that cannot be viewed in terms of ‘rights.’ This is what I think because as a Muslim, I approach abortion with a view of the body that is ‘created’ with grace and mastership which would not rule out Allah’s purposes of creation; that thus possesses secrets; that is partially alien to itself; and that therefore takes the divine surveillance serious.⁷²

⁷⁰ She had been a columnist in *Taraf* newspaper resigned from *Taraf* Newspaper in April 29, 2013. She currently writes articles in dunyabulteni.net, gazeteoku.com; given interviews to derindusunce.org, emekveadalet.org

⁷¹ Aktaş, C. (2012, May 31). Kürtaj ve Uludere Kolajı. *Taraf*. Retrieved from: <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/cihan-aktas/kurtaj-ve-uludere-kolaji/21605/>

⁷² “‘Bedenim benimdir’ demenin de bir sınırı olmalı ve hayat kurtaran bir müdahale olabilecek kürtaj, ölü bebekler toplumu oluşturma bir tekniğine dönüşmekten kurtarılmalı... Türkiye tipi feminizm ise bir taraftan aşırı lirik (ve barışçıl) bir kadınsılığı yüceltirken ideolojik bir refleksle rahmi, serbestçe kazınmaya açık herhangi bir organ olarak görme yolunu tutuyor... Kadınların büyük çoğunluğunun kürtaja acı duyarak katlandığını biliyorum tabii. Kürtaj pek çok kadında bütün hayatı boyunca atayacağı bir azap anlamına da geliyor. Bu açıdan "kürtaj hakkımız" sloganı "haklar" açısından bakılamayacak tepkisel, hatta kırgınlık yüklü bir anlam ifade ediyor öncelikle, bana kalırsa. Çünkü Müslüman olarak Allah'ın yaratımındaki amaçlarının göz ardı edilemeyeceği bir incelik ve ustalıkla “yaratılmış”, bu nedenle de sırlara haiz, kısmen kendine yabancı, dolayısıyla ilahi denetimi ciddiye alan bir beden görüşü üzerinden yaklaşıyorum kürtaja.” Aktaş, C. (2012, May 31). Kürtaj ve Uludere Kolajı. *Taraf*.

A similar criticism towards the feminist discourse on body is made by Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal⁷³. She directs criticism to the “my body is mine” slogan in her essay⁷⁴ in *Radikal* Newspaper as such:

Unfortunately, I do not find it right that my feminist friends adopt such cliché slogans. They want to do feminist politics and to come up against the government. That is fine; however, in Turkey it is impossible to attain a result with the kind of language they use. How many women attended that demonstration? Conservative women also have problems related to abortion and contraception.⁷⁵ (2012)

From these quotes, it is seen that intellectual religious women do not adopt the arguments of women’s rights activists who are against the ban on abortion. It should be noted that during the debate in 2012, there were several different campaigns to raise awareness against the ban on abortion. *Bianet Independent Communication Network*⁷⁶ started the “My Body My Decision Campaign” on 31 May, and called both women and men out to support the campaign by writing slogans related to the abortion debate and by sending those slogans’ pictures to Bianet Network.⁷⁷ By this way, all individuals standing up against this prohibition would be able to express their reactions explicitly

⁷³ She is a theologian and author. and columnist in *Taraf* Newspaper and *Radikal* Newspaper.

⁷⁴ Şefkatli Tuksal, H. (June 6, 2012). Uludere’de Kürtaj Yok, Çocuk Cesetleri Var. Interview of Özlem Çelik. *Radikal* Newspaper .Retrieved from:
<http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/uludere-de-kurtaj-yok-cocuk-cesetleri-var-1090283>

⁷⁵ The Turkish version is: “Ne yazık ki feminist arkadaşlarımın çok klişe sloganlarla hareket etmelerini doğru bulmadım. Feminist politika yapmak, hükümete de çatmak istiyorlar. Tamam ama öyle bir dil kullanılıyor ki, Türkiye’de bununla sonuç almak imkansız. Kaç kadın geldi o gösteriye? Muhafazakar kadınların da kürtaj ve doğum kontrolü ile ilgili sorunları var.” Şefkatli Tuksal, H. (June 6, 2012). Uludere’de Kürtaj Yok, Çocuk Ceswetleri Var. *Radikal* Newspaper

⁷⁶ Bianet (Bağımsız İletişim Ağı) Independent Communication Network (BIA) is a continuous project having been carried over four major activity fields – editorial desk, legal support unit, training programs, program production centre- in the centre of IPS Communication Foundation’s activities since 1997 with the objective of empowering and developing “independent media”.

⁷⁷ “Kürtaj Hakkı” Kampanyası Başladı. (2012, May 31). *Bianet* Newspaper. Retrieved from:
<http://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/138763-kurtaj-hakki-kampanyasi-basladi-on-02.06.2014>

and easily.⁷⁸ According to the campaign coordinators, the objective of *My Body My Decision Campaign* was to reflect the power of the reaction over the statements of Prime Minister Erdogan. On 6 June 2012, in a TV program⁷⁹ PM Erdoğan pointed at *My Body My Decision Campaign* and criticized it as:

There is a propaganda that has no religious roots. The body is not yours. This approach certainly varies religiously and culturally. At this point, our belief and traditions oppose this... In our constitutional law, the fetus acquires the right to live from the moment of conception. Under these circumstances, it cannot be within reason to say 'this body is mine'. Above all, we have to defend the right to live and we are in charge of duty. The other option would be lawless / disrespect to law.⁸⁰

It can be said that *My Body My Decision Campaign* emerged as a reaction to the PM's statements and it was supported by public including artists and opinion leaders who are sensitive towards women's issues.

⁷⁸ According to the report of the Third Sector Foundation of Turkey about the abortion struggle campaigns of 2012, it is stated that after Prime Minister Erdoğan's speech on abortion on 25 May, a great number of readers called *Bianet* and told that they would give support to a campaign regarding the abortion issue (2012). Being an independent press organization, *Bianet* organized a meeting about the issue with the participation of volunteers (Arman, 2012). As a result of this meeting, similar campaigns throughout the world was researched and then they decided that using visual images would make the campaign more visible to trigger public opinion. people responded by sending their photos which indicate that they oppose to the ban on abortion. By writing slogans on their bodies or on the banners, they emphasized that the decision of abortion belongs to women and cannot be prohibited by the state. *My Body My Decision Campaign* was significant to create awareness on social media; and it was carried into the streets by the protests organized by *Abortion is a Right, Decision is Women's Platform*⁷⁸, coming together with the call of Istanbul Feminist Collective. Different campaigns and protests were organized together and supported each other which enabled to express the reactions in a more composite ways.

⁷⁹ "Benim bedenim benim kararım' diyen kadınlara kızdı." (7 June 2012). <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/-benim-bedenim-benim-kararim-diyen-kadinlarkizdi/siyaset/siyasetdetay/07.06.2012/1550519/default.htm>

⁸⁰ The original version of the quote in Turkish is: "Dini temeli olmayan bir propaganda var. Vücut senin değil. Tabii bu yaklaşım dinsel ve kültürel olarak değişir. Burada inancımız ve geleneklerimiz buna karşı çıkıyor. Anayasamızda çocuk yaşama hakkını ana rahmine düştüğü andan elde eder. Bunlar varken kalkıp 'bu vücut benim' demek akıl karı değildir. Herşeyden önce hayat hakkını savunmak zorundayız ve görevliyiz. Diğer tercih hukuka saygısızlıktır."

Şefkatli Tuksal refers to the “my body is mine” slogan⁸¹ as a “very cliché slogan” which cannot be adopted by conservative women. Therefore, she asserts that it is impossible to get results through such a slogan in Turkey. By asking, “How many women came to the demonstration?” she means that conservative (religious) women do not attend to the feminists’ demonstration although conservative women do also have problems with abortion and birth control. We can make such an inference that Şefkatli Tuksal points out the discrepancies between religious women’s beliefs and the feminists’ discourse on body. Likewise, Cihan Aktaş depicts Turkey-type feminism as being cruel due to their demand for abortion right. For Aktaş, Turkey-type feminism sees the woman’s womb merely as an organ that is open to be freely scratched. However, this perception is not acceptable for Cihan Aktaş since as a Muslim, she approaches abortion issue with a view of the body that is “created.” Thereupon, Cihan Aktaş assigns the boundaries of her religiousity by the help of showing its difference from the feminist and secular account of body.

⁸¹ At this point, it is necessary to note that there were different voices in the struggle in terms of topics, agents and political views of the activists. However, intellectual religious women mostly refer to the “my body” slogan and commented on this slogan with a point of view that this is the dominant discourse emerging from the women’s struggle. During the abortion debate 2012, there were different campaigns to raise awareness against the ban on abortion. “My Body My Decision Campaign” was one of them, but not the only struggle in the abortion debate. Moreover, this campaign was not organized by feminists. In spite of the fact that feminist women supported the *Bianet*’s campaign through sending photos or spreading the word, they are only partially support the campaign. Herein, it is necessary to remember that the abortion struggle was not consisted of just by “My Body My Decision” campaign. There were women’s actions such as *Abortion cannot be Banned Campaign* and *Abortion is a Right Decision is Women’s Platform* that were dealing the current restriction on abortion. In general, the majority of the public is not informed consistently about the protests of feminists and activist women that are visible by means of the press releases and activities of *Abortion cannot be Banned Campaign* and *Abortion is a Right, Decision is Women’s Platform*. The discourse of these two organizations is quite different from the discourse of *My Body My Decision Campaign* in the sense that while the former ones put emphasis on the women’s right to access abortion and defend this right, the latter focus on the body. The media and the journalists mostly touch upon *My Body My Decision Campaign* and by implication spread its word. This detail is important regarding the intellectual religious women’s approaches to the abortion struggle since all of them has given overemphasis to the “my body my decision” slogan and its campaign and have not mentioned about other protests that were held by women. It is significant that intellectual religious women do not refer those acts and women’s struggle in their statements. Nevertheless, there were feminist reactions to the “my body my decision” slogan. For instance, Emine Ayhan objected this slogan. See: Ayhan, E. (2012) “Kürtaj ve Uludere: Sömürerek Öldürme ve Yaşatmadan Öldürmek”, Birikim. 12 June 2012.

This kind of discernment is compatible with Avishai's account of religious women's agency that her analysis serves that "[r]eligiosity entails a project of 'becoming' through practice against the image of a secular Other" (2008, p.423). To put it more clearly, Şefkatli Tuksal's account of body is constructed by its difference from feminist discourse. That is to say, for her, conservative women do not adopt a secular account of body such as the discourse of "my body" due to their religious beliefs. Aktaş and Şefkatli Tuksal construct religiosity in this case through pointing out the difference between the feminist/secular account and the conservative/religious account of body. This is what Avishai paid attention in her study to show how women "observe, negotiate and make sense of" religious norms (2008, p.409). For Avishai, the "goal of becoming an authentic religious subject" is possible by being against a secular other (p.413). From this schema, it can be argued that Aktaş and Şefkatli Tuksal emphasize the authenticity of religious women subject through constructing a distinction from secular feminist account. Avishai illuminates that religion is "as something that people do in social interaction and in the context of symbolic boundaries, regulatory cultural regimes, and institutional structures" (2008, p.428). Herewith, Avishai shows "how religiosity is constructed"; for her, religiosity is "a status that is learned, negotiated, and achieved by adhering to or performing prescribed practices that distinguish the religious from the nonreligious" (ibid). Aktaş's and Tuksal's depiction of nonreligious provide to distinguish what is religious.

On a similar vein, in an interview⁸² conducted by Ayça Örer in *Radikal* Newspaper, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu bases her argument about the women's body based on her religious belief:

I believe that our bodies are nobody's; they are handed to us. It is against my faith to be so assertive when it comes to a body that we did not bring into existence nor will be involved in its annihilation and to think we can use this body in whatever way we like. Of course it belongs to us, and yet it is ultimately handed to us. We are somehow taught how to protect it, guard it, and we are told

⁸² Ramazanoğlu, Y. (June 3, 2012). "Uludere Kırılma Noktamız". Interview by Ayça Örer. Retrieved from: http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/uludere_kirilma_noktamiz-1089937

about how precious it is. It is, however, not normal when men have a say in women's bodies in such an unbelievable manner. Nor is it normal when some of our friends defend the right to abortion so fearlessly and somewhat a bit carelessly. Of course it is a very important and painful issue. It is wrong to debate it without having thought about it thoroughly. Expressions such as 'She's been raped, so she should give birth to it, and the state shall adopt and look after it,' are not the type of sentences that can be uttered one after another so easily.⁸³ (2012)

From this quote, it can be interpreted that Yıldız Ramazanoğlu exhibits observance of Islam since she puts forward her opinion about the body in line with her religious faith. In this sense, her statement is a good example to compliant agency. She refers to the feminist women activists by saying "some of our friends defend the right to abortion so fearlessly." Ramazanoğlu criticizes feminists' discourse due to its fearless approach to the issue. Likewise, some men's responses are also at the target of her criticism since men support the intervention to women's body easily by undermining the rape and abortion issues. By means of this, Ramazanoğlu accuses both approaches towards body as abnormal.

Moreover, Filiz Işiker's approach to human body is in line with the statements of Böhürler, Aktaş and Şefkatli Tuksal on "my body is mine" slogan and on the Islamic perception of body. Filiz Işiker is a sociologist and the spokesperson of Free Expansion Platform⁸⁴. Işiker remarks as such:

⁸³ In Turkish: "Ben inanıyorum ki, bedenimiz hiç kimsenin değil, emanet. Var etmediğimiz, daha sonra yok olmasında müdahil olamayacağımız bir beden üzerinde bu kadar çok iddialı olmak ve onu dilediğin gibi kullanabileceğini düşünmek benim inançlarıma uygun değil. Tabii ki bize ait ama son tahlilde bize bir emanet. Onu nasıl koruyacağımız, nasıl kollayacağımız, bu bedenin kıymeti bize bir şekilde öğretiliyor. Ama erkeklerin bu kadar inanılmaz bir şekilde kadın bedeni üzerine söz söylemesi ve bazı arkadaşlarımız da biraz pervasızca kürtaj hakkını gözünü budaktan sakınmayarak savunması. İkisi de normal değil. Tabii ki çok önemli, acıtıcı bir şey. Bunun bu kadar üzerinde düşünülmenden tartışılması yanlış. "Tecavüze uğramış doğurmalı, bebeği alıp devlet bakmalı" cümleleri de kolayca arka arkaya sıralanabilecek cümleler değil." Ramazanoğlu, Y. (2012, June 3). Uludere kırılma noktamız. *Zaphaber* Newspaper. Retrieved from: <http://www.zaphaber.com/yildiz-ramazanoglu-uludere-kirilma-noktamiz-33894h.htm>

⁸⁴ Free Expansion Platform (in Turkish, *Özgür Açılım Platformu*) is an organization which established in 2008 by a group of religious youth. They declare to be interested in a wide range of issues such as Poverty in Turkey, Children in the World, Against Energy Wars, Globalization, Capitalism, Education, Latin

As the spokesperson of Free Expansion Platform and as a Muslim woman, what will I say about abortion cannot be outside the commandments of Islam. For Muslims, their bodies are not goods that they can dispose of arbitrary; they are entrustment of God. That is to say, according to Islamic thought humans are not owners of particularly their bodies and of cosmos/ecological system in general. The estimation that humans can make any intervention to their own bodies and ecology with their own will is the estimation of human-centered philosophy of enlightenment. However, since Islamic thought does not observe the universe and human in this manner, it does not allow killing the fetus, which is a living being whose spirit is blown by God. Abortion, which is made in cases other than exceptional ones such as woman's safety-critical situation, is called murder.⁸⁵ (2012, May 29)

In this quote, she firstly mentions that as a Muslim, she cannot comment on abortion outside the commandments of Islam. This is important to evaluate her perspective towards the doctrines of religion, that is, she proclaims that she will say what Islam commands⁸⁶, which can be interpreted as religious conduct.

American Peoples, Hunger in Africa, the Middle East and the question of Palestine, the Kurdish issue, women issue, Imperialism. See: http://www.uhim.org/tavsiye_uhim_detay.php?taid=122

⁸⁵ The original version of the quote in Turkish is: "Özgür Açılım Platformu sözcüsü ve Müslüman bir kadın olarak kürtajla ilgili benim söyleyeceklerim İslam dininin buyrukları dışında olamaz. Bir Müslüman için bedeni, üzerinde keyfince tasarrufta bulunabileceği bir eşya değil, Allah'ın emanetidir. Yani İslam düşüncesine göre insan, özelde bedeninin ve genel olarak kozmosun/ekolojik sistemin sahibi değildir. İnsanın kendi bedenine ve ekolojiye kendi iradesiyle istediği müdahaleyi yapabileceği yargısı insan merkezli aydınlamacı felsefenin yargısıdır. İslam düşüncesi ise kainata ve insana böyle bakmadığından Allah'ın ruh üflediği bir canlı olan ceninin öldürülmesine cevaz vermez. Kadının hayati tehlikesi gibi istisnai durumlar dışında yapılan kürtaja cinayet denir" Işiker, F. (2012, May 29). "Müslüman Kadınlar Kürtaj Hakkında Ne Düşünüyor?" Retrieved from: <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/138699-musluman-kadinlar-kurtaj-hakkinda-ne-dusunuyor>

⁸⁶ However, some of the intellectual religious women and theologians indicate that Islam is open to interpretation and the holy book of Islam, Qur'an, does not openly refer abortion as a sin or murder. For instance, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu and Nihal Bengisu Karaca direct the attention to that in Islam there are different approaches to abortion and therefore there is no final decision about abortion in this regard. For details see: Karaca, N.B. (May 30, 2012). "Kürtaj ve Sezaryen". Retrieved from: <http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/nihal-bengisu-karaca/746454-kurtaj-ve-sezaryen> and Ramazanoğlu, Y. (June 13, 2012). "Erkeklerin Kürtaji" retrieved from: http://www.zaman.com.tr/yorum_erkeklerin-kurtaji_1302783.html

Secondly, Işiker indicates that for a Muslim, the body is not a property that one can make a disposition of according to his/her wish, the human's body belongs to the God. According to Islamic thought, humans do not have possession of neither the body nor the ecosystem. However, for her opinion, the idea that humans can interfere with the body and to the ecosystem is the judgment of the Enlightenment philosophy, which puts humans at the center. Arguing against this philosophy, she puts the difference of Islamic thought in terms of perceiving human's body. Işiker accepts the idea that fetus's ensoulment starts with the fertilization so the fetus is perceived as alive.

Prosecuting her speech from this recognition, she indicates that intervention to take out the fetus is not acceptable. The intervention is taken from the perspective of the fetus not from the perspective of women's body. This is most of the time the case within religious discourses on abortion that it goes into divisions that can be categorized in two aspects: when life begins for the fetus and the issue of necessity for women to abort. While discussing on abortion, Filiz Işiker directly refers to the body issue by claiming that since body belongs to God, human beings cannot have possession of their body.

Hereby, Avishai's research on the agency of religious women offers an understanding for the approaches of Böhürler, Aktaş, Tuksal, Ramazanoğlu and Işiker. Avishai addresses the notion that "religiousity is performed and achieved in the context of a dialogue with a secular Other" (2008, p. 420). Intellectual religious women adopt an understanding of "deposit body" instead of secular understanding of body that is in evidence with the slogan of "my body, my decision." Following Avishai's account, it can be said that they express their religious faith through a dialogue with the secular other, viz. feminist women in this case.

In this chapter, in order to understand how intellectual religious women exhibit agency, I analyzed their statements during the abortion debate that can be framed under the compliant agency approach. Following Kelsy Burke (2008) and Orit Avishai (2008), I showed how religious women display agency when they interpret sacred texts and when they 'do religion'. To do this, firstly, the women's statements about the perception of use

of contraception are analysed. Secondly, the statements concerning the “my body is mine” slogan is viewed in order to trace how women interpret these issues from a religious compliance.

CHAPTER 4

PIOUS CRITICAL AGENCY

Since the main question of the thesis is “how the political agency of intellectual religious women reveals itself in the process of the abortion debate in 2012,” in this chapter I will investigate how intellectual religious women contest the religious government male representatives’ statements, feminist women and activist men and how they interpret their thoughts. Intellectual religious women, in their newspaper essays and speeches, not only have commented on the abortion restriction but also they raise criticisms towards the tradition of patriarchal structure in Islam and towards the government representative Muslim men’s and clergy’s ignorance in women’s issues / in abortion and the discourse of feminist women.

According to Rachel Rinaldo’s clarification, agency is consistently delineated as individual’s capacity “to make choices and take action” (2014, p.826). The relation between individual agency and social structures has been tackled by classical sociologists with a question that whether the former or the latter identify the human action. This question is asked by feminists too and initially it is assumed that “women wanted (or should want) liberation and that women’s collective action grows out of their common oppression” (Rinaldo, 2014, p.826). Nevertheless, I discussed above, many feminists such as Mohanty (1988), Kandiyoti (1988), Abu-Lughod (1990) and Butler (1993), challenged this understanding of agency. In recent past, as Rinaldo says, some social scientists especially Mohanty (1988) and Mahmood (2005) argued that:

Women may be agentic in ways that do not align with feminist expectations - such as choosing not to resist unequal social arrangements; embracing the family,

nation, or other social structures that feminists see as a location of oppression; or even contributing to the subjugation of others. (Rinaldo, 2014, p.826)

It is noteworthy to remember Said's influential work for an understanding of how religious women have been seen. Said's book, *Orientalism*, by following Foucauldian concepts,⁸⁷ refers to "discourse of power" by identifying Orientalist discourse as a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (1994, p. 3). In his book, the Orient mainly signifies the Muslim societies. Following Said, in approaching to Muslim women, we can talk about a dominant Orientalist view. As Ganguly claims, Said reveals that Orientalism⁸⁸ is not only functions through "theoretical violence" but also be elicited in "contemporary intellectual and political practice" (Ganguly, 1992, p.73).

According to Said's comprehension, power and knowledge are in a mutual constitutive relationship; following Said many scholars deal with the intersection of gender and Orientalism which give rise to the stereotyped image of Muslim women as the incarnation of an 'oppressive religion' (Yeğenoğlu, 1998). According to Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998), Said's arguments in *Orientalism* are missing the "sexualized reading" of Orientalism, therefore, she, in her book *Colonial Fantasies*, argues that sexuality and the images of women are crucial for the formulation of Orientalist discourses. For her, Orientalist discourses depict the West as the "universal subject of history" that has

⁸⁷ Actually, regarding Said's use or mis-use of Foucauldian concepts such as notion of discourse, the focus on confinement etc.; there is a broad debate on Said's book, *Orientalism*. For a discussion see: Courville, M. (2010). Theoretical travelogues: A slight return from Foucault back to Fanon and Sartre. In *Edward Said's rhetoric of the secular* (pp. 91-109). London: Continuum.

⁸⁸ Edward Said's work is criticized by several scholars such as Halliday, 1993; Kerr, 1990; Lewis, 1982; and; Turner, 1989. However, some postcolonial scholars founded their studies on Said's thesis through reassessments and counter arguments such as Bhabha, 1994; Yeğenoğlu, 1998; and Young, 2001. For instance, Bhabha's (1994) and Young's (2001) works qualify Said's emphasis on hegemony with an account of counter-hegemonic resistance (Bhabha, 1994; Young 2001).

evolved a “universally applicable norm of development and progress” (Yeğenoğlu, 1998, p. 95-96). This depiction is fed/constructed by assigning universality to the values of Enlightenment, liberalism and Western modernity; which in turn causes generalizations based on Eurocentric assumptions about the everyday lives, beliefs, and political positions of non-Western women. Postcolonial critics⁸⁹ contest the Eurocentric stand that privileges Western notions of liberation and progress while this stand is portraying Third World women essentially as victims of ignorance, their cultures or religions.

Moreover, Sirma Bilge (2010) by giving reference to Khiabany and Williamson (2008, p.76) clarifies this as,

Taking issue with subtle forms of Western ethnocentrism hidden in the universal discourse of women’s human rights, postcolonial feminist scholarship tackles, following Said’s critique of Orientalism, the dialectic constitution of normative emancipated Western womanhood through the depiction of veiled women as oppressed by their men. (Bilge, 2010, p.19)

Mohanty (1984), in her effective work, *Under Western eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, argues that:

Assumptions of privilege and ethnocentric universality on the one hand, and inadequate self-consciousness about the effect of Western scholarship on the ‘third world’ in the context of a world system dominated by the West on the other, characterize a sizable extent of Western feminist work on women in the third world. An analysis of “sexual difference” in the form of a cross-culturally singular, monolithic notion of patriarchy or male dominance leads to the construction of a similarly reductive and homogeneous notion of what I call the ‘Third World Difference’ - that stable, a-historical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in these countries. (p.335)

She directs criticisms towards Western feminisms by charging them to appropriate and colonize “the fundamental complexities and conflicts which characterize the lives of women of different classes, religions, cultures, races and castes” (ibid). Mohanty’s

⁸⁹ Edward Said’s work is criticized by several scholars such as Halliday, 1993; Kerr, 1990; Lewis, 1982; and; Turner, 1989. However, some postcolonial scholars founded their studies on Said’s thesis through reassessments and counter arguments such as Bhabha, 1994; Yeğenoğlu, 1998; and Young, 2001. For instance, Bhabha’s (1994) and Young’s (2001) work “qualify Said’s emphasis on hegemony with an account of counter-hegemonic resistance” (Bhabha, 1994; Young 2001).

arguments suggests that it is a matter of power which is exercised over “third world” since Western culture and values are seen as a universal norm of modernity and progress. Due to this constructed norm, Western women are assumed to be secular, liberated and modern, while third world women is just the opposite. Mohanty explains how the “third world difference” is produced:

Third world women as a group or category are automatically and necessarily defined as: religious (read ‘non-progressive’), family-oriented (read ‘traditional’), legal minors (read ‘they-are-still-not-conscious-of-their-rights’), illiterate (read ‘ignorant’), domestic (read ‘backward’) and sometimes revolutionary (read ‘their-country-is-in-a-state-of-war-they-must-fight!’). (1984, p. 352)

Therefore, “women in non-Western societies” are tried to be explored principally in terms of their “object status (the way in which they are affected or not affected by certain institutions and systems)” and they are judged according to their performance in achieving “Western ideals” (Mohanty, 1984, p. 338). On a similar basis, Fatima Mernissi (1987) claims that Muslim women have been conventionally approximated with explicit or implicit comparison to Western women. Consequently, this discussion tradition brings about meaningless analogies and “unfounded conclusions,” which in turn limits the topic to a shallow state as “who is more civilized than whom” (p. 7). Another critical point in Mohanty’s work is that Third World Women are analyzed “on the basis of shared dependencies,” which paves the way for a category for Third World Women to be always seen as “an apolitical group with no subject status” (p. 339). These two misconceptions are due to the “application of the notion of woman as a homogenous category” without considering specific contexts and due to the insufficient analysis of the power shifts between first and third world (Mohanty, 1984, pp. 351-352). In this study, I accept the postulation that unique social, political and cultural contexts should be considered for a sophisticated apprehension of religious women’s political agency.

Accordingly, under the light of these contributions, gender and religion had started to be evaluated from a different standpoint. Namely, while the previous scholarship were tend to view religious women, whether Christian, Jewish or Muslim, as simply victims of

patriarchy and religion, the standpoint of scholarship has been changed to studying religious women's agency with respect to gender and religion. This new concept urges to study religious women's agency as constituting and constituted within prevailing social structures (ibid).

Therefore, according to Rinaldo (2014) pious women's agency is started to be taken over dominantly in two different perspectives in social sciences: the first one is the cultural "toolkit" approach⁹⁰ and the second one is the "compliant" perspective (p.827). However, she argues that these two perspectives are not "necessarily mutually exclusive" although they are put forth as dichotomous. At this point, it is necessary to clarify what she means by "toolkit approach" in connection with questioning structure and agency. The cultural toolkit approach refers to the assertion that religious women's agency is instrumental; that is, they draw on religion as a means to reach their goals. This approach brings forward "instrumental agency" which is explained as use of religion as "a means to reach an end goal that is unrelated to religious faith itself" (Burke, 2012, p. 127). This perspective calls for some scholars to study the "ways in which women use their participation in gender-traditional religions for advantages in non-religious aspects of their lives," instead of dealing with "how women attempt to change oppressive aspects of their religions" (Burke, 2012, p. 126).

On the other hand, "[c]ompliant agency suggests that women exhibit agency in the ways in which they choose to conform to religious teachings – that not all women comply in the same way, even though it may appear the same to some outside scholars" (Burke, 2012, p. 128). For example, the studies of Avishai (2008) and Mahmood (2005) are evaluated under this approach. Compliant agency approach asserts that women do not passively obey the doctrines of religion and brings about that religious women may be compliant in diverse manners due to their conditions. Drawing from Homi Bhabha (1994) and Michel Foucault (1990), Burke points out that this approach to agency is "to

⁹⁰ The cultural "toolkit" is a notion put forward by Ann Swidler in order to explain how immigrants' behaviour are culturally determined while they conserve their previous habits. For detail see: Swindler, A. (1986). Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies. *American Sociological Review*, 51, 273-286.

challenge that agency must not be equated with the classical liberal perception of man's freedom" (Burke, 2012, p. 128) and should not be defined through autonomy. As Burke (2012) says, "[d]efining agency through autonomy ... makes invisible workings of power that make autonomy impossible to achieve" especially for the ones who lives outside a western context (p. 128). Therefore, following Mahmood's argument it can be said "the ways in which women understand their world –what they are capable of– may lead to intentional actions of conformity or resistance, both of which should be considered as agency" (ibid). However, Burke argues that most of the scholars who have been studying pious women's agency have a tendency to look at predominantly how women conform to religious norms considering the fact that the other forms of agency has already been studied (p.128). At this point, Burke points out this thriving focus on the compliant agency of religious women has a risk of "over-extending the definition of agency to include all actions, making agency meaningless" (2012, p. 124).

Following this discussion, Rinaldo argues that instrumental and compliant approaches to religion and agency "are not necessarily dichotomous, but instead can be intertwined in a form of agency" which she calls "pious critical agency" (2014, p.829). To put it clearly, she argues that women's feminist demands such as women autonomy and gender equality are not separate from their religious faith. At this point, it could be important to remember that in the common sense, feminist demands and religious faith are seen as two extreme ends. With Rinaldo's intervention, it is suggested that feminist demands and religious values/beliefs "are not necessarily dichotomous; rather they can be intertwined in a form of agency" (ibid). Rinaldo conceptualizes this form of agency as "pious critical agency".

Such an approach to the analysis of religious women's statements is useful for this chapter, since the statements of intellectual religious women regarding abortion ban cannot be placed on either a pro-life or a pro-choice side. As I explained in the second chapter, the abortion debate in 2012 had been carried on between two dichotomous stances. On the one hand, the abortion opponents who were demanding the legal restriction on abortion constituted the con-abortion position. On the other hand, the

supporters of the right to abortion who were against the abortion ban by various arguments as women's right to choose, women's health concerns, fear of population growth etc. labeled as pro- abortionists. Within this dichotomous layer of the debate, intellectual religious women's intervention to the abortion ban did not assure to be placed on either side. When we consider their intervention to the debate as an indicator of agency, their statements of newspaper releases depict neither "instrumental agency" nor "compliant agency". We can translate "instrumental agency" as corresponding to the expected/ assumed position of religious women on the con-abortion position. That is, the common sense assumes that religious women would be against the abortion right and they would defend the legal restriction. This assumption is due to the biased view which suggests that religious women are used as instruments whether by the power party or by the Islamic communities. That is to say, women are not to produce their own ideas on a specific topic but to repeat what the dominant religious figures had proposed. Women's responses do not conform to the instrumental agency approach. In the meantime, their position in the debate does not fit into the compliant agency in terms of their approach to men's irresponsibility.

For example, when the Health Minister Recep Akdağ made a declaration which supports the ban on abortion, this biased view expected that intellectual religious women will repeat/ expand and spread what has been argued by the government representatives (e.g. Recep Akdağ) and clergy. Since the government party (AKP) is known being Islamist and Recep Akdağ's arguments were within the Islamic discourse, pious women were expected to spread their word; however, as it is seen below it had not occurred as such.

Nevertheless, during the abortion debate in 2012, upon a research on the newspaper essays and declarations of intellectual religious women, it can be observed that not all these assumptions came true. Pious women's intervention to the debate is not homogeneous yet it can be said that some statements are divergent from the dichotomous tendency of the debate. Intellectual religious women created several cracks within the abortion discussions, which I will focus on to understand how they constitute various agencies through this public debate. The intellectual religious women's reaction

to the declaration of the Health Minister Recep Akdağ can be seen as an example of such cracks. For this chapter, I go into pious critical agency as a conceptualization of the statements of intellectual religious women. Pious women's feminist demands such as women autonomy and gender equality are not separable from their religious faith and beliefs. In this chapter, the two arguments of intellectual religious women, to wit, firstly the desire for the autonomy of pious women in the abortion decision and secondly grounding basing their argument upon the religious sentiments can be framed as pious critical agency.

4.1. The Critical Evaluation: Men's Responsibility through Use of Birth Control

Throughout the debate on the legal restriction of abortion in 2012, part of the discussion went around the birth control issue about seeking alternatives to reduce the abortion rates. It was also the case that the birth control issue is put forward by the participants of the discussion by suggesting women not to use abortion operation in place of a birth control method. For instance, Health Minister Recep Akdağ declared, “[a]bortion should never be used as a birth control method. Unfortunately, it is somehow used in this way in Turkey” (May 2012). In his speech he blamed women for their “reluctance” to give birth, moreover he judged women for not having taken cautions beforehand in order not to get pregnant.⁹¹

There is no legal restriction on contraception in Turkey; however, contraceptive methods were generally mentioned as an advice to women in order not to take one's chance to be pregnant (İlkkaracan, 2001, p.8). Although, there are different ways to prevent pregnancy by the advance of modern birth control methods, they are mainly seen as the responsibility of women. Much of the contraceptives are addressing women's use and

⁹¹ Akdağ, R. (May 2012). Bakan Akdağ'dan kürtaj açıklaması. Hürriyet Newspaper. Retrieved from: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/20655979.asp>

need to apply to women's bodies. Apart from using condoms, there is almost no widely used alternative for preventing pregnancy for men. The most common kinds of male contraception include condoms, withdrawal, outercourse, and vasectomy.⁹² However, according to feminist activist Filiz Karakuş, "men do not take responsibility of birth control and they do not apply these methods" (2012, May 31).

Actually, the suggestion of the Health Minister Recep Akdağ that abortion is not a birth control method is a reasonable argument that abortion right supporters also agree with. Some feminist declarations⁹³ also touch upon this topic that abortion should not be promoted as a contraceptive method since in turn it will harm female body with regards the fact that when abortion is performed as a birth control method repeatedly, the damage to the body of women cannot be ignored. Moreover, the feminist women from Socialist Feminist Collective⁹⁴ indicate that the very application of intervening to the body should be problematized and abortion should not be promoted from this aspect.

However, the rhetoric of the government representative men in giving advice to women for abstaining abortion as a contraceptive method has some divergences from the framework of feminists in the sense that the former call for not to abort in any case. They advice women to use other birth control methods, i.e., birth control pills, condom, abstinence, Diaphragm, the morning after pill⁹⁵ to prevent pregnancy. Hereby, according

⁹² See: <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-info/men/birth-control-men>

⁹³ İstedigimiz zaman, istedigimiz kadar çocuk! (2012, May 28). http://sosyalistfeministkolektif.org/XcpjM/WOMNR/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=273:issizlik&catid=14:mutfak&Itemid=22

⁹⁴ Socialist Feminist Collective (Sosyalist Feminist Kolektif -SFK) is an independent women's group, founded in 2009 and since then, SFC has 300 members who are organized in five cities in Turkey. Feminist Politics, Kitchen Witches, Purple Point are the regular print and online journals published by the collective. As a women-only group, the SFC struggles against the contemporary forms of patriarchy under its mutual interaction with capitalism. For detailed information see: Socialist Feminist Collective-Doing materialist feminism under contemporary patriarchal capitalism in Turkey. (2013, May 31). Retrieved April 15, 2014, from <http://www.sosyalistfeministkolektif.org/aboutus/525-sosfemeng.html>

⁹⁵ At this point, it is necessary to indicate that since women are seen as blameworthy in case of pregnancy, women are advised to prevent their pregnancy in order not to be constrained to abortion. However, at the

to their opinion, when a woman becomes pregnant, she should not apply abortion operation and has to give birth. Therefore, although supporters of abortion and anti-abortionists envision in a similar way considering that abortion should not be applied as a birth control, their rationalization differs from each other.

Following Akdağ's statement, some intellectual religious women such as journalist Esra Elönü and well-known activist and novelist Yıldız Ramazanoğlu problematized the issue of contraceptives by pointing out the importance of them in order to prevent unintended pregnancies. At the same time, they contest the way in which the contraception is talked.

Journalist Esra Elönü⁹⁶ responds to the accusation of women of not having taken sufficient precautions. Rachel Rinaldo's concept "pious critical agency" intends to designate "a new involvement of women in public, politicized discussions about the meaning of religious texts, in which they often contest conventional interpretations" (2014, p.843). According to her, in this sense, pious critical agency "involves not only women's reflection on religious texts but also critical reinterpretations that they use in political activism" (ibid). Esra Elönü's statement on the contraceptives can be seen as an example of contestation. Her response is:

Women are not fat chickens that are timetabled to lay eggs or a female bird that checks the room temperature to reproduce. They are not agents who are experts of diapers or ones who count bubbles after shaking the milk in the bottle, either. Women are not 24-hour-operating hotels that are waiting to bear offsprings! God, creator of all, has not created women to give birth to children without giving a break and then becoming their shepherd. You are about to see women as the most

same time, parallel to the abortion restriction intervention in 2012, the government announced that the sale of the morning after pills are restricted in the pharmacies and prescription would be needed to buy. Therefore, although contraceptive methods were advised to women, the accessibility of such methods was getting more limited, and this limitation issue was not widely problematized. For details of the restriction on the morning after pills, see:

http://www.ekonorm.com/saglik/ertesi_gun_hapi_alan_fislenecek_iddias_450063.htm

⁹⁶ Esra Elönü is a columnist in haber7.com

natural immortal child-bearer and make her get pregnant from every single sperm. Women are not continuous child-bearers of men or they do not give birth whenever it is ordered.⁹⁷

How odd is the fact that women are the responsible agent of bearing a child although it is the result of reproduction by two. This does not mean that women should get an abortion and stop renting their womb to an embryo; however, it should also be admitted that the owner of that womb is the women themselves.⁹⁸

In the same newspaper essay, she indicates:

Today, many women are charged of laying⁹⁹ (giving birth to) children because of men's laziness in prevention. Why? Because women should be protected, women should consider... Neither laws nor men decide on abortion. Women are the decision centers of when and where to put what they carry. Please do not stick to the word 'feminism'; if there is anything unfair about any situation, produce what is fair. Men should stop saying a word on this topic and they should get rid of their insensitivity. Men should also have their eagerness and enthusiasm on many topics aborted; after which they should be able to empathize fairly with whatever left with them. (2012, May 29)

From these quotations, it is possible to deduce several important themes concerning how Elönü contest the declarations on the use of contraceptives. First, she raises criticism against the conformism of men with relation to birth control. For her, men do not take responsibility of contraceptives. Here, Elönü problematizes the concept of responsibility in birth control and regards men's laziness in the issue as a problem requiring a solution. This intervention of Elönü is significant in the sense that while the debate was wheeling

⁹⁷ The Turkish version is "Kadın besili tavuk, kuluçkaya kurulu duvar saati, kanatlarıyla oda sıcaklığını ölçen havada karada dişi kuş, çocuk bezinden anlayan romantik sarraf, biberon çalkalayıp kabarcık sayan süt sayacı değildir. Kadın 24 saat açık döl oteli değildir! Dünyaya güneş doğuran Allah'tır ki kadını sürekli bir şeyler doğurup doğurduğunun kaz çobanı olması için yaratmamıştır. Neredeyse kadını üç basamaklı en doğal çocuk doğurucu sonsuzluk hatunu gibi görüp her dölden nem kaptırmaya çalışacaksınız. Kadın erkeğin siparişiyle çocuk doğurgacı değildir." Elönü, E. (2012, May 29). Erkekler neden kürtaj olmuyor? *Haber7*. Retrieved from: <http://www.haber7.com/yazarlar/feridenin-gunlugu/884807-erkekler-neden-kurtaj-olmuyor>

⁹⁸ "Ne tuhaftır ki iki kişilik kontenjan usulü üremenin kadrolu işçisi kadın olur. Bu kürtaj olun kadınlar karın boşluğunuzu bir cenine sürekli kiraya vermekten vaz geçin demek değil lakin o beden de ev sahibi kadındır" (ibid).

⁹⁹ Instead of "giving birth", Elönü used the verb "laying eggs" which is a function of chickens in order to emphasize the sequence and uncontrollability of births.

around women's "do's and don'ts" concerning the birth control and in case of pregnancy, she brought a different perspective; namely, she has diverted the discussion from women's so-called "duties" towards men's irresponsibility. Therefore, Esra Elönü voices the idea that women do not have to take all the responsibility of the use of contraception because of "men's laziness."¹⁰⁰

Secondly, she links her argument with the autonomy of women in the decision making process of abortion. By arguing against the perception that sees women as having a duty to consider using a birth control method, she makes a link between birth control and abortion decision. For her, "neither laws nor men decide on abortion." The abortion decision belongs only to women since "women are the decision centers of when and where to put what they carry," namely, she argues that women should decide on to use birth control or not and to have an abortion or not. Moreover, she indicates that defending the women's decision does not mean to call for women not to give birth in any way. It can be interpreted that if a woman wants to, she can decide to give birth. Since "woman is the host of her body," she decides how to use it. This shows her insistence on the women's decision.

Third crucial point in her statement is related with her remark on feminism. While she builds up her argument on the need for women's decision in the abortion, she signifies that instead of obsessing with the word *feminism*, it is better to focus on the notion of justice. While arguing this, she is aware of the fact that the proposition of women's decision is generally voiced by feminists and is met with a negative reaction within the religious communities. If there is injustice, she suggests being fair. Here, she diverts the discourse of feminism in the sense that she deals with the abortion decision from a perspective of justice between men and women. She brings the point out of the notion of

¹⁰⁰ Elönü's emphasis on the laziness of men reminds the banner: "If men could get pregnant, birth control would be from gumball machines and bacon flavoured." A banner was hold by a woman protester at the steps of the Supreme Court during Hobby Lobby Protests. Religious battle rages outside as Supreme Court debates letting businesses opt out of birth control mandate, on March 25 2014. <http://www.ibtimes.com/hobby-lobby-obamacare-case-religious-battle-rages-outside-supreme-court-debates-letting-businesses>

feminism, that is, she refers to the decision as something called feminism but relating it to justice.

In the fourth place, Esra Elönü summons men to sterilize their language about abortion issue: “Men should also have their eagerness and enthusiasm on many topics aborted.” Her contestation can be read from the perspective of Zion-Waldoks, “it is the very act of shutting women out that shuts down their agency and renders feminists at odds with what it means to be a normative religious woman” (Zion-Waldoks, 2015, p.82). Here, this quote firstly tells us that the act of shutting women out by the male discourse means hindering women’s agency. Secondly, Zion-Waldoks argues that such an inhibition of men also causes a conflict in terms of agency between feminists and religious women; “what it means to be a normative religious woman” (ibid). Esra Elönü, by her contest against the men’s *language*, aims to blur this conflictual state since she is a religious woman who demands agency. At the same time, her intervention can be read as a threat to the religious patriarchal status-quo. Zion-Waldoks interprets Hartman as such: “Women, who express and enact (unsanctioned) desires, women-qua-agents, represent ‘a movement toward greater self-definition of needs’ which threatens the religious patriarchal status quo” (ibid).

Elönü continues with challenging men’s power in the abortion issue and men’s sexual appetite by criticizing their lust and desires which need to be aborted. Male discourse creates a power that obstructs establishing fair empathy. She says that men have to do the following: to abort their lust and desires then to establish empathy with what left behind. It can be deduced that unless men get rid of their lust and desires on many issues, it is not possible for them to talk on the women’s issues since they lack empathy. Her critique is significant in the sense that she constructs her argument within a religious position, unlike liberal feminists. She calls men for a confrontation with their praxis regarding their insensitivity on abortion and desires in general. This shows that she does not accept men's position in the discussion and directs criticism against this position. At the same time, Elönü continues with referring to the Quranic verses while building up

her arguments in the same newspaper essay. That is to say, she does not speak out of the borders of her religious faith. For example, she signifies that:

The owner of that body is women. It is she who sins or savors the satisfaction of motherhood; leave them alone and let them decide on when they will do whichever they want to do. Although the holy book Koran mentions the phases of the embryo in the 12th and 14th verses of Mu'minun sura, it does not explain whether these phases are related to the creation of the soul. In one of his hadiths, i.e. sayings, Mohammed the prophet said that soul would be given to the embryo after the 120th day. (Buhari, Bed'ül-halk, 6) There are also other sayings that imply that soul is given after the first 40 days.¹⁰¹ (May 2012)

In this quote, firstly Elönü demands the women's decision in abortion as I discussed above. Herein, she continues her demand by depicting that if having an abortion is sin, then it is the woman who decides on this after all: to commit sin or not. She links the abortion decision to the timing of being ready for motherhood. She does not oppose to the idea of motherhood, rather being a mother is an experience to be delighted in her perception. Conveying the point to the women's decisions whether to be a mother or not, she argues that decision should be given by women. If abortion is taken as a sin, this cannot be an obstacle for women's decision since women can decide to commit sin. This shows us that Elönü constructs equality between men and women through the notion of sin. Further, she indicates that let women to decide on her own when to commit sin or to experience the joy of motherhood. Shortly after, she refers to the Quranic verses related to the ensoulment of the fetus, which are generally used as an evidence for the attribution of abortion as a sin.

¹⁰¹ In Turkish: "O beden in de ev sahibi kadındır. Günahı da kendi işler anneliğ in hazzını ne zaman hangi saat de yaşayacağına bırakın da kendisi karar versin. Kur'an-ı Kerim, ceninin yaratılış evrelerinden Mü'minûn Sûresi 12-14 ayetlerinde bahsetmekle beraber, bu evrelerin ruhun üflen iş i ile bir ilgisinin olup olmadığ ının açıklamasını yapmamaktadır. Hz. Muhammed (sas), bir hadisinde cenine 120. günden sonra ruh üfleneceğ inden bahsetmiştir (Buhârî, Bed'ü'l-halk, 6). Ruhun üflenmesinin ilk kırk günden sonra olduğ una işaret eden hadisler de bulunmaktadır (Müslim, "Kader", 2, 4; Müsned, III, 397)". Elönü, E. (2012, May 29). Erkekler neden kürtaj olmuyor? *Haber7*. Retrieved from: <http://www.haber7.com/yazarlar/feridenin-gunlugu/884807-erkekler-neden-kurtaj-olmuyor>

Elönü's interpretation of Islamic text does not strictly manifest that abortion is a sin. Her point in her speech is not to deal with whether abortion is a sin or not. She explains that there are different interpretations on the ensoulment of the fetus. Her point in this quotation is on that let's suppose abortion is a sin, even now this act is up to women's decision. Her statement is crucial to show us that her ideas about abortion, women's decision and gender equality are not separate from her religious faith. Her desire for the autonomy of women in the abortion decision and basing her argument upon the religious sentiments can be framed as pious critical agency.

Rinaldo's conceptualization of religious women's agency matches with my analysis of intellectual pious women's statements. Rinaldo's pious critical agency concept is similar to Saba Mahmood's pious agency term in the sense that "it captures how an individual's attempt to live up to religious norms can be a form of agency" (Rinaldo, 2014, p.829). Notwithstanding, according to Rinaldo, pious critical agency also encapsulates,

a different process than what Mahmood describes a process in which women try to be virtuous religious subjects through a critical approach to religion. While Mahmood examines Egyptian women's interest in interpreting the Quran (both privately and in prayer group sessions), and shows that at times they interpret it unconventionally, she argues that their doing so is a way of living up to pious norms, and that ultimately they are not seeking to reform the religion (although their involvement may produce changes). This fails to account for the political consciousness that often underlies critical interpretation, as well as for the fact that the critical interpretation that I see in Indonesia often goes beyond overtly religious spaces. As my fieldwork attests, public interpretation is often an essential aspect of this agency. (2014, pp.829-830)

Esra Elönü's account can be understood in line with what Rinaldo puts. In line with Rinaldo's clarification of Mahmood's argument, Elönü's unconventional interpretation is "a way of living up to pious norms" (Rinaldo, 2014, p.829). For Mahmood, women's unconventional interpretation should not necessarily be for the target of reforming religion, yet it may create such a result. Rinaldo furthers Mahmood's argumentation and adds that her research showed that critical interpretation often goes beyond overtly religious spaces. Especially, she points out that "public interpretation is often an essential aspect of this agency" (ibid).

Rinaldo's point in the critical interpretation is useful to understand the statement of Esra Elönü. Since Elönü criticizes men due to their unamenable behavior in taking precautions for pregnancy, her critical interpretation of the abortion issue, likewise what Rinaldo's study presented, goes beyond overtly religious spaces. Moreover, she points out the essential aspect of this agency as public interpretation, which is also the case for my thesis's field as the public debate on abortion.

4.2. Critique of Masculine Language / Discourse

Men's responsibility in contraception and the need for the development of contraceptive methods for the use of men have been discussed widely among various feminist circles during the abortion debate in 2012 (e.g. Karakuş, 2012 in *Taraf* Newspaper). For example, *Abortion is a Right; Decision is Women's Platform*¹⁰² announced that they demand from the government to "increase the dissemination of contraceptive methods especially for men's use."¹⁰³ Moreover, in the bulletin of Socialist Feminist Collective,¹⁰⁴ it is indicated that the representation of men as *inseminating* (tohum saçan) and women as *cultivated land* (ekilen tarla) not only paves the way for warranting

¹⁰² *Abortion is a Right, Decision is Women's Platform* (Kürtaj Haktır Karar Kadınların) was organized by women from various platforms. Feminist women collectives were the major participant of the *Platform*. Women from unions, associations, socialist parties, initiatives and union coordinations did also partake in the platform. *Platform* played an important role in the abortion struggle. For example, by the call of *Platform*, sit-in protest was organized in 22 cities of Turkey simultaneously on 8th June 2012. The platform organized two more marches on 17 June and 28 June by saying "Virginity, Pregnancy and Abortion cannot be blacklisted."

¹⁰³ Sosyalist Feminist Kolektif. (2013, April 7). "Kadınlar hükümetten ne istiyor?" Retrieved from: <http://www.sosyalistfeministkolektif.org/guencel/haberler-duyurular-basin-aciklamalari/847-kad-nlar-huekuemetten-ne-istiyor.html> on March 4, 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Sosyalist Feminist Kolektif. (2012, May 28). "İstedğimiz zaman, istediğimiz kadar çocuk!" Retrieved from: http://sosyalistfeministkolektif.org/XcpjM/WOMNR/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=273:issizlik&catid=14:mutfak&Itemid=22

men's irresponsibility about the birth control issues, but also strengthen the rationale behind this representation (2012).

Men's responsibility with respect to abortion is examined by one of the well-known intellectual religious women, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, in her newspaper article titled as *Erkeklerin Kürtajı*¹⁰⁵ (Abortion of Men) in *Zaman* Newspaper. She indicates that:

Women and the baby that floats inside them; there are two lives mentioned; however, shouldn't three lives be mentioned? The language that is spoken by everyone; from the state to the non-governmental organizations, is definitely distanced, cold and far from understanding. We avoid using the term patriarchy being aware of the fact that it loses its meaning when mentioned a lot; however, it is also very significant to note that both men and the state have the same tone of voice while addressing the issue as a problem belonging merely to women. It is extremely significant that men from both the state and civil society use the same discourse to address the problem as if they have been in consensus among the issue being exclusively a woman problem.- How irrelevant the discourse they use and how is it far from understanding? Men are climbing out of the topic with the discourse of women's bodies, women's lives, and women's decision (since / sneakingly) and as if there is no men's involvement, defect, fault¹⁰⁶ or responsibility. How this discourse even convinces women that we see there is no indication of calling men to take responsibility in the matter and invite these men to say that "just a moment, there is something referred to a piece from my soul" on the banners¹⁰⁷ during the (women's) protests.¹⁰⁸ (2012, June 13)

¹⁰⁵ Ramazanoğlu, Y. (2012, June 13). Erkeklerin kürtajı. *Zaman* Newspaper. Retrieved from http://www.zaman.com.tr/yorum_erkeklerin-kurtaji_1302783.html

¹⁰⁶ Here, it may sound problematic to label the agency of men that causes pregnancy since it implies that unwanted pregnancy, viz., the cause of abortion is an issue to be called faulty. In fact, there is an underlying message that if sexual intercourse will not bring about a baby, then men and women are sharing the fault of their act, namely having been into sexual intercourse.

¹⁰⁷ These banners refer to the ones prepared to spread the word during the protest that have been organized by feminist women and supported by masses of women. Ramazanoğlu wants to signify that within the context of these protests there were no slogans for calling men to take or share responsibility about the abortion.

¹⁰⁸ The Turkish version of the quote is "Kadın ve içinde yüzen bebek; iki can var ortada, oysa üç candan söz edilmeli değil mi peki? Devletten sivil toplum örgütlerine, yukarıdan aşağıya kullanılan dil ne kadar soğuk ve anlamaktan uzak. Çok kullanılınca etkisizleştiği için ataerkilden söz etmekten kaçınmaya çalışıyoruz ama söz birliği etmiş gibi aynı dili konuşan devletten ya da sivil yaşamdan erkeklerin meseleyi bir kadın sorunu gibi ele almaları son derece manidar. Kadının bedeni, kadının canı, kadının kararı söylemiyle işin içinden sıyrılmaya çalışan, olayda erkeğin hiçbir dahli, kusuru, kabahati, sorumluluğu

Ramazanoğlu's quotation can be reviewed from several perspectives that match with "pious critical agency". First, she brings a criticism towards men by condemning them for not evaluating the abortion phenomenon from a perspective that includes/ demonstrates men's agency and responsibility. She signifies that abortion debate is dominantly taken into account with a consideration on the baby and the mother with an exclusion of the third dimension, viz. men. This approach enables these men to take no account of their role in the matter. She refers to men as "the third spirit" which should be taken into account while debating on abortion. Her argument is that men are also included in the matter and have imperfections, fault and responsibility.

Subsequent to this determination, Ramazanoğlu criticizes the masculine discourse that evaluates abortion as exclusively women's issue/ problem. She mainly directs the criticism to men from the state and civic life who contributed to the discussion as if they agree on all hands to speak the same language. The male/state discourse dominates the women's life, women body and women's decision, which gives too much emphasis on women's role and responsibility. According to Ramazanoğlu through this discourse, men try to climb out of the abortion issue. Ramazanoğlu's determination goes in line with Mary O'Brien in terms of the calling for male historical praxis through reproduction. Taking into account what O'Brien (1981) pointed out on the importance of the causal aspects of fertilization as "that it confirms human reproduction as historical process rather than as brute biological accident" (as cited in Him, 2010, p.56); we can deduce that human reproduction cannot be evaluated solely over women body. In this sense, dealing with reproduction and whereat abortion is not only an issue of biology or health; rather as O'Brien suggests, the 'process of reproduction' ensures a theoretical framework from which we can observe 'male historical praxis.'

yokmuş edasıyla dolaşıma sokulan söylem, sinsice kadını bile nasıl ikna ediyor ki, pankartlarda erkeği sorumluluk almaya, 'benim de canımdan bir parçadan söz ediliyor, bir dakika' demeye davet eden kelimeler yok." Ramazanoğlu, Y. (2012, June 13). Erkeklerin kürtajı. *Zaman Newspaper*.

Second crucial point in Ramazanoğlu's account is her criticism to feminists through addressing the women's protests for the right to abortion during the debate. She refers to those protests and women marching¹⁰⁹ since she observes the similar male discourse within these protests in the sense that no motto or banner calls men for taking responsibility in abortion issue. Thereupon, Ramazanoğlu interprets this situation as women's being persuaded by the male discourse to defend only the women's right to decide, women's life and body. The limitation of the struggle within this discourse is problematic for her so she contests activist women who organized protest for the right to abortion exclusively based on women's body and decision. Although the men's way of taking part with the issue is the main problem in Ramazanoğlu's newspaper essay, she links this problem to the women's slogans during protests. To make it clear, Ramazanoğlu asserts that the dominant discourse was so effective that it convinced even women to talk only about women's body and decision. In her quote, the banners refer to the ones used during the protests of women against to abortion restriction. Ramazanoğlu challenges the context of the slogans why there is no indication for men to be called into action. In other words, she questions why activist women have not thought about recalling men for their responsibility in this issue. Herein her critique comprises both men's irresponsible approach and activist women's inadequacy to reveal this irresponsibility in their struggle.

As a third considerable theme, it is useful to analyze the underlying emphasis of the religious expression while depicting the pregnant women. Ramazanoğlu begins her statement with a description of two spirits/ lives as "the woman and the baby who swims in." She prefers to use "baby" to refer to the fetus. This is a conscious preference of her. As I indicated previously, the abortion debate was tended to be taken into account in a dichotomous way: on the one side the supporters of abortion right (pro-stance) and on

¹⁰⁹ She refers to the demonstrations of Abortion can not be Banned Campaign and Abortion is a Right Platform. The dominant discourse in those protests is framed by the slogans such as "abortion is a right, decision is women's", "my body my decision", "hands off my body", etc.

the other side the opponents of the abortion (con-stance). These two stances can be distinguished accordingly how they approach to the fetus; as a living human (baby) or as a fetus that is not necessarily living being. As Zeynep Direk summarizes:

On the pole that those who are against abortion, it is advocated that the fetus has a right to life as soon as it drops into the womb /uterus. In contrast, on the pole that those who advocate for the liberation of abortion, it is accepted not to be true that the premise of regarding the fetus as a 'person' or 'human.' (2012)¹¹⁰

When we consider her public statement, she prefers to use “baby” in a similar vein with anti-abortionists. Nevertheless, this does not mean that she shares the anti-abortionists’ opinions unconditionally. Contrarily, she constructs her argument just to oppose to the arguments of the anti-abortionists in the sense that they view the abortion issue exclusively as a women’s issue. Her use of “baby” is complementary for/with her contest to the anti-abortionist men’s irresponsibility in the matter. In other words, she reminds to men that there is a possible baby who needs to be considered while discussing on abortion; not just women's duties are in charge but also men's. The emphasis on three spirit/ life paves her way to confront men with their irresponsibility. Therefore, it can be said that she sets about her argument from a religious point, and then she ends up with a critical approach towards men, including who are opponents of the abortion. Moreover, within the same starting point, she also criticizes feminists who can be included to the ones who advocate for the liberation of abortion. Their discourse during the protests excludes the men's responsibility too. Ramazanoğlu’s statement is a good example to show that it is reductionist to discuss abortion from a dichotomous fashion. The intervention of intellectual religious women to the debate both dissolves the binary tone of the arguments and blurs the dichotomy of religion/feminism.

The fourth important discussion point in her statement binds her approach to patriarchy and men’s language. First, from state to NGOs, she points out the lack of empathy and understanding of the language from top to bottom. Here, the determination of the use of

¹¹⁰ For a detailed discussion on this see: Direk, Z. (January 4, 2012) “Benim Bedenim/ Bedenim Benim”. Retrieved from: <https://zeynepdirek.wordpress.com/2013/01/04/benim-bedenim-bedenim-benim/>

language from top to bottom is important in her criticism since it has an implication that her critic is towards the male/state discourse. She identifies this discourse as “far from understanding” and “distant/cold” in the sense that their statements are far away from grasping the whole dimensions of the matter. Second, she says that the men’s language from the state and civic life are the same as if they agree on all hands to speak the same language. She thinks that this sameness is meaningful although she indicates that they are trying to avoid mentioning patriarchy. Her reason for trying not to use patriarchy as a term is that it becomes ineffective when frequently used. In her statement, it is remarkable that she does not specify herself who avoids talking about patriarchy, but *we*. Her sentence refers to the religious community by signifying “we”, a group who avoids this jargon. Such an inference can be made that although she normally accompanies this avoidance of using patriarchy, for this specific case she determines that men from the state and civic life talk in an alliance that reminds her patriarchy.

Moreover, in the same newspaper essay she comments on the protest that was organized by men for the liberation of abortion at the time of abortion debate. On 8th of June 2012, a group of men from the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (Ezilenlerin Sosyalist Partisi /ESP) organized a protest¹¹¹ in Ankara against the state’s discourse on women’s body. The main banner of their demonstration was as such: “Abortion is a right, pull off your hands from the female body.” Two days later, male activists from the political parties and mass organizations organized a protest¹¹² on 10th of June in Istanbul. They carried a banner “Ban on Abortion is Violence against Women.”

Yıldız Ramazanoğlu comments on men’s march, though which protests she intended to in her declaration is not clear. Her response is:

¹¹¹ “Response to the Ban on Abortion from Men of ESP” (8 June 2012). Retrieved from: <http://www.etha.com.tr/Haber/2012/06/08/guncel/espli-erkeklerden-kurtaj-tepkisi/>

¹¹² “Erkeklerden kurtaj Eylemi” (10, June 2012). Retrieved from: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/erkeklerden-kurtaj-eylemi/gundem/gundemdetay/11.06.2012/1551980/default.htm> Moreover, there is a video from the protest: <http://www.demokrathaber.net/boyle-olur-erkeklerin-kurtaj-eylemi-video,49.html>

Men march for the right of abortion for women. This does not appeal to me at all; on the contrary, it sounds definitely ironic and it masks their guilt. According to the published bulletin, abortion is a right that women can realize with their final decision. It is not men who should utter decisions on this topic. In their bulletin, they emphasize the attacks of the patriarchal state to women and underline the fact that they reject to speak in the name of women. Then, they should stop speaking in the name of women, but speak for themselves. Do men have anything to say to their own kind who forces women to have abortion, do not value their lives, never give trust or fidelity, and force women to have abortion just for the sake of their own freedom and joy, or exert violence on women? Or to the ones who do not care about their own children (leave aside the unborn ones) using the excuse of having a lot of things to do at the office for the sake of his family or the homeland? And to especially ones who brag about themselves as being the hero of achievements in really big-business? “Decision should be made by women” is a motto that looks as if it creates freedom to women whereas it merely signals turning their back on women and running away. This is what we have been experiencing.¹¹³ (Ramazanoğlu, 2012)

Ramazanoğlu, firstly criticizes the men's marching for the women's right to abortion. For her, these protests are ironic in terms of men's position in the debate. According to public bulletin of men, it is indicated that abortion can only be performed by the decision of women. Further, they signify that men do not have the right to speak with authority in the abortion issue, so they say that they reject to speak in the name of women. At this point, Ramazanoğlu interferes to their statement by arguing that if so then men should be quiet in the name of women but to speak in the name of themselves. This contestation is crucial concerning how Ramazanoğlu approach to the “women's decision” discourse. For her, the main problem is the men's disregarding of their

¹¹³ The original version of the quote is: “Erkekler, kadınların kürtaj hakları için yürüyor. Hiç sıcak gelmedi bana, tersine, çok ironik ve suç bastırıcı bir yanı var. Yayınlanan çağrı metnine göre kürtaj, kadınların nihai kararıyla gerçekleştirebilecekleri bir hakmış. Bu konuda ahkâm kesmek erkeklere düşmezmiş. Bildiride ataerkil devletin kadınlara yönelik saldırılarından söz ediyor ve kadınlar adına konuşmayı reddettiklerini söylüyorlar. O halde kadınlar adına susmalı ama kendi adlarına konuşmalılar. Bu dünyada kadınları kürtaja sürükleyen, yaşamlarına değer vermeyen, güven ve sadakati esirgeyen, özgürlük ve keyif adına kürtaj için baskı yapan hatta şiddet uygulayan erkeklere sözünüz var mı? Peki işlerimin çokluğu, görüşmelerimin yoğunluğu, gecelerimin doluluğu yüzünden vatan için, millet için çocuklarımla yüzünü bile göremiyorum diyerek bırakın doğmamış bebekleri, hayata gelmiş çocuklarımdan bile ilgiyi esirgeyenlere... Bir de bunu, büyük işlerin adamı olmanın göstergesi olarak takdim edenlere ne demeli. “Karar kadının” üsttenciliğiyle kadına özgür bir alan açıyormuş gibi yaparak kaçmak ve kadına ve bebeğe sırtını dönmekten başka bir şey değil yaşadıklarımız.” Ramazanoğlu, Y. (2012, June 13). Erkeklerin kürtajı. *Zaman Newspaper*. Retrieved from http://www.zaman.com.tr/yorum_erkeklerin-kurtaji_1302783.html

responsibility simultaneously too much emphasis is made on women's decision. She deals with the decision discourse with a different perspective; namely, to reveal how men escape from their role in the abortion issue by the help of the women's decision discourse.

Further, Ramazanoğlu canalizes her criticism towards another direction. She asks whether the men who protest the ban on abortion question the male behaviors that cause pressure on women's lives. Do they have a say to the men who engage in violence towards women? She directs the attention from the abortion operation to the process before the abortion. Namely, for her the decision of abortion cannot be analyzed in an isolated manner; rather it should be evaluated in relation with the causes. For example, men's attitude to force women to have an abortion should be considered. She asks that do activist men have any response for those men who force women to abortion and even commit violence. Moreover, she criticizes the men who deny care to their children let alone unborn babies. Her target is the irresponsibility of men within family. She brings a new dimension to the decision of women issue in such a way that men get away from their duties with the discourse of "decision is women's."

She signifies that the male discourse as "disinterested and inconsiderate." This expression is momentous since by this, she implies that when men are not dealing the abortion issue from men's perspective, then the other contributions of men to the debate targeting women are meaningless. In other words, she does not find any consistency in men's responses to this issue when they do not point to their own fault¹¹⁴, involvement or responsibility.

To conclude, Rinaldo's conceptual framework provides an understanding in the intellectual religious women's agency concerning both their contest against various irresponsible behaviors and language of men and their construction of confrontation

¹¹⁴ Here, the agency of men that causes pregnancy is labelled as a fault may sound problematic for it implies that unwanted pregnancy, viz., the cause of abortion is an issue to be called faulty. In fact, there is an underlying message that if sexual intercourse will not bring about a baby, then men and women are sharing the fault of their act, namely having been into sexual intercourse.

within a religious ground. Rinaldo (2013) in her book *Mobilizing Piety*, through her research on religious women in Indonesia asserts that Islam starts to be a primary source of meaning and identity. According to her research on women activists, women's empowerment and equality are demanded by drawing on religion; at the same time, some activists women operate religion to advocate for a more religious/Islamic nation. In line with this view, in this chapter I discussed the notion of agency from the point of "pious critical agency" approach. For this end, two instances are pointed out: the first one is the criticism towards men's irresponsibility in the use of birth control methods, and the second one is the critique of masculine language with respect to abortion. These points are elaborated to understand how intellectual religious women exhibit agency in the abortion debate.

CHAPTER 5

DEVOTED RESISTANCE APPROACH TO POLITICAL AGENCY

Tanya Zion-Waldoks in her article, *Politics of Devoted Resistance: Agency, Feminism, and Religion among Orthodox Agunah Activists in Israel*, deals with religious women's agency and she aims at exploring "how religious women become legitimate actors in the public sphere" and she "analyzes their agency, its meanings, capacities, and transformative aims" (2015, p.73). Before elucidating Zion-Waldoks's conceptualization of pious women's agency, I would like to give an account of a critique of humanist perception of agency, which is helpful to understand the discussion on pious women's agency.

As discussed above, agency is typically "defined as people's capacity to make choices and take action in the world" (Rinaldo, 2014). Agency in social theory has long been disputed as a "sociological dilemma between structure and action following a modernist line" (Bilge, 2008, p.12). Nevertheless, "the question of whether social structures or individual agency determine human action" is an important area of study. Sirma Bilge quotes Phyllis Mack's definition of agency as "the free exercise of self-willed behavior" (p.12). Basing on this definition, Bilge argues that the humanist conception of agency is a deeply liberal concept liberal "in its philosophical sense," "closely linked to the transcendental humanist subject, a rational, free-willed, choosing agent" (ibid). The liberal account of agentic subject has been mainly criticized by post-structuralism. Poststructuralist critical account argues that "humanist assumptions" are making agency "a universal trait of pre-social, autonomous moral agent" (p.13). In contrast, as Bilge cites from Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin "human subjectivity is constructed by ideology (Althusser), language (Lacan) or discourse (Foucault), [therefore] any action performed by that subject must be also to some extent a consequence of those things" (as cited in

Bilge, 2008, p.13). Their critique's main axis consists of the "antagonistic conception of the relation between the subject and social structure" (ibid). In this line of thought, the theories of subjectivity have been extended.¹¹⁵

The importance of poststructuralist critique rests on its "reflection on the hegemonic consequences of an uncritical use of humanist agency" (Bilge, 2008, p.14) . That is, within this position, religious women's agency is located in seemingly irrational acts such a "submission" (ibid). Later, postcolonial feminist scholars have challenged the submission frame and a new paradigm of resistance started to be taken into account in analyzing agency. As I indicated previously, the approaches towards the agency of religious women within submission versus resistance stances have also been challenged. Saba Mahmood directs attention to the inadequacy of these perspectives in the sense that both fail to address the "questions of piety, morality, modesty, virtue and divinity" (2005, p.16).

In line with Mahmood's point, pious agency is questioned. However, there are two dominant perspectives for this end. One is the portraying of pious "devotion as counterproductive for women's agency" (Bilge, 2010, p.21); and the other one is to "translate religious drives into intelligible categories from a secular perspective" (ibid). Sirma Bilge elaborates that the deficiency of two perspectives lies in their modernist line. In other words, when the "relation between the subject and social forces" is conceptualized from "a modernist line," to wit, subjects are crafted "in oppositional relation to an external system" (ibid). Bilge elucidates that on the one side the subordination frame rests, and on the other the resistance frame, like Burke's classification. The crucial point for Bilge is that, although these two frames are distinct

¹¹⁵ At this point, Butler's objection is momentous in the sense that she negates the tendency to seek agency in a "conscious expression of purposeful intent" (1993). Butler's refusal can be understood by Bilge's clarification. Bilge reflects that Butler draws on Foucault's theory of 'subjectivation' and power, while contending that a conception of agency leaning upon "an 'epistemological account of identity', on a pre-discursive self, should be replaced by the one locating the problematic within 'practices of signification'" (Bilge, 2008, p.13)

from each other¹¹⁶; they share the same ground in the understanding of agency. That is, following Mahmood's critique, it is asserted that both perspectives reduce agency to the "capacity to realize one's own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles" (Bilge, 2008, p.21). Such a comprehension of agency, as Mahmood argues, locates "the political and moral autonomy of subjects in the face of power" (as cited in Bilge, 2008, p.21). Therefore, these frames are inadequate to address religious motivations.

Considering specifically the women who are devoted to the gender-traditional religions, there are multiple and distinctive interrogations in the sense that how religious women become legitimate political actors, for instance the studies of Rinaldo (2010) shows "how their involvement transform the public sphere, and whether it promotes gender equality or not" (Zion-Waldoks, 2015, p.74). First, the subordination thesis is challenged. Then, Mahmood (2005) and Avishai (2008) challenge the resistance thesis by reading "performance of gender-traditional religious norms as a form of agency" (Zion-Waldoks, 2015, p.76). Avishai specifically named her approach as "doing religion" which "emphasizes subjectivication as a form of agency". For her, religious women's "experience of complying for religious ends" is consistent with the subjectivication. At this point, Zion-Waldoks points out that "the debate regarding whether religious women have agency raises questions about the very meaning of 'agency' – a pertinent yet contested concept for both modernity and feminism" (ibid).

As Avishai, Jafar, and Rinaldo (2015) clarify in the introductory article of the *Journal Gender and Society's* special volume on religion and gender, Zion-Waldoks "challenges current dichotomous conceptualizations like resistance / compliance, autonomy / dependence, and feminism / religion demonstrating how theorizing from such cases can

¹¹⁶ The first frame, the subordination thesis, ascribes the religious women as non-agentic relying on the proposition that "one cannot choose freely to submit oneself." The second frame, "the resistance thesis," on the contrary, assigns women a role of being rational-choice-oriented dissidents.

lead to more nuanced theoretical paradigms” (Avishai, Jafar, & Rinaldo, p.16). Zion-Waldoks is influenced by Mahmood (2005) regarding her rejection of the “liberal identification of agency with rationality, self-control, or uninhibited free will” (2015, p.77). They rather focus on docile obedience to religious norms in their investigation of pious women's agency. Zion-Waldoks furthers her inspiration by basing her ground on the notion that “we are all relational beings and agency is ‘an action within relationship’” (ibid). Leaning on the Mackenzie and Stoljar’s relational autonomy perspective, she argues that agentic competencies need to be analysed within religious relationships (ibid).

Zion-Waldoks suggest the concept “devoted resistance” for the understanding of pious women’s agency by asserting that:

Using the concept of “devoted resistance,” this study straddles these divergent lines of inquiry, innovatively locating agency in Agunah activists’ resistance within a collective feminist movement as devout subjects pursuing religious aims. Attuned to activists’ religious grammars, drawn from historic Jewish tradition and contemporary Modern-Orthodoxy in Israel, I examine what agency means within relationships among Agunah activists (as pious relational subjects), divine will, Jewish/Orthodox discursive and normative traditions, institutions, and society. (ibid)

Zion-Waldoks introduces the term “devoted resistance” on the ground of her research about the Agunah religious women. Her main intention is to show that devout subjects can pursue religious aims in their political activities. She claims that Agunah activists comply with religious grammars by basing on both “historic Jewish tradition and contemporary Modern-Orthodoxy in Israel.” Within this context, she aims to analyze religious women’s agency with a consideration their understanding of divine will, religious traditions and institutions. Zion-Waldoks’ attempt provides a ground to understand religious women’s agency from a perspective that enables to see that pursuing religious aims can be perceived as agency. Hence, she suggests the conceptualization of devoted resistance for the understanding of such religious agency.

For my research, intellectual religious women's intervention to the statements of male government representatives can be read from the perspective of Zion-Waldoks' devoted resistance. Specifically, two prominent discussion points provide such an analysis for the statements of women. First, the Health Minister Recep Akdağ made a declaration regarding the raped women and abortion. Second, the head of Religious Affairs Mehmet Gómez made a declaration assigning abortion as sin and "religiously impermissible." The reactions of women towards these declarations are significant in the sense that they show a devoted relationship "with the religious structures in which they are embedded" and this devotion informs "their ability to resist culture from within and transform the public sphere (2015, p.75).

In her study, Zion-Waldoks conceptualizes the religious Orthodox women's activism that aims to "advocate women's rights to divorce." Those religious women are voicing, "[a] moral critique of tradition and its agents precisely because they are devoutly devoted to them" (2015, p.73). According to Zion-Waldoks "such political agency is conceptualized as 'devoted resistance': critique within relationship, enabled by cultural schema, and comprising both interpretive skills and 'relational-autonomy' capacities" (ibid).

Her account matches with the statements of intellectual religious women that I examine in this chapter. The debate on raped women and whether the state will look after the baby was considerable regarding women's construction of their arguments within a religious perspective and resisting through religious sentiments. Embedded in and activated by Islamic faith, intellectual religious women voice "a moral critique of tradition" since they aim at the male Muslim interpretation of the Islamic "tradition and its agents" precisely because pious women are "devoutly devoted to the tradition and its agents" (ibid).

In Zion-Waldoks' line of thought, I examine the case of intellectual religious women in the abortion debate as defying "simple binary categorizations, inviting deconstruction of many either-or conceptualizations characteristic of scholarship on the intersection of gender, religion, and politics" (Zion- Waldoks, 2015, p. 74).

5.1. Reflections on the Relation between Abortion and Raped Women: “Are Women Soulless Carriers?”

The Health Minister, Recep Akdağ contributed to the abortion debate by emphasizing the Minister’s preparation of a report on abortion. He made a controversial statement concerning raped women. He declared, “[s]ometimes, things are said like that ‘What will happen if something bad happened to the mother?’ If necessary, the state will look after the baby.”(2012, May 31)¹¹⁷

Akdağ’s statement highlights two different points on the ground of abortion operation. One is the proposition that the state would take care of the babies of the raped mothers; and the other is his advice to women to give birth in such a case (Istanbul Feminist Collective, 2102, June 4). Actually “pregnancies resulting from rape and incest” were previously formed “a necessity discourse” for an abortion operation (Komut, 2009, p.79), and it was widely accepted that “a woman can get an abortion freely in these cases as it is unfair for the woman to be have to remember this event for at least nine months” (ibid). However, in 2012 during the abortion debate, Akdağ and the ones who share his point oppose abortion by claiming that “child of rape”¹¹⁸ (*tecavüz çocuğu*) would be brought up under the state control. Therefore, his account offers that there is no need for an abortion operation for the women who are raped.

Moreover, Recep Akdağ described his understanding of abortion in his speech as such, “[a]bortion means scratching away a living being from a mother’s womb. You are cutting off its organs and its body. You are destroying it.”¹¹⁹ He was describing a

¹¹⁷ The Turkish version of the quote is: “Bazen, ‘Annenin başına kötü bir şey gelmişse ne olacak?’ vesaire gibi şeyler söyleniyor. Gerekirse öyle bir bebeğe devlet bakar”

¹¹⁸The declaration of Health Minister Recep Akdağ is in Radikal Newspaper. See: Radikal. Retrieved from: http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/bakan_akdag_tecavuz_bebegine_devlet_bakar-1089651

¹¹⁹ Ministry of Health Prepare "Report on Abortion " (2012, May 30). *Bianet Newspaper*. Retrieved from <http://bianet.org/bianet/gender/138718-ministry-of-health-prepare-report-on-abortion>,

scenario of a murderer woman and a victim baby. This kind of depiction of abortion serves to blame women as cruel beings and therefore aims to manipulate women in their decisions.

Akdağ names babies that are born from pregnancies due to rape assault as “child of rape.” Without questioning the issue of rape, the entitlement of newborn babies as “child of rape” has several problems. Firstly, in this case, rape is taken as a natural phenomenon; namely, Akdağ does not take side against rape culture but accepts it as a norm. Secondly, such a naming not only legitimates the rape culture against women but also discriminates babies that were born because of unwanted pregnancy due to rape. Akdağ embarks upon labeling babies qua the child of rape, which causes the marginalization of these children in the society. His elaboration that relates rape to a potentiality of having baby, apart from the normalizing the cruel act against women, depicts how women body is objectified.¹²⁰ In line with Ruth Miller’s argument on *biopolitical womb* (2007, p.28), Akdağ’s statement serves for the expropriating women’s womb. Therefore, his description of “a murderer mother” who aims to have an abortion goes in line with his effort to advice women to give birth even though they are raped and get pregnant. His depiction of abortion as a cruel act and his advice to pregnant women to give birth show us that Akdağ does not see woman as an individual who can decide on her own and if she decides to abort this is a murder. His line of thought is an example to the objectification of women in the sense that he describes women only through motherhood.¹²¹ According to the public bulletin of Gender and Women Studies

¹²⁰ Foucault’s theory of bio-politics provides an understanding for Ruth Miller who explained the “bio-political womb” by referring to Foucault’s theory of governmentality. Miller’s articulation of Foucault provides an understanding in how the government’s effort to restrict abortion paves the way for the objectification of women bodies. See: Miller, R. (2007). *The limits of bodily integrity abortion, adultery, and rape legislation in comparative perspective*. Ashgate and Foucault, M., & Bertani, M. (2003). *Society must be defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*. New York: Picador.

¹²¹ Consequent to Akdağ’s statement, according to the news dated 18th July 2012, the Ministry of Health prepared prominent articles of the “Reproductive Health Law Draft”. According to this draft: “Speaking of pregnancies after rape, those under 15 will be object to judicial decision as calling for parent permission might oppose the decision and advantage of the child.” This article is a confrontation that if a raped woman becomes pregnant, it is an issue of juridical decision. Unless that woman is under 15, she has to give birth. In case the woman is under 15, then the issue will be consulted with the family and accordingly

Department of Middle East Technical University (2012, June 17) on abortion debate, abortion restriction reveals that women are aimed to be controlled by attributing importance to women's "fundamental" feature to give birth and preventing sexual deviance by keeping women within the institution of marriage and motherhood. The bulletin argues that this process can be called as "the project of trivializing women".

The chairperson of the Parliamentary's Human Rights Commission Ayhan Sefer Üstün specified a similar attitude towards raped women. He states that:

In Bosnia, women were raped but they had given birth. If they were killed in their mother's womb, there would have been much more offence than those rapists did... the foetus does not have to take the blame of his/her rapist father's crime; the women who is raped have to give birth. When the mother does not want to look after the baby, the state can take it. (Radikal, June 1, 2012)

As it could be seen in Üstün's instance, he is against abortion in any case. Akdağ's and Üstün's statements have evoked many reactions from women both from secular and religious circles. Religious women point this issue in their articles by criticizing women's identification as "carrier" (taşıyıcı) and "coolie" (hamal).

To begin with, Cihan Aktaş's reaction is significant. She has been one of the most important figures in terms of intellectual and theoretical background of the veiled women movement and today she plays an influential role in politics via being a newspaper columnist. In her article, *Is woman a soulless carrier?* Cihan Aktaş (2012, June 4) reflects that:

In the text of mine, I want to bring my idea, which is, fiqh language about abortion must be rehandled considering the factor of woman, forward. Fundamentally, we can even think that, mostly, traditional fiqh is softer about issues that interest women primarily, when we consider the 'masculine' power language which is currently used in the abortion discussions and whose authority

abortion will be allowed. "Kürtaj Yasasının Ayrıntıları Belli Oldu" Internet News. Retrieved on June 3, 2014 <http://www.internethaber.com/kurtaj-yasasi-kurtj-tasarisi-recep-akdag-ensestiliskiler-siniriirtesi-gun-hapi-443748h.htm>

tone is increased because of the political showdowns. In this respect, it seems to be important to me that having the sensitivity about the new content and wording, which is added by politics while discussing the issue of fiqh blending in its own context, also hurts the religious context's purpose. In fact, what is required to be done must be the reverse and a language of fiqh, which regards women's sensitivity in a topic like abortion, must be developed. Consequently, it cannot be said that women factor, which is especially affected directly, is treated due attentive treatment and spoken to in the attentive language required, about abortion in current times.¹²²

...

On one side, there are woman fractions who think with an absolute understanding of possession of their body that they are the arbiters of the faith of the fetus, to wit a human in continuation of being; and on the other side there are provisions that create the impression to fictionalize pregnant women as carriers that are devoid of nerves and spirit with all its reasons and results.¹²³

...

While the Creator's clemency, his gracious and compassionate properties are eulogized; it also matters to develop a refined approach related to the body that carries the foetus at the same time. The message that is transmitted through the statement of the Head of the Commission of Human Rights of Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM), Ayhan Sefer Üstün as 'Foetus cannot take the blame of a rapist father, the woman who is raped must give birth. When she gives birth, the state would give the necessary support to her' is the thought that women are seen as incubators. Criticizing this kind of language as part of the

¹²² The Turkish version of the quote is: "Bu yazımda, kürtaj konusundaki fıkıh dilinin kadın unsuru dikkate alınarak yeniden ele alınması gerektiğine dair düşüncemi öne sürmek istiyorum. Esasında geleneksel fıkıh çoğu zaman öncelikle kadınları ilgilendiren konularda daha yumuşak diye düşünebiliriz bile, halihazırda kürtaj tartışmalarında kullanılan ve siyasi hesaplaşmalar nedeniyle de otorite tonu keskinleşen "eril" iktidar dilini dikkate aldığımızda. Bu açıdan siyaset dilinin fıkıh konusunu kendi bağlamında harmanlayarak tartışırken kattığı yeni içerik ve üslubun dini bağlamın meramına da zarar vermesi konusunda bir duyarlılığa sahip olunması önemli görünüyor bana. Oysa yapılması gereken tam tersi olmalı ve kürtaj gibi bir konuda kadınların duyarlılığını da hesaba katan bir fıkıh dili geliştirilmeli. Dolayısıyla özellikle doğrudan etkilenen kadın unsurunun hakettiği özenli muamele ve dille konuşulduğu söylenemez, kürtajın şimdilerde." Aktaş, C. (2012, June 4). Kadın Ruhsuz Bir Taşıyıcı mı? *Dünya Bülteni* Newspaper. Retrieved from: <http://www.dunyabulteni.net/?aType=yazarHaber&ArticleID=17941>

¹²³ The original version in Turkish is: "Bir tarafta bedeni üzerindeki mutlak tasarruf anlayışıyla ceninin, yani oluşmayı sürdüren bir insanın kaderi üzerinde de söz sahibi olduğunu düşünen kadın kesimleri, diğer tarafta ise hamile kadını bütün sebepleri ve sonuçlarıyla birlikte sinirden ve ruhtan yoksun bir taşıyıcı olarak kurguladığı izlenimi uyandıran bir ahkâm..." Aktaş, C. (2012, June 4). Kadın Ruhsuz Bir Taşıyıcı mı? *Dünya Bülteni* Newspaper.

consideration that reverences woman and motherhood intangibly seems to be important to me by force of the respect to women's existence. Otherwise, a consideration in the form of Muslim people see women as incubators only, rather than seeing them as respectable/significant individuals, would consider itself excused in front of these cold, harsh statements. But what is more important is that our 'conservatism' about the language of these statements...¹²⁴ (ibid)

From this quote, two major themes emerge that I would like to focus on. On the one hand, she posits her opinion on the language of fiqh law¹²⁵ and masculine power language. On the other hand, she points out the need to consider women's body in a more nuanced way through religious interpretations.

Yet, as a third instance, she criticizes the discourse of women's protests in which secular women demand their right to have control upon their body, though this point is not discussed under this chapter. In short, for Aktaş, those women think that they have the right to comment on and to decide on their body which at the same time means to have an absolute control in the fate of a human in continuation of being. Then she focuses on the intervention to the fetus, rather than to the control of women on their body, in other words the bodily integrity of women. Here, she directs criticisms to women who are acting within the discourse of "my body my decision," which is examined in Chapter 3.

In the first instance, Aktaş points out the masculine language and says, "[s]uch a discourse towards women should be criticized as a requirement of the conception which glorifies women and motherhood in an abstract way." This criticism seems important to

¹²⁴ The Turkish version is "Yaradan'ın şefkati, rahman ve rahim özellikleri sitayişle hatırlanırken, cenini taşıyan bedene ilişkin de ilkeli, aynı zamanda incelikli bir yaklaşımın geliştirilmesi büyük önem taşıyor. TBMM İnsan Hakları Komisyonu Başkanı Ayhan Sefer Üstün'ün 'Tecavüzcü babanın suçunu cenin çekemez, tecavüze uğrayan kadın doğurmalıdır. Doğurunca devlet ona gerekli yardımı yapar' şeklindeki açıklamasının kimi kadınlara ilettiği, bir kuluçka makinesi gibi görüldüğü düşüncesi oluyor. Bu tür bir dilin kadını ve anneliği soyut bir şekilde yücelten telakkinin bir parçası olarak eleştirilmesi, kadın varlığına bir saygının gereği olarak bana önemli geliyor. Aksi takdirde Müslümanların kadınları saygın/anamlı kişilikler olarak değil de salt kuluçka makineleri gibi gördüğü şeklindeki bir telakki bu soğuk, sert açıklamalar karşısında kendini mazur bilecek. Fakat daha önemlisi bizim bu açıklamaların dili konusundaki 'muhafazakârlığımız'..." Aktaş, C. (2012, June 4). Kadın Ruhsuz Bir Taşıyıcı mı? *Dünya Bülteni* Newspaper.

¹²⁵ Fiqh law refers *fıkıh* in Turkish

her as a requirement for “the respect to the presence of women” (ibid). She warns that, otherwise, the conception that Muslims’ regarding women as incubators rather than respectful/meaningful personalities, will justify itself. This warning is important to highlight since Aktaş worries on the perception on religion. She argues that in infact Islamic doctrines values the presence of women and such interpretations of Ayhan Sefer Üstün and alike not compatible with religion. Hence, her concern is not to destroy the image of religion on the women issue. Her reaction stems from that Islam values women concerning women’s body during pregnancy and as a mother. Therefore, the insensitive language towards women by assigning them as “carriers” is not acceptable on the ground of religion. We can deduce that her contest towards the male language stems from her devotion, which can be framed under the concept of devoted resistance.

Cihan Aktaş continues her review by pointing out, “[i]t is important to approach in a nuanced way to the body that is carrying the fetus; just like as praising God’s compassion, the features of Compassionate and Mercifulness.”

Secondly, she criticizes the discourse that assigns women a carrier role that “devoid of spirit.” Religious government representative men adopt this discourse, and Aktaş refers to this discourse as *evoking the impression that construct* to assign women the carrier role. Aktaş reviews not only the women’s psychology after rape but also the process of pregnancy. She criticizes the views that are mentioned by Akdağ towards pregnant women who do not want the baby of the rapist. She describes Akdağ’s attitude as evoking the impression that he fictionalizes pregnant women as a “carrier who is without nerves and spirit” (2012).¹²⁶ Here, she condemns the approaches towards pregnant women that see women as an object or an instrument for the production of babies. According to Cihan Aktaş, it is “extremely repulsive” to evaluate the pregnant women as “carriers like robots.”

¹²⁶ Aktaş, C. (2012, June 4). “Kadın Ruhsuz bir Taşıyıcı mı?”. *Dünya Bülteni*. Retrieved from <http://www.dunyabulteni.net/?aType=yazarHaber&ArticleID=17941>

At this point, I want to underline that she does not prefer to criticize harshly what government representatives said on woman's body, instead she softens her critique by indicating "evoking the impression that." Considering the fact that Aktaş has contested against both to the secular understanding of body by feminists and to masculine and violent language of the supporters of abortion ban, she does not put herself in a position to ally with either one. In this case, while she is resisting to the masculine language, she presents a modest way. This attitude of Aktaş reminds Zion-Waldoks's analysis on modesty and legitimacy. Based on her research, she says:

some activists try to downplay the more contentious (read: ostentatious, or masculine) aspects of their work. They report feminizing their practices to become 'non-confrontational' and 'clean,' or regulating their desires—"purifying" their intentions and denying identification with 'flag-carrying,' politically driven 'militant' feminists with 'an agenda.' If one strategy is minimizing conflict between activism and modesty, another is co-optation. Such activists use modesty to obtain legitimacy in the public sphere. (2015, p. 83)

Zion-Waldoks' point can be helpful to understand Cihan Aktaş's attitude that she softens her critique towards the masculine interpretation and says in a modest manner that masculine discourse is "evoking the impression" to assign women a carrier role. In this quote, Zion-Waldoks aims to explain how religious women are denying identification with "flag-carrying" and "militant" feminists. Feminist image has a politically driven militant schema and they are fighting with an agenda. However, religious women do not adopt this kind of political activism. Therefore, religious women try to downplay the contentious aspects of their activism. Zion-Waldoks calls this perception as a strategy of religious women to be accepted in the political and public arena. By this way, they "use modesty to obtain legitimacy in the public sphere" (2015, p83). It is important to note that, one of the activists in Zion-Waldoks' research indicated that she prefers to be modest since "other activists who 'said too much' were 'blacklisted' as 'anti-religious.'" Losing legitimacy meant losing 'their capacity to speak the language of Rabbis,... to be

heard” (ibid). Herein, Cihan Aktaş uses a more modest language in her criticism unlike feminists’s ‘flag-carrying’ type of activism.

Cihan Aktaş’s attitude can be read as an attempt to re/gain legitimacy in the public sphere and in the religious communities.

Another significant statement of Aktaş deals with a self-criticism of the conservative people. She says that “what is more important is that our ‘conservatism’ about the language of these statements” referring to the harsh and cold statements of male representatives and men from Islamic communities which see women as “incubators”. For her, these statements do not stem from a religious ground, so it should be displayed that religion does not assign women such a de-valued position. However, there is not much reaction to that harsh, masculine interpretation from within the religious communities. Therefore, she names this silence as “our conservatism” not to talk about and react to it.

On a similar basis with Cihan Aktaş, columnist Yıldız Ramazanoğlu¹²⁷, in an interview, contributes to the debate, initially indicating her belief that:

Our bodies are nobody’s, they are deposits. Being assertive about a body that we did not bring into being and which we cannot intervene with its disappearance later, and thinking that you can use it as you wish is not appropriate for my faith. Of course, they belong to us, but at last, they are deposited with us. (2012, June 3)¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Yıldız Ramazanoğlu’s perspective on feminism as such: “Entelektüel olarak feminizmi kabul etmiyor ama bir yandan da feminizmle bu kadar kesişen bir söylem geliştirmek ve “Metodolojik olarak biz ataerkilliğin yapısökümüyle ilgilenmeliyiz,” demek bence çok önemli. Bunun feminizm ve İslami görüş arasındaki konuşma ve karşılaşma alanlarını geliştirebilecek bir bakış olduğunu düşünüyorum” (Akınerdem, 2012, p. 91). Feyza Akınerdem, who is an academician religious women and portrays herself as feminist, reflects Ramazanoğlu’s position.

¹²⁸ The original version of the quote in Turkish is: “bedenimiz hiç kimsenin değil, emanet. Var etmediğimiz, daha sonra yok olmasında müdahil olamayacağımız bir beden üzerinde bu kadar çok iddialı olmak ve onu dilediğin gibi kullanabileceğini düşünmek benim inançlarıma uygun değil. Tabii ki bize ait ama son tahlilde bize bir emanet.” Ramazanoğlu, Y. (2012, June 3). Uludere kırılma noktamız. *Zaphaber* Newspaper. Retrieved from: <http://www.zaphaber.com/yildiz-ramazanoglu-uludere-kirilma-noktamiz-33894h.htm>

Moving from her belief regarding the body, she attributes the point to the “my body my decision” slogan. She regards the body as a deposit, which needs protection. Then, she comments on the abortion struggle by criticizing both men and activist women:

But men’s commenting this much on woman’s bodies implausibly and some friends defending the right of abortion disregarding dangers a little carelessly. Both are not normal. Of course, it is an important, hurtful thing. Discussing this without contemplating is really wrong. (ibid)¹²⁹

Similar to Cihan Aktaş, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu directs the critique towards both sides and evaluates them as abnormal. For the women’s defence for the right to abortion, she uses the attributes “carelessly” (*pervasızca*), “disregarding dangers” (*gözünü budaktan sakınmayarak*). Further, she directs a criticism towards men’s implausible comments on women body. She thinks that both the supporters of the abortion right and the anti-abortionist deserve similar negative criticisms in the sense that they disregard the sensitivity of the issue. The abortion issue is sensitive because the intervention to body should be taken in consideration from a religious point of view. Since body is deposited with human, thinking that one can use it as one’s wish is not compatible with the Islamic faith. Anti-abortionists evaluate the pregnancy as a mechanical process without dealing with its spiritual aspects. The same mentality is at work with the feminist demand for abortion right because feminists’s requests do not make allowance for the sensitivity of the issue within spiritual terms. As a reaction to both perspectives, Aktaş suggests being very rigorous while proposing something on the abortion issue as the debate needs special attention regardless of whether to be against or for. Aktaş’s reaction stems from her devotion to Islamic faith. As Zion-Wladoks conceptualizes critique within relationship, Aktaş’s statement exemplifies the devoted resistance approach to agency.

¹²⁹ The original Turkish version is: “Ama erkeklerin bu kadar inanılmaz bir şekilde kadın bedeni üzerine söz söylemesi ve bazı arkadaşlarımız da biraz pervasızca kürtaj hakkını gözünü budaktan sakınmayarak savunması. İkisi de normal değil. Tabii ki çok önemli, acıtıcı bir şey. Bunun bu kadar üzerinde düşünülmeden tartışılması yanlış.” Ramazanoğlu, Y. (2012, June 3). Uludere kırılma noktamız. *Zaphaber* Newspaper. Retrieved from: <http://www.zaphaber.com/yildiz-ramazanoglu-uludere-kirilma-noktamiz-33894h.htm>

She enunciates “a moral critique of tradition” and its agents while dealing with the body and intervention to body. She contests the opinions of men in terms of their approach to raped women and the possibility of pregnancy. Her opposition points out the discrepancy of men’s opinion on raped women with the religious doctrines. At this point, Aktaş’s transformative aim depends on her devotion to religion, Islam. Therefore, such a position diversifies the meanings of both devotion and resistance.

5.2. Contesting Pious Community and the Religious Affairs on the Ground of Men’s Responsibility

This section will mainly deal with how intellectual religious women contest the role of Religious Affairs’ in reminding Muslim men their responsibility of fatherhood and in raising children.

Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal indicates, in *Radikal* newspaper that nobody has spoken about the responsibility of men until now, the negotiation went around the “killer mother.” She refers to the Director of Diyanet Mehmet Gömez’s speech and takes out what he said on the relation of men to abortion as “the most responsible of abortion is men”¹³⁰ Tuksal suggests to go on this sentence, and comments like:

Since he has such a determination, what will he propose to men? Will he suggest birth control for men, to be a good father? We have to talk about this. We do not have a father/ male profile that we can demonstrate with pride. Women marry even though they know that they will suffer a lot. Since Diyanet made this determination, then it has to think about the ways to ‘make a man of’ these male profile.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Gömez, M. (2012, June 7). Diyanet’ten CHP’ye Cevap. Retrieved from: <http://ohaber.com/diyanet-ten-chp-ye-cevap-h-144489.html>

¹³¹ Şefkatli Tuksal, H. (2012, June 6). Uludere’de Kürtaj Yok, Çocuk Ceswetleri Var. Interview of Özlem Çelik. *Radikal* Newspaper. Retrieved from: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/uludere-de-kurtaj-yok-cocuk-ceswetleri-var-1090283>

This quotation is crucial to understand the criticism of intellectual religious women from within the religion. Tuksal makes a statement as such, “[w]e have to talk about this. We do not have a father/ male profile that we can demonstrate with pride.” Here, from the quotation we can deduce that by mentioning “we”, Tuksal refers to pious people. According to her, male profile of Muslim people and community is not sufficient in terms of gender relations. For instance, she directs attention to the issue of marriage. She says that women marry even though they are aware that they will suffer a lot. This point is important to show the women’s reluctance for marriages due to men’s bad behavior. Herewith, Şefkatli Tuksal entitles them as forced marriage, which is a very radical criticism from a religious perspective. Since pious men are not challenged by religious institutions to change their behaviours towards women, men have a conformist position not to improve themselves, which is a problem for Tuksal. Tuksal indicates that since Religious Affairs (Diyanet) has a power to guide Muslim people as in the case of abortion issue, which was intended to women’s responsibility, this aspect should be valid for Muslim men withal. In other words, she tries to show the double standard of the religious institutions in their attitude towards men and women. If Religious Affairs has a power to intervene in pious people’s way of life and daily practices, it should be valid for both women and men. Just like how women are called not to have an abortion with religious reasons, pious men are also directed to take responsibility in the issue. Herein, two points attract the attention in terms of how pious women exhibit devoted resistance. Firstly, she builds up equality between men and women on the ground of the Religious Affairs’ role in determination to call for religious ends. Her statement is to contest the Religious Affairs’ perception on gender. Secondly, Tuksal’s reaction reminds Zion-Waldoks’ statement that “political agency is tied to women’s interpretive use of religious schema”; namely, “texts and meanings underlying society’s structures” (p.78). Tuksal assents the role of Religious Affairs as a religious institution. At the same time, she shows a devoted resistance to the Affairs’s policy. Therefore, again driving from Zion-

Waldoks, the “conceptualization of religious women’s political agency as ‘devoted resistance’” (p.75) underlies Şefkatli Tuksal’s statement.

Zion -Waldoks, “Bucar’s (2011) ‘dianomy’ as moral agency is also discursive, and her ‘creative conformity,’ both citational and critical, further undermines the dichotomy” (2015, p.78). Moreover, she refers to Deeb’s (2006) concept of “authentication,” arguing that to a certain extent it is another example since pious women employ “religious knowledge and interpretation to transform and delegitimize ‘traditional’ religious norms” (ibid.). Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal’s account is a good example to delegitimization and transforming of traditional religious norms in the sense that she criticizes the Religious Affairs’ attitude towards gender roles.

Therewithal, as Zion-Waldoks reflects from the research of Ben Shitrit (2013), religious women’s interpretation to transform the traditional norms is “experienced as individuals’ autonomous choice to oppose traditional societal norms” (2015, p.78). This point is important to remark that “regardless of whether the end result of the activism (intentional or otherwise) is reforming or endorsing religious patriarchal gender norms, religious women’s political agency is deeply linked to their interpretive capacities” (ibid).

The reaction towards the masculine language within the religious community is pointed out by Meryem İlayda Atlas,¹³² in *Radikal* Newspaper. She wrote an article titled “Kürtaja da karşıyım yasağa da.” (I am against to both Abortion and the Ban)¹³³ While she is contributing to abortion debate by saying that, she is against abortion due to the religious reasons and conscientiously; she indicates her position as opposing to the ban on abortion. In other words, although she does not support the abortion operation *per se*, she is not on the side of anti-abortionists. Her position does not conform to both sides. In

¹³² Meryem İlayda Atlas is a master student at Boğaziçi University who has a column in Sabah Newspaper, and also writes in ahaber.com and lacivertdergi.com.

¹³³ Atlas, M. (2012, June 4). *Kürtaja Da Karşıyım, Yasağa Da*. Radikal Newspaper. Retrieved from: http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/kurtaja_da_karsiyim_yasaga_da-1090016

her article, she directs criticism towards religious men who are from wisdom and insight connoisseur:

Even if these people are precious and respected ones who have knowledge and wisdom, they still fail in women issues. Why? Because these issues are not debated by religious circles in a way that women participated. They are ignored as possible in a so-called holy and untouchable space. Yet, women are firstly persuaded not to talk on these issues.¹³⁴ (Atlas, 2012)

Her main concern is the way in which abortion is discussed and especially the exclusion of women. She corrodes the so-called belief that religious men have knowledge on everything, but she asserts that even Muslim men fail in women's issues because of excluding women from the issues related to women. To put it more clearly, Atlas indicates the problematic case that although it is believed that religious people are knowledgeable on many issues, their scope is not wide enough to include women's issues. The reason why these respected religious men fail to be expert in women's topics due to that they exclude women from the discussions that are related to women. So, she directs the attention to the discrimination of women within religious communities. This criticism is outstanding in the sense that it calls for a new ground for the praxis of the discussion within the religious communities.

Moreover, she contests the religious men's attitude towards women in the sense that women are tried to be silenced and persuaded not to talk on issues related to women. Abortion debate is a good example to show how pious male representatives attempt to discuss the abortion issue with an effort to exclude women in the discussions and decisions. At this point, Atlas's critical evaluation is important since her contestation is based on her pietism. Her intervention can be framed as devoted resistance.

¹³⁴ The original version of the quote in Turkish: "Velev ki bu kimseler çok sevip saydığımız ilim/irfan erbabından olsun, yine de kadın konularından ikmale kalıyorlar. Neden mi? Çünkü dindar kesimde bu meseleler kadınların da dahil olduğu bir şekilde konuşulmuyor. Dokunulmaz, güya kutsal bir alan içinde, göz ardı edilebildiği kadar ediliyor. Hatta bu konularda konuşmamaya önce kadınlar ikna ediliyor." Atlas, M. (2012, June 4). *Kürtaja Da Karşıyım, Yasağa Da*. Radikal Newspaper. Retrieved from: http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/kurtaja_da_karsiym_yasaga_da-1090016

To conclude, “interpreting agency in its culturally specific grammar is crucial, since its accounting, or meaning making depends on ... the communal traditions of ‘co-action.’” (Zion-Waldoks, 2015, p. 93)¹³⁵ As we can deduce from the statements of intellectual religious women, their resistance rooted in Islamic grammars. This shows us that they do not follow “dichotomous models of liberal ‘free will’ or religious ‘submission’” (ibid). Rather, as Zion-Waldoks offers, their resistance follows “divine will into resistance, echoing prophetic duties of care, critique, and re-vision” (ibid). In this chapter, two instances to the devoted resistance approach is highlighted: the first one is the discussion of women on the statements of the relation between abortion and raped women. They ask, “[a]re women soulless carriers?” and they contest against the devaluation of women’s bodies. Second one is the discussion of the masculine language through the declarations of the Minister of Religious Affairs and contesting the pious community on this ground.

¹³⁵ “Co-action” is a term offered by Gergen (2009).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In order to analyze the intervention and contribution of pious women to the public debate on abortion issue, Mahmood's suggestions pave the way for my study in terms of the conception of agency. First, she argues, "[w]e think of agency not as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create" (2001, p. 203). For an analytical purchase such a conception of agency, she deals with the participants of the Mosque movement that she worked with in Cairo "through an examination of the cultivation and performance of gendered Islamic virtues" (ibid). Departing from here, she proposes, "[i]n analyzing this material, I hope not only to parochialize the normative subject of feminist theory as desirous of freedom from relations of domination, but also to rethink the conceptual relationship between desire and self-making, performance and the constitution of the subject, and moral action and embodiment in feminist debates" (Mahmood, p.203).

The novel case of the intervention of intellectual religious women to the abortion debate in 2012 defies simple binary categorizations, calling for "deconstruction of many either-or conceptualizations characteristic of scholarship on the intersection of gender, religion, and politics" (Zion- Waldoks, 2015, p.75). The intellectual religious women who have contributed to the abortion debate by their public statements do not create a homogenous group though their speech acts are significant to analyze the agency of pious women. The women whose statements are analyzed for this thesis deserve a research on concerning their position at the intersection of religion, gender, and politics. Firstly, as being Muslim pious women, it can be said that they have been educated and meticulously observe the Islamic laws within religious communities. Secondly, as being intellectual public figures, they engage in "politicized gender resistance in public

spheres, both religious and civil” (Zion- Waldoks, 2015, p. 75) and both by resisting or complying. Thirdly, like following Zion-Waldoks’ research case, as living in Turkey, they are “educated professionals inhabiting patriarchal frameworks in a modern liberal-democratic Westernized nation-state” (ibid). In this thesis, I try to explore the intellectual religious women who embody this ambivalence. The main research question to do this investigation is that: is it consistent to think about religious women within liberal notions of agency while they incorporate a religious context intersecting with gender and politics? As Zion-Waldoks clearly puts, “understanding agency within religious grammars reveals its underlying logics, highlighting how structures shape the meanings and realization of women’s varied ‘agentive capacities’” (2015, p.73).

Herein, I would like to make clear that I followed the line of thought that Avishai, Jafar, and Rinaldo (2015) propose on the issue of employing a critical gender lens on religion that means, “[t]reating neither religion nor gender as a variable, but rather examining their complex intersections, without assuming a deterministic framework. Indeed, it may be productive to think about how gender and religion constitute each other” (p.13).

In the third chapter, Avishai’s account for the religious women’s agency highlights two different points on the ground of religious compliance of women. One is religious conduct; and the other is being religious within a secular context/country. In the first instance, for intellectual religious women abortion operation is not acceptable on the ground of religious faith. Therefore, as it could be observed through the statements of intellectual religious women, they comply with the Islamic sermon and they avoid abortion operation. In line of Mahmood’s terms, such a discipline of compliance to the laws of the religion is the main path for committing oneself for devout subjecthood by means of religious conduct (Avishai, 2008, p.427). During the abortion debate, we can observe such a positioning that intellectual pious women express their subjecthood within a stance of being “Muslim”. They refer to their religious identity while delineating their opinion on abortion operation. Although they oppose to the legal restriction on abortion, it is clearly put in their statements that they do not support abortion on the ground of religious sentiments.

Avishai adds a second point, that is, the presence of a secular Other as an effective factor for pious women to comply with religion. Namely, she suggests that “in the context of a dominant and threatening secular ... Culture,” religious conduct is perceived as cultivating subjecthood by religious women (ibid). In the case of Turkey, religious women have long been in a contestation with the secular state and seculars. Considering the abortion debate in 2012 in Turkey, the approaches of intellectual religious women reflect firstly their contest with the secular other; second their compliance with religion. In the first instance, they react against the secular understanding of body which is embodied in the “my body my decision” slogan. Further, the discrepancy of religion with the enlightenment understanding was put forward in some statements. Secondly, they base their argument of being against to abortion operation on the ground of religious sentiments. However, at the same time, they raise criticisms towards the ban on abortion in the sense that the legal limitation cannot be made on the ground of religion.

In the fourth chapter, following Rachel Rinaldo’s ideas on the interpretation of pious women’s agency, I investigate how intellectual religious women contest the religious government male representatives’ statements, feminist women and activist men and how they interpret their thoughts. Rinaldo calls for a different reading of women’s agency, she asserts, “women may be agentic in ways that do not align with feminist expectations” (2014, p.826). Her critical intervention is momentous to challenge the dichotomous perception of the pious agency. She argues that feminist demands such as women autonomy and gender equality may not be distinct from women’ religious faith. This account is contrary to the common sense that assumes feminist and religious urges cannot be parallel. With Rinaldo’s intervention, it is asserted that they can be “intertwined in a form of agency,” she conceptualizes this form of agency as “pious critical agency”. Rinaldo’s “pious critical agency” approach designates “a new involvement of women in public, politicized discussions about the meaning of religious texts, in which they often contest conventional interpretations” (2014, p.843). The intellectual religious women’s reaction to the declaration of the Health Minister on birth control is analyzed as an example for this form of agency in this chapter. To do this,

firstly, how pious women evaluate men's irresponsibility of use of birth control is analyzed. Pious women, with a critical lens, approach towards the conformism of men in birth control and men's sexual appetite. Secondly, the masculine discourse that takes abortion issue as exclusively women's problem is criticized. In line with Rinaldo's conceptual framework, the intellectual religious women's contest against various irresponsible behaviors and language of men are interpreted as "pious critical agency" since women's criticism stems from their confrontation to religious values and norms.

In the fifth chapter, Zion-Waldoks' term "devoted resistance" approach to pious agency is utilized to understand the women's statements on the raped women and assigning abortion as sin. These reactions of women goes in line with Zion-Wladoks' insight that: "devout subjects pursuing religious aims" (2015, p.77). The debates on raped women and whether the state will look after the baby were important themes regarding women's construction of their arguments within a religious perspective. The crucial point in their argumentation is that they, at the same time, resist for religious aims. Therefore, embedded in and activated by Islamic faith, intellectual religious women voice "a moral critique of tradition" since they aim at the male interpretation of the Islamic "tradition and its agents" precisely because pious women are "devoutly devoted to the tradition and its agents" (ibid). This perspective provides an understanding to the intervention of intellectual religious women to the abortion debate in the sense that their contestation is based on pietism. This is important to display an example to how pious women do not confront to the "dichotomous models of liberal 'free will' or religious 'submission'" perspectives.

To sum, this thesis aimed to discuss different forms of agency through a critical approach to the liberal and humanist conception of agency. The intellectual religious women's intervention to the abortion debate in 2012 is analyzed to interrogate how pious women exhibit agency. Hence, three forms of pious agency, that is, compliant agency, pious critical agency and devoted resistance agency is analyzed through the public statements of intellectual religious women. This analysis enables to open up a discussion on the recognition of the different forms of agency.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THE PROFILES OF INTELLECTUAL RELIGIOUS WOMEN

The ones who are columnists in a newspapers

1. Ayşe Sucu: columnist in *Sözcü* Newspaper, written in Muhelif.gazete
2. Nihal Bengisu Karaca: columnist in *Haber Türk* Newspaper; writes articles in emekveadalet.org
3. Fatma K. Barbarosoğlu: columnist in *Yenişafak* Newspaper
4. Hilal Kaplan: columnist in *Yenişafak*, and writes articles in islamvehayat.com
5. Özlem Albayrak: columnist in *Yenişafak* Newspaper
6. Esra Elönü: columnist in haber7.com
7. Cihan Aktaş: columnist in *Taraf* Newspaper writes articles in dunyabulteni.net, gazeteoku.com; given interviews to derindusunce.org, emekveadalet.org
8. Hilal Ünal: columnist in emekveadalet.org
9. Yıldız Ramazanoğlu: columnist in *Zaman* Newspaper; given interviews to zaphaber.com, timeturk.com, derindusunce.org, hurriyet.com.tr.
10. Ayşe Böhürler: columnist in *Yenişafak* Newspaper
11. Seher Akçınar: columnist in hurbakis.net
12. Fatma Bostan Ünsal: columnist in *Taraf* Newspaper, she writes newspaper articles in: www.kazete.com.tr, interview in haberand.com
13. Sibel Eraslan: columnist in *Star* Newspaper, a guest in a TV Program: haberturk.com/haber/video/
14. Tuğba Kaplan: reporter in yenibahardergisi.com
15. Sabiha Doğan: columnist in *Milat* Newspaper
16. Cemile Bayraktar: columnist in derindusunce.org
17. Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal: columnist in *Taraf* Newspaper and *Radikal* Newspaper; given interview to kadinlarkurtulusu.org

18. Meryem İlayda Atlas: columnist in *Sabah* Newspaper and has an article in *Radikal* Newspaper

The ones who have given a statement/ declaration about abortion issue to a newspaper

19. Emine Şenlikoğlu, in 7martgazetesi.net
20. Leyla İpekçi, in the Newspapers *Zaman* and *Taraf* Newspaper
21. Feyza Akınerdem, in t24.com.tr and bianet.org)
22. Hülya Şekerci, in haksozhaber.com (chairperson of Özgür-Der),
23. Hüda Kaya, in Roni Marquel's article in taraf.com.tr
24. Filiz Işiker, in bursaport.com (Sociologist and speak person of Free Expansion Platform - Özgür Açılım Platformu)
25. Berrin Sönmez, in taraf.com.tr / *Taraf* Newspaper

Other categories

26. Şule Yüksel Şenler: She is a novelist. She did not contributed to 2012 abortion debate; however, she had expressed her opinion about abortion in earlier news.
27. Merve Kavakçı İslam: in *Haber Türk* Newspaper, before the 2012 debate, she had written an article about the abortion discussions in USA declaring her positions as anti-abortion. She was a controversial figure among Islamist women in Turkish politics being the first veiled women who entered in the Parliament, which was faced with big reaction from various segments of society.
28. Emine Uçak Erdoğan: columnist in emekveadalet.org, during the 2012 abortion debate, she has written an article on Uludere without any mention on abortion. This piece of article is distinct in the sense that it disregards the abortion debate.

Interviews

1. Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal – interview with Burcugül Çubuk in kadinlarinkurtulusu.org/
2. Esra Elönü – interview in <http://www.haber5.com/roportaj/esra-elonu-camiamizda-kufretme-modasi-var>
3. Cihan Aktaş
 - 3.1. Interview in <http://www.derindusunce.org/2012/03/21/cihan-aktas-ile-soylesi/>
 - 3.2. Interview in <http://www.emekveadalet.org/arsivler/377>
4. Yıldız Ramazanoğlu - <http://www.zaphaber.com/yildiz-ramazanoglu-uludere-kirilma-noktamiz-33894h.htm>
 - 4.1. By Suzan Nur Basarslan on Jan 14, 2013 <http://www.derindusunce.org/2013/01/14/yildiz-ramazanoglu-ile-soylesi/>
 - 4.2. Interview with Cemile Bayraktar: <http://www.derindusunce.org/2011/11/14/yildiz-ramazanoglu-ile-sohbet/>
 - 4.3. Interview On Uludere: <http://www.emekveadalet.org/arsivler/7214>
 - 4.4. Interview on feminism: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/22062849.asp>
5. Fatma Bostan Ünsal
 - 5.1. Interview with ETHA <http://www.etha.com.tr/Haber/2012/06/21/politika/akpli-bostan-unsal-cozum-icin-tutarlilik-gerek/>
 - 5.2. Interview with Hazal Özvarış

<http://www.haberand.com/akp-nin-kurucusundan-akp-ye-gezi-elestirisi-h-334925.html>

6. Kadriye Avcı Erdemli – interview with Hazal Özvarış
<http://t24.com.tr/haber/diyanetin-basina-ne-zaman-bir-kadin-gecebilir/186417>
<http://www.netpano.com/kadinlar-artik-disarida-namaz-kacirmayacak/>

Tv programmes:

1. Cihan Aktaş
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVqTcX7jnBw>,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFCsa4535G0>
2. Sibel Eraslan (as a guest speaker in Balçiçek İlter’s TV Programme “Söz Sende”)
<http://video.haberturk.com/haber/video/kadini-kurtaja-yoneltmek-icin-cok-sebep-var/62533>
3. Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal (a guest speaker in TV Programme: “Öteki Gündem”)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBRjdlaYJnw>
4. Esra Elönü (Esra Elönü’s TV programme titled as “Kime göre, Neye göre”).
<http://www.haberturk.com/medya/haber/747363-turkiyede-kadin-olmak>

APPENDIX B: TURKISH SUMMARY

Bu çalışmada Türkiye’deki entelektüel dindar kadınların nasıl bir politik eylemsellik¹³⁶ geliştirdiği incelenerek, eylemsellik kavramına yönelik evrenselci Avrupa-merkezci yaklaşımların bir eleştirisi amaçlanmıştır. Tezde, Türkiye’de 2012’de tanık olduğumuz kürtaj tartışması, entelektüel dindar kadınların¹³⁷ kamusal bir tartışmaya nasıl müdahale ettiklerinin izleğini oluşturan bir örnek teşkil etmesi sebebiyle, inceleme nesnesi olarak ele alınmıştır.

Kürtaj tartışmasından kısaca bahsetmek gerekirse, o dönemin başbakanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan 25 Mayıs 2012’de Nüfus ve Kalkınma Uygulanmasına İlişkin Beşinci Uluslararası Parlamenterler Konferansı’nda kürtajla ilgili bir konuşma yaptı. Bu konuşma tartışmanın başlamasına yol açması itibariyle önemli bir noktada duruyor. Bu konuşmada başbakan kürtajı cinayet olarak gördüğünü söyledi ve bir bebeği anne karnında öldürmekle doğumdan sonra öldürmek arasında bir fark olmadığını belirtti.¹³⁸ Bu açıklama sonrasında yasal düzenlemelerde değişikliğe gidilerek, kürtaj hakkı riske atılmış oldu. 2012 yılına kadar, Türkiye örgütlü bir kürtaj karşıtı hareketliliğe tanıklık etmemişti. Kürtaj 1983 yılında yasallaşmıştı. Son 10 yıllık süreç içinde ise, her ne kadar yasal olsa da, birçok devlet hastanesinde kürtaja erişim konusunda kısıtlamalar vardı (Toksöz, 2011, s.82). Başbakanın kürtajı cinayet olarak nitelediği Mayıs 2012 tarihi öncesinde Türkiye’de açık bir şekilde kürtaj karşıtı bir politika yürütülmemiştir. Buna rağmen, hükümetin ısrarlı bir şekilde kadınları üç çocuk doğurmaya çağırması ve Sağlık Bakanı Recep Akdağ’ın “üreme sağlığına evet, aile planlamasına hayır”¹³⁹ şeklinde ifade

¹³⁶ *Political agency* kavramının çevirisi politik eylemsellik olarak yapılmıştır. Bu özetteki çeviriler benim tarafımdan yapıldı.

¹³⁷ Tez boyunca dönüşümlü olarak mütedeyyin ve dindar tanımlamalarını kullanacağım.

¹³⁸(2012, May 26). “Abortion is ‘murder,’ says Turkey’s PM”. DailyNews. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/abortion-is-murder-says-turkeys-pm.aspx?pageID=238&nID=21665&NewsCatID=338>

¹³⁹ Recep Akdağ had been Health Minister between 18 November 2002 and 24 January 2013.

ettiği gibi kadınları doğurmaya teşvik eden açıklamaları, kürtaj karşıtlığı ile paralel bir düzlemde ilerleyen politikalar olarak değerlendirilebilir.

Kürtaj tartışması, kürtajın yasaklanmasını savunanlar ile kürtajın yasal olarak uygulanmaya devam etmesini savunanlar olarak iki kutup arasında süre giden bir tartışma olarak ele alındı. Tartışma, birbiri ile uzlaşmaz iki kutuplu bir şekilde ilerledi. Bu noktada, tartışmaya katılan entelektüel dindar kadınların yaptıkları açıklamalar her iki kutup içinde de değerlendirilemeyecek nitelikteydi ve bu açıdan tartışma süresince hangi kutupta konumlandırılacağı belirsiz bir hal taşıyordu. Kürtaj tartışması, ikili bir hat üzerinden yani kürtaj yasağı lehinde ve aleyhinde olanlar üzerinden yürütülmesi, hümanist/liberal bir bakış açısı ile incelendiğinde dindar kadınların tartışma içindeki konumlarını anlamayı zorlaştırıyordu. Tartışmaya katılan dindar kadınları konumlandırırken, politik eylemselliği hümanist/liberal ve Avrupa-merkezci yaklaşımlarda kendini gösteren direnen/itaat eden ikiliği içinden değerlendirme çabası, kadınların sözlerinin görünmezleşmesine ve anlamlandırılmamasına sebep oluyordu denebilir. Daha açık ifade etmek gerekirse, kürtaj yasağını savunanlar ve yasağa karşı çıkanlar ikiliği, dindar kadınların tartışmaya müdahalelerini açıklamak için yeterli bir zemin sunmuyor. Kürtaj yasağını savunanların itaatkâr, yasağa karşı çıkanların ise muhalefet eden/direnen olarak konumlandırıldığı ikilik içinde, dindar kadınların sözleri görünürlüğünü yitiriyor.

Bu tezde, temel olarak Saba Mahmood'un (2009) çalışmasını takip edilerek, eylemsellik kavramının evrenselci Avrupa-merkezli bakışla yorumlanışına eleştiri getiriliyor. Bu doğrultuda Avrupa-merkezli kavramsallaştırmanın getirdiği ikilikler üzerinden düşünme pratiğinde ya faillikleri yok sayılan ve kurbanlaştırılan ya da liberal anlamda bir direniş göstermesi beklenen dindar kadınların nasıl bir eylemsellik gösterdiğine bakılacaktır. Bu sorunsallaştırma üzerinden, *dindar eylemsellik*¹⁴⁰ kavramına farklı yaklaşımlar üzerinden açıklama getirmeye çalışılıyor. Bu araştırma için 2012'deki kürtaj tartışması deneysel bir vaka olarak ele alınırken bu süreçte entelektüel dindar kadınların yaptıkları açıklamalar

¹⁴⁰ Dindar eylemsellik, pious agency kavramına karşılık olarak çevrilmiştir.

incelenmiştir. Tezde açıklamaları incelenen dindar kadınlar¹⁴¹ homojen bir grup oluşturmuyor. Bu nedenle, kamusal olarak dindar kimlikleri ile bilinen, çeşitli gazetelerde köşe yazarlığı yapan, aktif siyaset içinde bulunan ve kürtaj tartışması sürecinde çeşitli gazetecilere kürtaj konusunda görüş bildiren ya da röportaj veren kadınların açıklamaları incelenmiştir.

Homi Bhabha'nın, Location of Culture kitabında işaret ettiği gibi, yeni bir durumu anlamlandırma konusunda politik müzakere üzerine görüşleri ile ön-kabul model ya da paradigmaya yönelik eleştirilerde bulunur. Bhabha'ya göre “politika yapmak müzakereden ibarettir... müzakere ettiğimiz bilincinde olmadığımızda dahi müzakere ederiz” (1990, s. 216). Bhabha müzakerenin önemini melezliğe bağlayarak şöyle der: “melezlik yeni bir durumda kendini yeniden kurar, prensipleri gözden geçirmeyi, yeniden düşünmeyi ve aşmayı dayatır” (a.g.e.).

Buradan yola çıkarak kurulan metodolojik yaklaşım doğrultusunda, kamusal bir müzakere alanı olan kürtaj tartışması araştırma nesnesi olarak merkeze alındı. Tartışma yapısındaki çatlaklar üzerinden dindar kadınların çelişik politik failliğinin¹⁴² izini sürmek amaçlandı. Bu tezde açıklanması amaçlanan çelişik/kararsız pozisyon, dindar kadınları genel olarak İslamın pasif kurbanları şeklinde ele alan yaklaşımları aşındırması açısından önem taşıyor. Aktif/pasif, direnen/itaatkâr ve liberal/dinsel gibi ikilikler üzerinden yapılan değerlendirmeleri sorunsallaştıran postkolonyal eleştirmenler, dindar kadınları pasif bir pozisyona hapseden aşırı genelleştirmelere dayanan yaklaşımlara meydan okuyan teoriler geliştirdiler. Buradan hareketle, entelektüel dindar kadınların kürtaj tartışmasına yaklaşımlarını ele alırken, postyapısalcı ve postkolonyal teorilerden faydalandığımı belirtmeliyim.

¹⁴¹ Entelektüel dindar kadınlar olarak nitelendirdiğim kadınlar, farklı politik duruşları olan, farklı meslek ve eğitim seviyelerinden, farklı yaş gruplarından oluşuyor. Kamusal alanda dindar kimlikleri ile biliniyorlar ve farklı gazetelerde yazsalar ve farklı politik faaliyetler içinde bulunsalar da İslami söylemi kullanmaları ortaklaştıkları nokta oluyor.

¹⁴² “Çelişik politik faillik,” *ambivalent political agency* kavramının karşılığı olarak çevrilmiştir. Ambivalent için Türkçe’de çeviri önerileri olarak belirsiz, kararsız, çelişik kelimeleri önerilir.

Entelektüel dindar kadınların nasıl bir politik eylemsellik sergilediğini incelerken, tezde iktidar¹⁴³ ve direnme kavramlarının nasıl ele alındığını belirtmek önem arz ediyor. Asef Bayat *Life as Politics* kitabında, Müslüman Orta Doğu¹⁴⁴ çerçevesinde politik eylemselliği ve değişimi tartışmaya açıyor. Foucault'nun merkezsizleşmiş iktidar ve Gramsci'nin yeniden yorumlanan hegemoni kavramları ile mikropolitikanın ve direniş perspektifinin temel teorik hatlarını çiziyor (2013, s.41). Bayat' a göre “direnış kavramı iktidar ve karşı-iktidarın ikili zıtlık içinde olmadığını, daha ziyade ayrıışmış, karmaışık, belirsiz ve sürekli bir kontrol dansı olduğunu vurgular” (a.g.e.). İktidara bu şekilde yaklaşmak, Foucaultcu anlamda iktidarın ilişkisel niteliğine gönderme yapar. Foucault, *Özne ve İktidar*'da, güç ilişkileri çokluğundan bahseder (1978, s. 92). Başka bir deyişle, iktidar sahip olunacak bir şey değildir, güç ilişkileri öznelerin üretilmesini sağlar (1983, s.220). Sonuç olarak, ilişkisellikteki güçler birbirini yok etmeye yönelik değillerdir; aksine birbirlerini üreterek yönetirler. Foucault'nun iddiası, iktidarın olduğu yerde direnmenin de olduğu ve bu direnmenin hiçbir zaman iktidar ilişkisinin dışında olmadığıdır (1978, s.95).

Foucault'dan yola çıkarak Asef Bayat direnmenin küçük-ölçekli, günlük eylemlilikler olduğunu belirtir (2013, s.41). Direnişin bu şekilde yorumlanması kadın çalışmalarını¹⁴⁵ da kapsayan birçok alanda kendini gösterir ve bu çalışmada da dindar kadınların eylemselliğini anlamada yol gösterici olmuştur. Bayat'ın anlatısıyla, öznelerden evrenselleşmiş değerlere dayalı mücadele biçimleri beklenmesi, genellikle öznelerin değişim hakkındaki farklı yaklaşımlarını çarpıtır. Bu nedenle, yerel, kendi dinamiği

¹⁴³Pieper tarafından belirtildiği üzere postkolonyalizm, bilgi ve iktidar arasındaki ilişkiyi sorgulamasının merkezine alır. Postyapısalcı, postmodern ve postkolonyal teoriler Foucaultcu varsayımına dayanır ve bilgi ve iktidar arasında yakın bir ilişki olduğundan yola çıkarak geleneksel olarak kabul edilen yaklaşımları deneysel olarak inceler (Pieper,s.9).

¹⁴⁴ Müslüman Orta Doğu, Bayat'ın çalışmasında dinin önemli bir yer kapladığı toplulukları ifade etmek için kullanılıyor.

¹⁴⁵ Bayat örnek olarak etnograf Lila Abu-Lughod'un bir araştırmasından örnek verir. Abu-Luhod, aklarından mahrum bırakılmış kadınların ataerkilliğe karşı halk hikayeleri ve deyişleri ile nasıl karşı koyduklarını anlatır.

içinde değerlendirilmeli ve mücadelenin her zaman her yerde örgütlü kolektif eylem şeklinde olmayabileceği kabul edilmelidir (a.g.e.).

Saba Mahmood ise bu tartışmayı bir adım öteye taşır ve eylemselliği direnmeye indirgeyen liberal/hümanist kavrayışını eleştirir. Mahmood, dindar eylemselliği ve cinsiyetli-geleneksel dinsel normlar içindeki dindar kadınların pratiklerini sorgular (2005). Saba Mahmood da Bayat'ın önerdiği gibi örgütlü protestonun her zaman öncelikli mücadele şekli olmayabileceğini iddia eder ve daha esnek, küçük-ölçekli, bürokratik olmayan eyleme şekillerinin tanınması gerektiğinin altını çizer. Kısaca, bu tezde eylemsellik kavramı Foucault, Bayat ve Mahmood'un kavramsal müdahaleleri doğrultusunda sorgulanmıştır.

Bu amaçla, Homi Bhabha'yı izleyerek, politik eylemselliğin anlaşılabilmesinde, tartışma içindeki çatlaklara odaklanılması gerektiğini ileri sürüyorum. Buradan yola çıkarak, 2012'deki kürtaj tartışmasını bir vaka olarak ele alıp, entelektüel dindar kadınların açıklamalarını analiz ediyorum. Bu analizi üç farklı yaklaşım üzerinden gerçekleştirdim: itaatkâr eylemsellik, dindar eleştirel eylemsellik ve eylemselliğe 'adanmış direniş' yaklaşımı.

Analizi yapılacak verilere ulaşabilmek için, kürtaj tartışmasının başladığı 25 Mayıs 2012 tarihinden sonraki bir yıllık süreci kapsayan dönemde yayınlanmış tüm Türkçe gazetelerin taraması yapıldı. Dindar kadınlar çeşitli gazetelerde yazdıkları için, tartışmaları farklı bakış açılarından takip edebilmek adına, gazete sınırlaması yapılmadı. Gazete köşe yazıları, internet dergi sayfaları, televizyon programları ve röportajlar geçerli materyal olarak analiz edildi. Toplam 30 entelektüel dindar kadın incelendi. Bu kadınlardan 18'i bir gazetede kürtaj hakkında köşe yazısı yazmıştı; 7'si ise herhangi bir gazetede köşe yazısı yazmamıştı fakat gazetecilere verdikleri demeçler ile fikir beyan etmişlerdi (Emine Şenlikoğlu, Leyla İpekçi, Feyza Akınerdem, Hüda Kaya, Hülya Şekerci, Filiz İşiker ve Berrin Sönmez). 6 kadın ise kürtaj tartışması üzerine röportaj vermişti (Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, Esra Elönü, Cihan Aktaş, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Fatma Bostan Ünsal, ve Kadriye Avcı Erdemli). Toplamda 33 adet köşe yazısı, 7 demeç

/bildirge ve 11 röportaj incelenmiştir. Ayrıca, 6 adet video ve televizyonda gösterimi olan açık oturum programın incelemesi yapılmıştır. Sibel Eraslan, Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal ve Cihan Aktaş bu TV programlarına dindar kesimden kanaat önderi kadınlar olarak davet edilmişlerdir.

Bu tez yazım aşamasında iken, Çağla Kubilay tarafından kaleme alınan *İslami Muhafazakar Kadın Yazarların Perspektifinden Kürtaj Tartışması: Eleştirel Bir Değerlendirme* isimli makalede dindar kadın yazarların gazete yazıları üzerinden kürtaj tartışmasına nasıl bir yaklaşım sergilediklerini incelenmiştir. Kubilay, makalesinde kürtajın ikili zıtlıklar çerçevesinde ilerleyişine şu şekilde dikkat çekmiştir: “tartışmalar büyük ölçüde embriyonun yaşam hakkı (pro life) ile kadının kendi bedeni üzerinde hak sahibi olması (pro-choice) arasındaki karşıtlık üzerine temellenmiştir” (2014, s. 387). Kubilay, çalışmasında İslami-muhafazakâr kadın yazarlar olarak tarıflendiği kadınların kürtaja yaklaşımlarını iki açıdan ele alıyor. İlk olarak, kürtaj yasağını destekleyen İslami cemaat içindeki erkeklere karşı geliştirdikleri eleştiri; ikinci olarak kürtaj yasağına “benim bedenim benim hakkım” slogan ile karşı çıkanlara karşı geliştirdikleri eleştiri. Bu noktada, islami muhafazakâr kadınların açıklamalarının bu iki kutupta da yer almadığını belirterek, bu belirsiz konumlanmanın incelenmesi gerektiğini belirtiyor. Bu bakımdan Kubilay’ın araştırması bu tezin başlangıç noktası ile paralellik gösteriyor. Fakat Kubilay’ın incelemesi iki yaklaşımın sadece birer betimlemesi olarak görülebilir (s.390). Her iki kutupta da yer bulamadığını iddia ettiği yazarları, makalenin sonuç bölümünde yaptığı tartışmada, kürtaj yasağını savunanların savlarına yakın bir yerde konumlandırır: “her ne kadar çoğunlukla kürtajın yasaklanmasına açıktan karşı çıksalar da onları da kürtajın yasaklanmasını isteyen kesimlerin argümanlarına yaklaştırmaktadır” (s.415). Dindar kadınların açıklamalarına, böyle bir çıkarım yaparak yaklaşmak, dindar kadınların eylemselliğini ele alırken özgül durumları gözetmemek anlamına geliyor. Bu bakımdan, bu tezde ileri sürülen dindar kadınların politik eylemselliği tartışmaları ile Kubilay’ın yaklaşımı birbirinden ayrılmaktadır. Eylemsellik tartışması üzerinden, ikili uçlara yerleştirilemeyen kadınların açıklamalarına analitik bir açıklama getirilmeye çalışılmaktadır. Bu amaçla, entelektüel dindar kadınların gazete

yazıları ve röportajlarla kamusal hale getirdikleri açıklamalarını inceleyerek dindar eylemsellik üzerine yapılmış çalışmalar ışığında üç farklı yaklaşım analiz edilmiştir.

Bu noktada, Avishai, Jafar, ve Rinaldo'nun *Gender & Society* dergisinin din ve toplumsal cinsiyet üzerine hazırladığı özel sayının giriş yazısında belirttikleri nokta önemli bir yerde duruyor. Dini eleştirel bir toplumsal cinsiyet merceğinden ele almayı şu şekilde tarif ediyorlar:

Dine eleştirel bir toplumsal cinsiyet perspektifi ile yaklaşmak ne dini ne de toplumsal cinsiyeti bir değişken olarak ele almadan; daha ziyade bu iki kavramı karmaşık içe geçişleri ile değerlendirerek, determinist bir çerçeve varsaymamak demektir. (2015, p.13).

Tezde üç bölüm halinde bu farklı yaklaşımlar açıklanmış ve kadınların açıklamaları incelenmiştir. İlk bölümde, Orit Avishai'nin itaatkâr eylemsellik¹⁴⁶ yaklaşımı üzerinden dindar kadınların dini inançlarını nasıl ele aldıkları iki nokta üzerinden açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır. Birincisi, dini inanç, diğeri ise seküler/laik bir bağlam içinde dindar olmak olarak kavramsallaştırılmıştır. Kürtajın yasaklanma girişimi, aynı zamanda kürtajı dini olarak kabul edilebilir olup olmadığı tartışmasını da beraberinde getirmiştir. Bu açıdan birçok dindar kadın kürtajın yasaklanmasına karşı olduklarını dile getirirken, eş zamanlı olarak kadınları kürtaj olmaya yönelten sebeplerin ortadan kaldırılması ve bu şekilde kürtajın önlenmesi üzerine de düşüncelerini ifade etmişlerdir. Kürtaja iten sebepleri engellemek için işaret edilen önerilerden biri doğum kontrol yöntemlerinin kullanılmasıdır. İslam dininin doğum kontrol yöntemlerinin kullanılmasına izin verdiğini ve tavsiye ettiği belirten Prof. Dr. Beyza Bilgin¹⁴⁷ ve İstanbul Müftüsü Kadriye Avcı Erdemli¹⁴⁸, peygamberin öğretileri doğrultusunda doğum kontrol yöntemlerinin

¹⁴⁶ Avishai'nin tartıştığı *compliant agency* kavramını “itaatkâr eylemsellik” olarak çevirdim.

¹⁴⁷ Bilgin'in açıklaması: “Ben bunlardan bir şey çıkaramadım. Ama İslam'da kürtajla ilgili neler var, size onu söyleyebilirim. İslama göre, çocuğun istenmediği durumda ne yapılır? Hz. Peygamberin tavsiyesi şudur: planlama yapmak ve korunmak. Cahiliye denen İslam öncesi dönemde bunu erkekler yapıyordu. Peygamber de onlara bunu yapmamalarını söylemiyor. Tam aksine bu konuda bir ayet var.”

kullanımını onayladıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bir gazeteye soru üzerine demeç verdikleri sözlerinde özellikle vurguladıkları nokta, dini inançları gereği kürtajı doğru bulmadıkları fakat kürtaja karşı önlem almak amaçlı doğum kontrol yöntemlerinin uygulanmasını destekledikleri yönündedir. Bu açıklamalar, Avishai'nin itaatkâr eylemsellik kavramsallaştırması ile çerçeveselendirdiği gibi, dindar kadınların dini gelenek ve kurallara itiraz etmeden uyum sağladıklarını göstermektedir.

Kürtajın yasaklanma girişimine farklı kesimlerden itirazlar da yükselmiştir. Bu itirazların en görünür olanı “benim bedenim benim kararım” sloganında cisimleşen Bianet haber ağının organize ettiği kampanya olmuştur. Öne çıkan bu slogan dindar kadınların açıklamalarında eleştiri getirerek yer verdikleri ve İslami beden anlayışını tartıştıkları bir hat oluşturmaktadır. Yeni Şafak gazetesi yazarlarından Ayşe Böhürler¹⁴⁹ ve Taraf gazetesi yazarı Cihan Aktaş¹⁵⁰ ve Radikal Gazetesine verdiği bir röportajda Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal¹⁵¹ bu slogan üzerinden görüşlerini ifade etmişlerdir. İslam

¹⁴⁸ Erdemli'nin açıklaması: “İslam’a göre gebeliğin başlamasından itibaren cenin, annesinden ayrı bir şahsiyettir. Dolayısıyla annesinin veya bir başkasının iradesine bağlı olmaksızın yaşama hakkına sahiptir...Bu itibarla dinen meşru bir zaruret olmadıkça, gebeliğin hangi döneminde olursa olsun, ceninin hayatına tecavüz, yani çocuğu aldırma veya düşürme cinayet sayılmış... Sadece kesin bir hayati tehlike bu konuda nazara alınması gereken bir zaruret teşkil edebilir. Ama insanlar gebe kalmamak için doğum kontrolü yapabilir. Bunda bir mahzur yok.”

¹⁴⁹ Böhürler'in açıklaması: “Muhafazakâr kadınlar asla “bedenimiz bizimdir” demediler ve demeyecekler de. Feminizmin Hristiyan inancının kadın algısına karşı başlattıkları özgürlük mücadelesine özgü bu sloganı elbette kullanamazlar. Bu onların inançlarına da, değerlerine de aykırı.” Böhürler, A. (2012, June 9)“Darbeleri Araştırma Komisyonu'nun başında iyi ki bir kadınvar!” *YeniŞafak* Newspaper. Retrieved from: <http://yenisafak.com.tr/yazarlar/AyseBohurler/darbeleri-arastirma-komisyonunun-basinda-iyi-ki-bir-kadin-var/32751>

¹⁵⁰ Aktaş'ın açıklaması: ““Bedenim benimdir’ demenin de bir sınırı olmalı ve hayat kurtaran bir müdahale olabilecek kürtaj, ölü bebekler toplumu oluşturmanın bir tekniğine dönüşmekten kurtarılmalı... Türkiye tipi feminizm ise bir taraftan aşırı lirik (ve barışçıl) bir kadınsılığı yüceltirken ideolojik bir refleksle rahmi, serbestçe kazınmaya açık herhangi bir organ olarak görme yolunu tutuyor... Kadınların büyük çoğunluğunun kürtaja acı duyarak katlandığını biliyorum tabii. Kürtaj pek çok kadında bütün hayatı boyunc atışıyacağı bir azap anlamına da geliyor. Bu açıdan “kürtaj hakkımız” sloganı “haklar” açısından bakılamayacak tepkisel, hatta kırgınlık yüklü bir anlam ifade ediyor öncelikle, bana kalırsa. Çünkü Müslüman olarak Allah'ın yaratımındaki amaçlarının göz ardı edilemeyeceği bir incelik ve ustalıkla “yaratılmış”, bu nedenle de sırlara haiz, kısmen kendine yabancı, dolayısıyla ilahi denetimi ciddiye alan bir beden görüşü üzerinden yaklaşıyorum kürtaja.” Aktaş, C. (2012, May 31). Kürtaj ve Uludere Kolajı. *Taraf*.

¹⁵¹ Şefkatli Tuksal'ın açıklaması: “Ne yazık ki feminist arkadaşlarımın çok klişe sloganlarla hareket etmelerini doğru bulmadım. Feminist politika yapmak, hükümete de çatmak istiyorlar. Tamam ama öyle

dininin bedene bakış açısına göre, bedenın Allah'ın emaneti olduđu ve bu emanete bireyin kendi tercihi doğrultusunda müdahale etmesinin, konumuz itibari ile, kürtaj yaptırmasının kabul edilir olmadığına altını çizdikleri yazılarında, kürtaja tıbbi bir operasyon olarak neden karşı olduklarını anlatmışlardır. Kürtajın yasal düzenleme ile yasaklanmasına karşı çıktıklarını fakat seküler feminist söylemin kürtaja yaklaşımını da kabul etmediklerini, dini inançları ve İslamın öğretileri üzerinden ifade etmişlerdir. Bu açıklamalar, Avisha'nın itaatkâr eylemsellik yaklaşımı üzerinden anlaşılabilir. Avishai, itaatkâr eylemselliđi iki nokta üzerinden yorumlamıştır. Birincisi, dindar bireylerin dini normları yerine getirdikleri zaman eylemsellik halinde oldukları önermesidir (2008, s.410). Avishai, eylemselliđin, otonomi ve bilinçli bir niyet üzerinden anlaşılmasını eleştirir ve eylemsellik ve dini bađlılıđın önsel (a priori) olarak uzlaşmaz olduđunu varsayan paradoksal çerçeveye kavramsal bir yön deđiştirme önerir.

İkincisi, dindarlıđın seküler bir öteki ile karşıtlık kurularak perforce edildiđi ve gerçekleştirildiđi iddiasıdır (2008, s.420). Entelektüel dindar kadınların açıklamalarında, bedenın İslami olarak ele alınışı açıklanırken, seküler feministler ile olan karşıtlık temel bir dayanak noktası olmuştur ve “bedenim benim” söyleminin batılı feminist bir argüman oluşundan dolayı reddedildiđi belirtilmiştir.

Dindar eylemselliđine ikinci yaklaşım, dindar eleştirel eylemsellik tartışması yapılan dördüncü bölümde, Rachel Rinaldo'nun düşünsel izleđi ile takip edilmiştir. Rinaldo, dindar kadınların feminist beklentilerle uyuşmayan şekillerle de eylemsellik içinde olabileceklerini iddia eder (2014, s.826). Rinaldo dindar kadınların, dinin kurbanları olarak görüldüđu ve dolayısıyla dine eleştiri getiremez bir konuma yerleştirildikleri bakış açısını aşındırmaya yönelik bir girişimde bulunur. Dindar kadınların eleştirel olabilmelerini, dine karşı çıkmaları gerekliliđine bađlayan liberal varsayıma karşı çıkan bir müdahale ile dindar kadınların dine bađlılıklarını devam ettirerek de dini metinlere

bir dil kullanılıyor ki, Türkiye'de bununla sonuç almak imkansız. Kaç kadın geldi o gösteriye? Muhafazakar kadınların da kürtaj ve doğum kontrolü ile ilgili sorunları var.” Şefkatli Tuksal, H. (June 6, 2012). Uludere'de Kürtaj Yok, Çocuk Ceswetleri Var. *Radikal Newspaper*

eleştirel yaklaşabilecekleri önermesinde bulunur (2014, p.843). Dindar kadınların kamusal alanda, politik tartışmalar ile dini metinleri yeniden yorumladıklarını ve bu metinlerin geleneksel/muhafazakâr yorumlanışını eleştirdiklerini ifade ederek, dindar eleştirel eylemsellik kavramsallaştırmasını önerir (a.g.e).

Kürtaj tartışması sırasında işaret edilen doğum kontrol yöntemlerinin kullanılması konusunun sadece kadınlar üzerinden ilerlemesini eleştiren Esra Elönü¹⁵² tam olarak Rinaldo'nun çerçevlendirdiği gibi bir eleştirel yaklaşım içindedir. Dini inancını sahiplenerek, fakat dini metinlerin eril akıl tarafından yorumlanışını eleştirerek doğum kontrol yöntemleri kullanımında erkeklerin hiçbir sorumluluk almıyor oluşunu eleştirir. Benzer bir şekilde, Zaman gazetesi yazarı Yıldız Ramazanoğlu¹⁵³ kürtajın sadece bir kadın meselesi ve sorunuymuş gibi tartışılmasına itiraz eder. Erkeklerin konformizmi, sorumsuzluğu ve kadını dışlayan eril dili eleştirilir. Rinaldo'nun sunduğu dindar eleştirel eylemsellik perspektifi, dindar kadınların erkeklerin sorumsuzluğuna ve eril dile karşı getirdikleri eleştirileri açıklayan bir tanım sunar.

Tezin beşinci bölümünde ise, Zion-Waldoks'ın 'adanmış direniş'¹⁵⁴ yaklaşımı üzerinden bir analiz yapılmıştır. Dindar kadınların eylemselliğini anlamak için aktivist kadınlarla

¹⁵²Elönü'nün açıklaması: "Kadın besili tavuk, kuluçkaya kurulu duvar saati, kanatlarıyla oda sıcaklığını ölçen havada karada dişi kuş, çocuk bezinden anlayan romantik sarraf, biberon çalkalayıp kabarcık sayan süt sayacı değildir. Kadın 24 saat açık döl oteli değildir! Dünyaya güneş doğuran Allaktır ki kadını sürekli bir şeyler doğurup doğurduğunun kaz çobanı olması için yaratmamıştır. Neredeyse kadını üç basamaklı en doğal çocuk doğurucu sonsuzluk hatunu gibi görüp her dölden nem kaptırmaya çalışacaksınız. Kadın erkeğin siparişe çocuk doğurgacı değildir."

¹⁵³ Ramazanoğlu'nun açıklaması: "Kadın ve içinde yüzen bebek; iki can var ortada, oysa üç candan söz edilmeli değil mi peki? Devletten sivil toplum örgütlerine, yukarıdan aşağıya kullanılan dil ne kadar soğuk ve anlamaktan uzak. Çok kullanılıncı etkisizleştiği için ataerkilden söz etmekten kaçınmaya çalışıyoruz ama söz birliği etmiş gibi aynı dili konuşan devletten ya da sivil yaşamdan erkeklerin meseleyi bir kadın sorunu gibi ele almaları son derece manidar. Kadının bedeni, kadının canı, kadının kararı söylemiyle işin içinden sıyrılmaya çalışan, olayda erkeğin hiçbir dahli, kusuru, kabahati, sorumluluğu yokmuş edasıyla dolaşıma sokulan söylem, sinsice kadını bile nasıl ikna ediyor ki, pankartlarda erkeği sorumluluk almaya, 'benim de canımdan bir parçadan söz ediliyor, bir dakika' demeye davet eden kelimeler yok." Ramazanoğlu, Y. (2012, June 13). Erkeklerin kürtajı. *Zaman Newspaper*.

¹⁵⁴ Zion-Waldoks'un resistance agency kavramını 'adanmış direniş' olarak çevirdim.

yaptığı araştırmada, kadınların dini amaçlar için hareket edebileceklerinin ve bunun da eylemselliğin bir formu olduğunu iddia etmiştir (2015, s.77).

Kürtaj tartışması sırasında Sağlık Bakanı Recep Akdağ tecavüze uğramış kadınların hamile kalması durumunda, kürtaj yasağının geçerli olacağını, gerekirse doğacak çocuğa devletin bakacağını belirten bir açıklama yaptı.¹⁵⁵ Bu açıklamanın ardından, Cihan Aktaş¹⁵⁶ tecavüze uğramış kadınların doğurmaya davet edilmesini sorunsallaştırmış ve kadın bedeninin “taşıyıcı” olarak kurgulanmasını eleştirmiştir. Benzer bir şekilde Yıldız Ramazanoğlu¹⁵⁷ tecavüz ve kadın bedeni üzerine yapılan eril yorumları eleştirerek, bu eril açıklamaların kaynağının din olarak gösterilmesinden duyduğu rahatsızlığı belirtmiştir. Aktaş ve Ramazanoğlu, tecavüze uğramış kadın üzerine “pervasızca” konuşulmasını eleştirirken, dayanak noktaları olan dini işaret etmektedirler. Bir başka deyişle, eril dile karşı eleştirilerini İslam bilgisinden yola çıkarak yapıyorlar. Bu, Zion-Waldoks’un ‘adanmış direniş’ yaklaşımı ile anlamlandırılabilir. Dini geleneğin ve bu geleneğin sürdürücüsü olan eril öznelerin etik bir kritiğini yaparak, tam da dini geleneğe olan bağlılıklarını gösteriyorlar. Bu eylemsellik formu, yani ‘adanmış direniş,’ dindar kadınların, dini itaat ve özgür iradeli direniş ikiliği içinde değerlendirilemeyeceklerini göstermesi açısından önemlidir.

¹⁵⁵ Akdağ’ın açıklaması: “Bazen, ‘Annenin başına kötü bir şey gelmişse ne olacak?’ vesaire gibi şeyler söyleniyor. Gerekirse öyle bir bebeğe devlet bakar”. kdağ is in Radikal Newspaper. See: Radikal. Retrieved from: http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/bakan_akdag_tecavuz_bebegine_devlet_bakar-1089651

¹⁵⁶ Aktaş: “Bir tarafta bedeni üzerindeki mutlak tasarruf anlayışıyla ceninin, yani oluşmayı sürdüren bir insanın kaderi üzerinde de söz sahibi olduğunu düşünen kadın kesimleri, diğer tarafta ise hamile kadını bütün sebepleri ve sonuçlarıyla birlikte sinirden ve ruhtan yoksun bir taşıyıcı olarak kurguladığı izlenimi uyandıran bir ahkâm...” Aktaş, C. (2012, June 4). Kadın Ruhsuz Bir Taşıyıcı mı? *Dünya Bülteni* Newspaper.

¹⁵⁷ : “Ama erkeklerin bu kadar inanılmaz bir şekilde kadın bedeni üzerine söz söylemesi ve bazı arkadaşlarımız da biraz pervasızca kürtaj hakkını gözünü budaktan sakınmayarak savunması. İkisi de normal değil. Tabii ki çok önemli, acıtıcı bir şey. Bunun bu kadar üzerinde düşünülmeden tartışılması yanlış.” Ramazanoğlu, Y. (2012, June 3). Uludere kırılma noktamız. *Zaphaber* Newspaper. Retrieved from: <http://www.zaphaber.com/yildiz-ramazanoglu-uludere-kirilma-noktamiz-33894h.htm>

Sonu olarak, politik eylemsellik kavramını sorunsallařtıran bu tez, dindar kadınların eylemselliğini üç farklı yaklaşım üzerinden analiz etme girişimidir. 2012'deki kürtaj tartışması sürecinde yaptıkları açıklamalar üzerinden Türkiye'deki entelektüel dindar kadınların nasıl bir politik eylemsellik gösterdikleri incelenmiştir. İtaatkâr, dindar eleştirel ve 'adanmış direniş' şeklinde farklı formlarda eylemsellik geliştiren entelektüel dindar kadınların çelişkili bir politik eylemsellik gösterdikleri ileri sürülmüştür.

APPENDIX C THESIS PHOTOCOPYING PERMISSION FORM

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YAZARIN

Soyadı : ÖZCAN
Adı : TUĞBA
Bölümü : SOSYOLOJİ

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce): THE AMBIVALENT POLITICAL AGENCY OF
INTELLECTUAL RELIGIOUS WOMEN IN TURKEY: A CASE STUDY OF THE
ABORTION DEBATE IN 2012

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans ☐ Doktora ☐

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐
3. Tezimden bir bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz. ☐

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ: