

Women living under muslim laws  
النساء في ظل التبرعات الإسلامية  
Femmes sous lois musulmanes

# **Feminism in Turkey in the 1980's :**

## **An interview with Ayfle Düzkan and Meltem Ahiska**

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Women Living Under Muslim Laws  
BP 23, 34790 Grabels

## Women living under muslim laws النساء في ظل الشريعة الإسلامية

### Femmes sous lois musulmanes

International solidarity network

Réseau international de solidarité

Central Coordination:

Boite Postale 23, 34790 Grabels, France.

Coordination for Asia:

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### Women Living Under Muslim Laws

is a network of women whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by laws, both written and unwritten, drawn from interpretations of the Koran tied up with local traditions.

Generally speaking, men and the State use these against women, and they have done so under various political regimes.

### Women Living Under Muslim Laws

addresses itself

to women living where Islam is the religion of the State, as well as to women who belong to Muslim communities ruled by minority religious laws,

to women in secular states where Islam is rapidly expanding and where fundamentalists demand a minority religious law, as well as to women from immigrant Muslim communities in Europe and the Americas,

and to non Muslim women, either nationals or foreigners, living in Muslim countries and communities, where Muslim laws are applied to them and to their children.

### Women Living Under Muslim Laws

was formed in response to situations which required urgent action, during the years 1984-85

The case of three feminists arrested and jailed without trial, kept incommunicado for seven months, in Algeria, for having discussed with other women the project of law known as "Family Code", which was highly unfavorable to women.

The case of an Indian sunni woman who filled a petition in the Supreme Court arguing that the Muslim minority law applied to her in her divorce denied her the rights otherwise guaranteed by the Constitution of India to all citizens, and called for support.

The case of a woman in Abu Dhabi, charged with adultery and sentenced to be stoned to death after delivering and feeding her child for two months.

The case of the "Mothers of Algiers" who fought for custody of their children after divorce among others...

The campaigns that have been launched on these occasions received full support both from women within Muslim countries and communities, and from progressive and feminists groups abroad.

Taking the opportunity of meeting at the international feminist gathering "Tribunal on Reproductive Rights" held in Amsterdam, Holland, in July 1984, nine women from Muslim countries and communities : Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, Iran, Mauritius, Tanzania, Bangladesh and Pakistan, came together and formed the Action Committee of Women Living Under Muslim Laws, in support of women's struggles in the concerned contexts.

This Committee later evolved into the present network.

The objectives of **Women Living Under Muslim Laws** are

- to create links amongst women and women's groups (including those prevented from organising or facing repression if they attempted to do so) within Muslim countries and communities,
- to increase women's knowledge about both their common and diverse situations in various contexts,
- to strengthen their struggles and to create the means to support them internationally from within the Muslim world and outside.

In each of these countries till now women have been waging their struggle in isolation.

### Women Living Under Muslim Laws aims at

- providing information for women and women's groups from Muslim countries and communities
- disseminating this information to other women from Muslim countries and communities
- supporting their struggles from within the Muslim countries and communities, and make them known outside,
- providing a channel of communication amongst women from Muslim countries and communities.

These objectives are fulfilled through

- building a network of information and solidarity
- disseminating information through "Dossiers"
- facilitating interaction and contact between women from Muslim countries and communities, and between them and progressive and feminists groups at large.
- facilitating exchanges of women from one geographical area to another in the Muslim world.

## **An Introductory Note**

The network Women Living Muslim Laws has for several years attempted to promote the exchange of information and experiences within women's movement initiatives across the Muslim world. In recent years the wide spread rise of fundamentalist and conservative religious movements have revived major political debates about the separation between religion and the state in many Muslim societies. There has been a serious & dangerous erosion of women's rights in many of these societies as the Religious Fundamentalist formations begin to exercise greater power and begin to influence the redefinition of the frontiers between matters of state and religious practice.

The historical development in Turkey of the separation between affairs of state and religious authority has evoked great interest amongst women's political groups across the Muslim world. The experiences, practices and strategies, current within the women's movement in Turkey, though specific to their local realities, are surely of great interest to women elsewhere

We are therefore reproducing here for you a full length translation from Turkish of an interview with two well known Turkish feminists Ayle Düzkan and Meltem Akisha. They recount in graphic detail the trajectory of the Feminist movement in Turkey throughout the 1980's.

Women Living Under Muslim Laws Network  
Grabels, France, (December 1994)

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## FEMINISM IN TURKEY IN THE 1980s

### An Interview: Ayfle Düzkan, Meltem Ahiska

Meltem Akhisha : Feminism has emerged and expressed itself in Turkey after 1980 – I am saying this disregarding the former feminist experiences. If we can see the 1960s and the 1970s as periods when opposition increased, feminism belongs to the years after 1980. Feminism arose at a time when the socialist movement collapsed, when it was destroyed, and gradually tended to disappear. Moreover, feminism was regarded as an adverse movement both by the socialists and the society in general; it attracted a great deal of criticism but at the same time it was discussed a lot and it remained on the agenda. However, in these years, that is at the beginning of the 1990s, there is a different situation. Almost 10 years have elapsed in between and today, feminism is not feminism as such; but the problem it brings to the fore, that is the "women's problem," has become more familiar. Popular magazines and women's journals have tackled these matters and they have made them more popular. They have undertaken to establish a ministry to deal only with women's problems and they have even tried to adopt the slogans which had once been used by the feminists. In the program drawn by the Ministry to celebrate the 8th of March, these slogans were incorporated in a very eclectic way and considerably emptied of their real meanings. On the other hand, it is considered very important to give a place to the "women's problem" in some leftist organisations. This has almost become the criterion of being contemporary. It can even be said that, at the meetings of some leftist organisations, you come across objections like, "Why aren't women here? They should also raise their voices." There seems to be an acute sensitivity to this problem today. However, one feels as if the number of fields where feminism expresses itself have decreased in number; or rather, we do not see their own organisations, their own publications. How do you evaluate this situation?

Ayfle Düzkan : The rise of feminism after the 1980s has been discussed a lot and much has been said on the matter. fiirin Tekeli has made an observation I partly agree with. The weakening of the socialist organisations after the 1980s has made it easy for feminism to come to the fore, but there was feminism before that. Those women who founded the feminist organisations afterwards had been trying to establish those organisations even then. There was the *Kadınca* magazine;

there were women who read this magazine. fiirin says that even if there had not been the military coup in 1980, there would have been feminist organisations. I agree with her to some extent. On the other hand, I believe that there was a civil war in Turkey before 1980. These things are difficult to accomplish under conditions of civil war. I mean, Turkey is a wierd country. Maybe we can say that everything has become apparent after 1980. Anarchism came out after 1980; criticism of Lenin began after 1980; it can even be said that social-democratic theory came out after 1980. Let alone these things, I think, for instance that the socialists, and say, the state have quite different attitudes in preventing feminism or women's struggle. For, seen from our point of view, both are men's sides. Of course, the state is worse, because the socialists have not yet come into power. But there is no indication that they particularly side with women.

When did socialists ever support women that we should expect them to do so now? Also, the left has an attitude like this in Turkey: the Turkish left used to be against the struggle of the Kurds; Kurds began to organise separately; now, everybody talks about the Kurdish struggle and their getting organised independently. Women's organisations are also talking about women's getting organised independently. There is something paradoxical, even a wierd situation here, for there is the Marxist movement in Turkey, which does not claim to be pioneering. But all of these movements actually follow up on something, that is they emerge after the events. Let us say that something else has exploded in Turkey. I can't think of anything else actually, but let us say that this happened; we'll see the socialists starting to write on that subject, although they had never considered that problem before. Socialism in Turkey has not created its own agenda.

But, of course, the state has created an agenda. With the foundation of the Republic, the state has already adopted a policy for women. This was one of the areas of state policy, and when an alternative or an anti-establishment policy began to be generated concerning this matter, the old policy came back as a haunting ghost. There is nothing strange about this. Now, when do we see the Kemalists, that is the Kemalist women, opposing us? You see Nermin Abadan, coming up and telling stories like, "One day, when I was sleeping, Atatürk came along, patted my head and said, 'You'll make it, my dear girl,' and he sent me to school." The interesting thing is that nobody said anything in Turkey about why the state had a policy for women until the feminists came along. I think it was fiirin Tekeli who first began to write on this subject. Why did the state in Turkey, while the

Republic was being founded, adopt a policy for women? Why did it declare certain things for their liberation? What do all these things mean? Feminists began to think about these matters.

There is something very strange in Turkey. Even those who are strongly opposed to the state do not make an analysis of the state. There is no effort to find out how the Republic was founded. These are also things that came to be discussed recently in Turkey. But, of course, when we go over a decade, I see that we are under a very serious seige. The socialists, the Kemalists, the Muslims, the liberals. . . we are under a very comprehensive seige. When I look at the last decade in Turkey, I consider the women's movement one of the two most significant dynamic forces. And the Kurdish question . . . These have changed the face of Turkey considerably. The Islamists have also begun to change Turkey's face a lot, but in what direction, I am not so sure about that. But I think that women's movement has also changed Turkey's face considerably in the last ten years.

MELTEM AHISKA: If you like, we will return to this matter later. I want to ask you something else now. It seems to me that it should be possible to establish a special relationship between the development of the women's movement and the development of capitalism, even though it cannot be a causal one. I mean, the fact that capitalism does away with all the traditional relations and draws everything to itself, that is to market, is an important factor in the formation of new identities. This is a process, which, on the one hand lays the foundations of liberation, but which, on the other hand, establishes new mechanisms of oppression. For example, things like women taking their place in the business world, in the job market . . . Do you think this plays a role in bringing about some identities of women that rebel or speak for themselves? If so, how was this experienced in Turkey?

AYfiE DÜZKAN: I think this is quite meaningful. For instance, it seems to me very interesting how women's press has come about. I mean, the developments we see in publications like *Kadınca* and *Elele* are very important. The magazines published for women readers address a certain type of audience. This is a new type of readership. In Turkey, there came about an urban mass of working women, some married, some living alone. These magazines address them and they sell well; so they can finance themselves. This is an indication of real support. However, an analysis of the society in this respect, that is, how far women came into the job market, did this happen in the last ten years, when did it happen? I am not well informed about these

matters.

MELTEM AHISKA: And there is not much research done in this field either.

AYŞİE DÜZKAN: I guess not. However, I can see for myself that in this city there are now women who are working, who are living alone, or who are married but who do not make their living on their marriage. And I think this offers an important potential from the feminist point of view, an important potential that has not been exploited. But I have to say this: When I look at Turkey, starting from feminism, I don't see capitalism, but I see patriarchy, the domination of men. For this reason, more than the changes taking place in capitalism, what interests me is how patriarchy is changing in Turkey, what kind of forms it is taking in practice, what transformation is the family going through – not in terms of the last decade, but in terms of its transformation into the nuclear family – these seem more interesting to me.

MELTEM AHISKA: All right, how do you define patriarchy? Do you define it as a system related with capitalism or as a completely different and independent system?

AYŞİE DÜZKAN: Certainly in relation with capitalism. But it is a different thing, not the same thing. That is, I define it as a different mode of production. It is interlocked with capitalism, it has been tightly interwoven, but this is extremely important in my view: Patriarchy is not there for capitalism to continue; we can even say that, they clash with each other at certain points; I don't know whether it would be correct to call it a system but these are two different systems existing side by side, giving concessions to each other. I mean, women do not work in the home for capitalism to continue. On the contrary; women work in the home but capitalism forces them to do the opposite; it takes women out of their homes in one way or another, it provides the circumstances for this, because women provide cheap labour for capitalism. The first thing we see when we look at women's world is patriarchy. Capitalism also exploits women, it abuses them . . . You can say many things, but before this we must ask what transformations does patriarchy go through; we have to look at this first.

MELTEM AHISKA: What you have said, seems to be related more with material conditions. These also have some ideological dimensions in the culture. That is, when women go out of their homes, what is the kind of life that meets them? Is not there a similar ideology in the

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places they work? The way patriarchy aligns itself with capitalism at this point seems extremely important to me, for capitalism, which you say "tends to untie to be all relations" does not untie some forms of relations. Women are still in secondary position, they are still subjugated to men, and they are being abused in the work place.

AYfiE DÜZKAN: In this world, capitalism is a matter of only yesterday. Whereas patriarchy is a very old system. Of course capitalism would not undo it, why should it? Capitalism uses whatever suits its purpose; it is a social order that starts from what it finds, that builds on whatever it finds. Capitalism found patriarchy; all modes of production have discovered patriarchy, anyway.

MELTEM AHISKA: But we have said that the development of capitalism affects women in a way.

AYfiE DÜZKAN: Capitalism takes women out of their homes, it offers them a new field to make their living, a field to live outside patriarchy. Now, since we have begun to talk, a new phrase has been coined in this country: There is another life. You go out and work; later, maybe you can make a new life for yourself, or you can make yourself a new life with your husband, again in the nuclear family. In the last ten years, I think this is the most significant thing feminism has achieved in Turkey. It reminded urban women the possibility and this has become something valid, something worth mentioning. I mean on TV, everywhere, in the media, this possibility has been noticeable – it is neither in the media nor outside it; can one ever remain outside the media? . . . I always suspect greatly those which seem to be alternatives. Another life is possible. This sounds a bit superficial, a bit of a generalisation, but as there are unions for workers, or as socialism is the messenger of a different world, it is the same thing as this. And everything starts with this. Doing something other than working for a boss is possible in this life; we can come together to protect our rights, we can join unions etc. . . . In the end, this is something individual for the worker, it concerns his own life. For women a similar hope emerged . . . But how are we going about organizing it?

MELTEM AHISKA: I wanted to come to this point exactly. In my opinion, feminism has come to a very important point in Turkey, maybe in other countries as well. And that point is to bring out clearly those material foundations, that is women's oppression particular to themselves due to their being apprentices and their objective interests. As unions are institutions organizing the objective interests of the workers, in my opinion so is the women's movement. But feminism is quite different from this . . . We are talking about political conscio-



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usness in feminism. We are talking about this ground being built on the basis of objective interests, being transferred onto another consciousness through political means, that is into a consciousness similar to the workers' passing into socialism . . . Workers do not become socialist of their own. In the same way, women are also being oppressed but do not become feminists of their own accord. Don't you think this political transition needs to be defined and organised?

AYfiE DÜZKAN: Of course, of course, it has to be defined. Feminism is a movement which has its own tradition, but because it is not total, and because it does not start from a comprehensive theory, it is a movement which is not international, if I may so. There is feminism in all parts of the world, but everybody says something different. In my mind, this is also a good opportunity for feminism. It is an opportunity, but it makes things very difficult at the beginning of the undertaking. Feminism offers the possibility of acknowledging differences; that is, when women of different races, different nations, different cultures are rebelling against common oppression, feminism becomes something that helps them keep these differences. In so many countries, for instance in England – I am saying this, because I know the situation in England relatively better – Irish women organise differently, brown-skinned women have their own organisations, black women have their own organisation. This was obvious, this had to be like this, for they say we all live different lives, we talk about the ways we live. For this reason there are organisations that are widely differentiated . . . Like Irish lesbian women. I think this is an opportunity. Because I do not think that there is total oppression. The idea, "There is total oppression, there is total order, and people are being oppressed under that," is a weakness of anarchism. Apart from this, anarchism houses immense possibilities; if it only recognized these differences, it would have great potential, to my mind. For instance, in capitalism, both the boss oppresses and the state does . . . but it is extremely difficult to make a lot of people say that it is the men who oppress. You cannot ever get them to say that men oppress. Somebody oppresses, but it is never clear who does so; they say it is a male dominated society, they say it is the heterosexuals who oppress, but nobody owns the blame. All these are valid, but everybody, in one way or another, ends up on one side in some issues, and on the other side in some other ones.

MELTEM AHISKA: And these are not very static identities either.

AYfiE DÜZKAN: Not so static in Turkey, where penetration between

social classes is frequent, when everybody becomes a worker, a petit bourgeois, and then the boss, and later on an employee. But in societies where class differences have been established, it is static in fact. I mean, you are either white or black, either female or male, either a worker or a boss, or a petit bourgeois. These are things that rarely change. But a person becomes the other party in all his relationships. That is she may not be oppressed as a worker, but she may be oppressed as a woman; or the man who is being oppressed as a worker oppresses his wife in turn. I think this is very significant.

MELTEM AHISKA: Now let us go into the matter of how a policy can be adopted for doing this. For all you have said have been raised against Enlightenment, which developed as a male ideology in the world. That is, it is an argument which goes against what is good and right for everybody, against the Declaration of Human Rights. We are talking about more relative identities, about different kinds of social status. How can people in these different positions, especially these different women in the women's movement be brought together to meet each other? Can a relationship be established between the political objective of feminism and these things? There you have women in different positions within the women's movement. . . black, brown-skinned . . . these do not experience the same things in the same way.

AYFİE DÜZKAN: And materially they are not in the same position.

MELTEM AHISKA: Well, is it possible to have a feminist policy that would unite them all?

AYFİE DÜZKAN: I don't think such a comprehensive policy would be possible. Feminism proceeds with campaigns, anyway; those who wish to do so may join these campaigns, but everybody has organised separately. Sometimes they come together for a certain campaign. And apart from that, there are small groups. Groups sometimes organised only for consciousness raising, and sometimes only to write, to discuss something. But nothing is meant to be lasting; the campaign is not meant to be lasting either. For instance, in Turkey there are women working for the *Mor Çat* (*Purple Roof*), they have dedicated themselves to this cause. But when there is a march against beatings, then everybody comes. Maybe this is something more general, something that interests all women. But working for the *Mor Çat* is something else. In a similar way, there are those women who work for the Women's Library. I would call these real organisations. And there are other things. In Turkey there are some institutions that feminism has established but there are

some other things that have not yet been established. At one time, women were going to get together against sexual molest, but then they got separated. If that campaign has ended, if they think that it has achieved its ends, it is quite normal for them to disperse. I mean, we cannot call this type of thing lack of organisation.

MELTEM AHISKA: But I still see an impasse at one point. This matter of differentiation has become one of the most favourite subjects for discussion recently. For example, post-feminism also talks about it. However, in ideas based on these differences, differences are reduced to singular examples incapable of understanding one another.

AYŞİE DÜZKAN: There is something else involved here, there is depoliticisation. Because this means that, in the end, everybody struggles for his own liberation, for his own personal liberation. But I am a feminist because I have become aware of this fact: you can't have liberation only for one person, it is not possible to be liberated as an individual woman. For in its most crude and most cliché meaning, this is a matter of social order. Then, I should be able to come together with some people who are also being oppressed by this order so that I would be able to accomplish something. You cannot do it alone. I may have attained enough freedom for and by myself, but I cannot be liberated. Post-feminism has the differences brought to the fore-ground to the degree that they cannot be brought together any more. You do not look for any common points, you only talk about the differences. But we have our differences and our common points in this life. It is an obvious fact.

MELTEM AHISKA: I want to ask about these common points both in terms of the past and concerning today. In this last decade of feminism, has it been possible to find these common points, what kind of differences have there been, where have these differences met and where has it been possible to bring them together? How were these differences, for example, experienced between intellectual women and non-intellectual women, or between Kurdish women and Turkish women, and how can they be experienced when we look at them today?

AYŞİE DÜZKAN: I think they began with a handicap like this. Most of the women who first started the women's movement in Turkey, who took place in it for long years were intellectuals, leftists or ex-leftists. Socialism has that thing which gives one the made-up and false feeling of "we are all one". These women came into feminism with that feeling. But some women make little money, some make more,

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some are married, some are not . . . some are intellectuals and some are not . . . these came to be realized by and by. But there was no process in which these were discussed. They only dwelt upon unimportant matters. I mean, things like some women can talk more freely about than others, etc. There were a lot of discussions on authority among feminists. In Turkey, it was feminists more than anarchists who discussed authority. That is to say, there are some women who have worked as university professors for years; of course, they know how to talk very well. Women who have taught at universities have more to say on such subjects.

MELTEM AHISKA: And they received a lot of criticism because of this, as far as I know.

AYŞİE DÜZKAN: Certainly, they were reacted against. The discussion about authority goes as far as that and ends up there. When it has not been transformed into the question of why these differences exist. How can we live out these differences? Some people will be blamed with exercising authority, and some will feel to be unfairly treated. I don't mean to say that it is a meaningless thing, it is an unjust thing, but in my opinion it does not bring a solution. I think the problem of hierarchy will not be solved by criticism. If I had believed it to be so, I would certainly have been a "Fire Robber". We have not been able to reach the point where we can discuss these matters because we are too busy discussing socialism; this is one of the most important weaknesses. The relationship between socialism and feminism did not go any deeper than, "How did socialism look at feminism in the wrong way?" People did not want to see this.

MELTEM AHISKA: Why didn't they? I think, this was not something the socialists imposed?

AYŞİE DÜZKAN: Except for a very small number of women who have made emotional investments in feminism in Turkey, for a significant group or militants – if you like, I can expand on my use of the word militant here – feminism has always been a side issue. There is politics, and there is feminism. Politics is leftism, politics is socialism . . . because there is such a thing as politics.

MELTEM AHISKA: We don't know of any other politics, anyway.

AYŞİE DÜZKAN: There is politics, and there is feminism. Feminism will reform that policy, will improve it, then we shall have a better policy – whatever that policy of ours may be – or it will protect our rights in the policy. For socialism, even if I use the mildest expression in the world – is a field where women are being

disregarded at the least. We shall do away with that . But feminism has not been seen as a policy that would transform the world by itself, a revolutionary, separate policy on its own.

A lot can be said about what feminism has been in Turkey. I think it can at least be said that it was a mass movement, or the rough draft of a mass movement. Feminism is the movement of women's liberation in Turkey. For some women what is reformist and transforming is socialism; feminism is a side issue to be annexed to it . . . not the leading actor or actress, but a secondary player. Some women saw feminism as a movement enriching their cultural and philosophical lives. For example, Duygu Asena is very much criticised, very much scorned, even by those who side with feminism. Whereas, I think Duygu performed an important function in Turkey for the word feminism to be commonly known. Duygu does not say very profound things but this is what mass movement is, anyway. Mass movement is not something that proceeds from deep analyses. Analyses are made somewhere over there, and the mass movements are influenced by them.

MELTEM AHISKA: When you say mass movement, to what extent has it turned into mass action?

AYfiE DÜZKAN: I am saying that it was a rough draft; I'm not saying that it has become a real mass movement. It is sketch of the mass movement. That was the point it could have come to, and I still have my hopes lying in that direction. Anyway, feminism is a mass movement in the world too. It is not a sub-culture of socialism, or a movement of thought, or it is not something rich and deep in terms of academic content. I think I have quite a different attitude from many others at this point.

MELTEM AHISKA: Very well, but where do you place feminist consciousness when you say mass movement? Do you think that feminist consciousness which has not been formed directly, which has not risen from the existing conditions turn into a mass movement?

AYfiE DÜZKAN: I think feminism has an advantage over other opposition movements. It is something – I would say militants again – its militants, its subjects experience directly. A woman is talking about women, that is about herself. This is something very direct, it is not a roundabout thing. Other movements of opposition are not like this. They have many indirect ways, they talk about second-hand experiences. Of course, consciousness is something very

indirect, it is exactly what we experience, it is not the mirror-image of it. But the reason why feminism has come into being so easily is just this directness. Feminism is only at the beginning of things but it has come about very quickly. Of course, there are focuses which this mass movement has concentrated, I am aware of those. It is a mass movement, but it is not something that exists in the same intensity from beginning to the end, from the front to the back. There are certainly places where you have indirect ways, there are some focuses. I mean, if there were no books, no magazines, no discussions, if it were not reminded, there would never have been such a movement. I can say this for myself, and for many other women: If we had not opened *Somut* and seen the women's page in it, I can't think what would have happened. The fact that some women made more emotional investment, that they have spent a lot of physical effort, is something that makes it possible for them to be in circulation. But doesn't it always happen like this? Something starts from somewhere, that vein still continues. I don't approve of anything other than that. I am most against a group of people leading the whole, in Marxism, even in life.

MELTEM AHISKA: I don't want to discuss this. What I want to discuss is a point of view which I call naturalism. Of course all demands, all organisations stem from the existing situation, existing conditions. But I consider it important to transcend the existing situation, that is to break down naturalism. If we apply this to the women's example, it is extremely important that women should go out of their existing conditions and this is where political directness acquires importance. In your view of feminism, don't you have a perspective like directing women towards going out of their present situation, maybe to lead them out of the frame of womanhood that they have thought up, that they have constructed themselves?

AYfiE DÜZKAN: It seems to me that there is a bit of idealism in this. I don't mean it in the moral sense, but idealism as opposed to materialism. Women's going out of their existing situations, if I may say so, is related with things like being an individual, the process of individuation, which has become outmoded for feminism now. I am saying this, going back to the times of Simone de Beauvoir, in a way. This can only be thought of and used as a tool for analysis. For there is no such thing as the existing situation changing a little, then changing a little bit more, then being realized as an ideal, as an Ithaca. I think you cannot use this for making a policy. You said naturalist, that is very correct; I think you can wage policies by means of naturalist things, by means of material things. But Ithaca, a

new life for women, a new kind of existence, a new world, all these are tools for analysis.

MELTEM AHISKA: Don't you think there should be a perspective like this?

AYFİE DÜZKAN: Of course, there is such a perspective, but whether this perspective can be a tool for politics, I am not sure of that. Politics is something you do day by day; and for this reason, it is something that can be done by using the possibilities and tools you have in hand and to the degree that you have them in hand.

MELTEM AHISKA: In that case, feminist policy is only voicing the existing demands, is that it?

AYFİE DÜZKAN: It is voicing the existing demands, but the existing demands do not exist fully. You create demands. People think that they can live as slaves, that there is no life other than slavery. I think the demand not to be a slave any more is a demand that is created. It is voicing the idea, "Let us not be slaves any more!" The creation of this demand is something produced by consciousness.

MELTEM AHISKA: But taking the existing desire, the existing orientation onto another, higher level and creating concepts and demands, isn't this doing exactly what I called a non-naturalist attitude? That feminist policy in this sense is something which has to be created? . .

AYFİE DÜZKAN: Then it means that we have to analyse the existing way of living so that we can understand where we stand, where we can hope to be. Analysing the existing way of life is something that can be done by means of concepts and methods. I think materialism is a good method to employ in analysing the situation we find ourselves in. For it is quite possible and extremely widespread to be a feminist without being a materialist. Maybe that is the most widespread attitude. Of course, we need concepts, we need abstractions. For example, it is quite common to look at our lives through concepts in psychology. You know, "Most neurotics are women"; "I am bored", "Why am I always working for this man?", "Why am I always at home? . ." But, from here we have to arrive at another question: The woman next door is also getting bored, she also gets beaten from time to time. To create a mass movement starting from here, we have to stop and ask, "All right, we get beaten, but whose purpose does this serve?" that is, we have to put up an effort to analyse all this.

There is a situation like this here: Women's movement moves

with women, that is with the material it has in hand. The workers' movement was very lucky from the start. For the workers' movement started not with the workers but with the intellectuals and it had the possibility of thinking about the matter. This is a completely different thing. There is a statement saying, "Women are nature and men are culture." Of course, this is not something absolute, not something natural and unchanging, but we can say that it has some truth in it. Culture has been kept away from women. Thinking, culture, analysis, anything you can think of, have been kept away from them.

MELTEM AHISKA: A while ago, when you were calling it the draft of a mass movement, you said that feminism was not seen as something that would transform the world. Did it have such a perspective then, or how was this expressed?

AYfiE DÜZKAN: Perspective is something that is formed. There was this possibility. I mean, this was something often expressed in words, said quite often verbally. But it has come to be something that irritates me greatly when I hear it. Because it has become a cliché. We are going to transform the world, but how are we going to transform it, by means of which organisation, by using which tools? We can never come to the point where we can discuss these things. What do we talk about? Why is socialism bad. Why doesn't it want us? And the like. I have put this in a childish way, but this is exactly the case. That feminism is something which will transform the world has been written down a thousand times in our feminist literature. But if you do not analyse it, if you do not support it, it does not become meaningful. For everybody kept believing secretly that socialist movement would transform the world.

MELTEM AHISKA: In your opinion, can feminism be an alternative project to socialism in transforming the world?

AYfiE DÜZKAN: If you ask me, socialism transforms the world for the workers. It cannot go beyond that. Even it begins to seem doubtful to me, well, anyway. Feminism transform the world for women. They are two different things. They cannot be alternatives for each other, for their subject matters are different. This world needs socialism and it needs feminism. But I am saying that socialism cannot promise anything to women, and feminism cannot promise anything to workers. The advantage of feminism lies in the fact that it does not talk about workers anyway, but socialism talks about women of course.



MELTEM AHISKA: If you like, let's go back to history, to the women's movement. In this process, socialist feminists and radical feminists separated from each other. They published two different magazines but they also acted together and joined forces in various activities. How do you evaluate this separation today?

AYfiE DÜZKAN: For me this is such a recent event that I don't really know whether I should be talking about it as history. It seems to me that history is a process that you watch from a far distance. What seems to be the case is that radical feminists published a magazine and socialist feminists published another magazine; that was something I experienced from inside, very closely, and it did not happen exactly like that. A friend of mine used to say, "You would enter the university, and you would first become a member of Dev-Genç,\* and then you would decide upon your policy." And I used to say, "In the old days, you would first become a socialist feminist and then you would choose your policy." Because all these women came from socialism, everybody was under the impression that they were socialist feminists or they became socialist feminists. When I said for the first time in my life that I was a radical feminist, a lot of people, including my own friends, were shocked. They said things like, "How can this be? Has the dream of socialism died now? What kind of a break is this? How can you say such a thing?" To hear these words said was quite startling for me at the time, because it is my feeling that in those days, aside from socialist feminism, it was again socialist feminism that was being practiced under the name of only feminism. It was very important for me to remind that feminism could exist outside socialist feminism, a different feminism that would allow us to freely analyse, to generate theories without anything really getting in our way – I mean an obstacle, something intellectual getting in our way. A lot of things were settled down much later. I think you had also joined those meetings. Starting as a very large group, we arrived at the point where we had decided to publish the *Feminist* magazine. Later on, I really regretted not having worked with some other women. But these were not socialist feminists. Why didn't I work with fiirin Tekeli, for instance? I see this as a mistake in my past. But at those times, when the *Feminist* magazine was first published, there were no feminists who claimed to be radical feminists other than myself in that group. But there were some other women who were not socialist feminists. I mean, there were women who did not want to define themselves as such, those who wanted to define themselves as feminists only. I don't know the process socialist feminism went through very well, that is

the process followed in publishing the *Kaktüs* (Cactus) magazine. An important part of the women who had published *Kaktüs* wrote up a common text afterwards. I heard that they came together around that text. I mean, this was not a process that I know clearly, but the *Feminist* magazine offered the possibility of talking about feminism without mentioning socialist feminism, that is socialism. At the beginning, there was something that I had insisted upon very much. We are not going to get into a row with socialists here, we are not going to answer them back, we are not going to talk about this. We are not going to get into a polemic discussion; we are talking about something else, and we must first tell about this . . . I had personally made such a preference. And there are very few women who came up and said that they were radical feminists. None of the women who published the *Feminist* magazine defined themselves as such.

MELTEM AHISKA: In more concrete terms, what was the difference aside from socialism?

AYŞE DÜZKAN: There was only that. There was no concrete difference other than socialism. There was something Stella said then. "In the days when I first started to talk about these things, I wanted all the leftist women to be feminists. Now that this aim has been realised, we have to aim for housewives," she used to say. If you ask me, we should have aimed not for housewives, but for those women who were working, living in the cities, and living on their own, but we were not able to do this. I hold myself responsible for this failure. For instance, could you have realized such an aim by means of *Kaktüs* ? I am not saying that you could have realized it through *Feminist*, but I think discussions to settle the accounts with socialism which had been going on for some time led to a commitment. That was because women were trying to cope both with socialists and feminism. I mean, it is one thing to be a socialist feminist as a coloured variation of feminist policy, and it is quite another thing to be in the socialist policy as a feminist. There is a very important difference between the two. This is a political difference. But in the long run, they become the same thing.

MELTEM AHISKA: I understand how socialist feminism shuts itself out but if we go back to the *Feminist* magazine, isn't there an attitude here also to shut itself away? If we start from the premise, "What is personal is political," then individual life is something extremely class-oriented and it is determined by some other differences. The way this life is voiced by women actually expresses a female image, a certain way of life. How can this potential mass of women that you

have mentioned be reached?

AYFİE DÜZKAN: I now think that I had written in *Feminist* quite differently from what I had thought out in my mind. I began to think about other things and I wrote about those things. When there are no pioneers, and when you don't see yourself as a pioneer, everybody comes up and says, "I want to write about this," "I fancy writing this." This is not a world of obligations, of course; then, you can't find that sort of richness, that kind of colourfulness. I think the most significant tool for that has been *Kadınca*. I consider *Kadınca* and also some women who wrote for it to be very important. At the moment, those women who are writing for *Kim*. We have become, in a sense, a vein that has supplied them with blood. I mean, the things we used to say in those days, I now see written in these magazines. In a more popularised way but it is not too bad for some things to be so popularised. For instance, things concerning fatness. Now, *Kim* writes about these topics. Anyway, these acquire a meaning when they are discussed in a magazine like *Kim*. We used to publish 3000 issues . . . Maybe this had some significance in those days; people did not even think that fatness was something that could be used in generating policies. But when something is treated in a magazine that prints 40.000 issues, then it has really turned into something political.

MELTEM AHISKA: A while ago, you said that in the worker's movement intellectuals speak on behalf of the workers. Don't you think there was a similar situation in the women's movement?

AYFİE DÜZKAN: Yes, there is some truth in this, but . . . For example, I'm not an intellectual. I mean, a lot of women I knew in my circle, even a significant part of the women working for *Feminist*, were women who did not have an academic formation. I began to write after I had become a feminist. I had worked for a newspaper before that and I had prepared news reports for the daily *Demokrat*, but this is something quite different. For me writing was something that began with feminism. I don't know whether I would ever write otherwise. This is true for a lot of women. I mean, those women had not written before, nor did they write afterwards. *Feminist* consisted of such a group actually. I think *Feminist* was significant in this respect. In the sense that people who were so cut away away from writing came to write . . .

MELTEM AHISKA: Is there anything you want to say about mistakes made in the past?

## *Feminism in Turkey in the 1980s*

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AYfiE DÜZKAN: If I had had the consciousness then that I have now, I would have aimed for the mass aspect of the matter. I don't mean when we first started to publish *Feminist*. I am not sure about that. There were some women then that I did not want to be with. I now consider it a mistake not to have worked with them. But now I have the feeling that, afterwards, I would have aimed for a publication which was more mass-oriented, which would be published more frequently, which would say more, and which would talk more about daily matters. And now it seems to me that, apart from that, I would not have wasted time on things like the women's congress. These are the things that I can remember now. Which means that this is my personal history. I can only talk about my personal experiences.

MELTEM AHISKA: Can you see the possibility of a more widespread feminist political organisation today?

AYfiE DÜZKAN: There are now women whose emotional investment is much more considerable. I believe they exercise their minds on this subject. This is not a process that has been exploited; I mean it is not widespread a process. At present, there are some women who think about and undertake doing things collectively. But of course, there are also women who got involved in this matter in 1989. This is something quite different for them. I think that in this process of analysis they have fewer possibilities in their hands. We should turn back and look at the past only in the sense that we should not make the same mistakes when we try to accomplish something. Apart from that, you may have experienced an absolute failure and then you stop and make an assessment of the past; this is not exactly the situation.

MELTEM AHISKA: One of the most active institutions now working is the Mor Çatı, and it is working against violence directed towards women, against beatings. This is the specific field it chose for itself to work in. But to my mind, feminism is a much wider project and it comprises many more fields. And when you say, "What is personal is political," then there comes up a situation in which a woman should form herself as a subject, that is there are things to be said concerning sex and the body of women, not things against these, but more positive things about them. What do you think about these questions?

AYfiE DÜZKAN: The women who want to think about this, who want to work in these fields, I am sure will do so. I think, men's violence directed upon women is something more important than

we assume it to be. Not only ways of intimidation like beatings, that is ways of making women behave themselves(?), but a way of experiencing sex, as a part of our sexual lives . . . I am not using these words in the sense of sadism-masochism; I think this is very important in experiencing our daily, ordinary sexual lives, in organising our daily lives, in organising our relationships with men. Of course, the Mor Çat is an organisation for a more specific problem. But, maybe answers to all these things has to be found like this, in bits and pieces. Maybe one day a group of women will come up and say "No!" to something in their bedrooms, and they will start to think and talk about that thing. Both these women themselves, and the other militants in the women's liberation movement, and also our social memory will be transferred into this new thought. But, apart from this, I do not believe that a more comprehensive consciousness can be produced. And besides, would it be very correct to do so, I am not sure about that either.

MELTEM AHISKA: Then we come to the meaning of the theory. Some women are talking about the lack of a feminist theory at the moment. In this field also there is a West-centered thinking; it looks as if what is happening in the West is later being experienced in Turkey . . . Whereas, as far as I know, there is no central feminist theory in the West for the time being. Universities produce a large number of studies, research papers, etc., but what comes out are attitudes completely different from one another, different outlooks. . . Especially the so-called post-feminist indicate that they will disperse and differentiate, anyway. In your opinion, is there need for a comprehensive feminist theory today?

AYŞE DÜZKAN: First of all, let me say that I feel that I belong to the East. And I think that an Eastern feminism is possible. Now, we have such an atmosphere in Turkey that, if you defend ideas of freedom, of liberation, it sounds as if you are adopting a Western attitude; and to defend the opposite of this is considered something Eastern. I think this attitude has been changed by the Kurdish movement. The hidden consciousness of the East. . . This country, with a lot of things belonging to it, in spite of Kemalism, is an Eastern country and this is not so bad. But in the East there is less that allows freedom; then we shall break this tradition, we can answer the demands, because we belong here. What is happening in the West, I am not really very much interested. Very close to us we have Iran, we have Egypt. We have no idea what is happening in those places. In india they burn a woman each month, and nobody moves a finger. Certain things are happening in Egypt, we turn our backs on them. It it not that I

admire what they say, but we never turn our eyes to those places. We don't learn Arabic; all of us constantly learn English. And we choose French as a second language. There is nobody among us who learns Persian. Even those things written in Persian we read through English. This is outrageous!

Of course, for the questions I find myself asking I need a theoretical perspective. In the past I suffered a lot from the difficulty of not being able to share some of the things I thought up, of not being able to make them collective. In addition, when we were thinking about such subjects as sex, which determined the political agenda of feminism, we were not able to turn these ideas into collective consciousness. The most important thing that we have been able to turn into collective consciousness is the need to become an independent movement.

MELTEM AHISKA: And above all, to become independent of socialism. . . In a period when Marxism was very influential, feminists in the world tried to re-produce the concepts of Marxism within the feminist theory. For instance, Christine Delphy tried to prove in the 1970s that woman made up a class. Don't you think this means thinking within the Marxist framework in a way? It was as if feminism had to talk using concepts similar to those of Marxism; it had to prove that it was a class so that it could be taken seriously?

AYŞE DÜZKAN: I agree with this to a certain extent for Kate Millet. But I don't agree for Christine Delphy. For Christine is a materialist and she is a woman who has written on the subject saying that materialism was the only way out. For this reason, I don't think that her talking about women as a class was an effort to find its mirror image. Until I read Delphy, I had seen materialism being applied only to the public field outside the home. Delphy treated home life as a field of exploitation. When we say home, this is a very large field, especially in the pre-capitalist social order – when I say order, I mean mechanism. There is exploitation here, especially. Women work in the home, but they also work in the field, in the garden, in front of the house, and at the carpet loom inside the house. Patriarchy means not only the domination of men over women, but also the domination of the elderly over the youngsters, of the head of the family over the other members. It is something organised in its own. Christine analyses this, she analyses it employing a materialistic method. Of course it is important that this happens in France, because it is one of the least capitalised countries in Western Europe. I think what Delphy says is also very important

in term of Turkey. For Turkey still has a lot of pre-capitalist relationships. When you look at the family, it is one thing to look at it in terms of its historical development, it is quite another thing to look at it through the nuclear family. Marxism, although it looked at the pre-capitalist periods of history at the ideological level, actually looks at the nuclear family. It says that in the nuclear family there is housework being done, this is re-production, it is not production at all. But if you look at this through the perspective of the transformation of patriarchy it is a completely different thing. Patriarchy does not mean the domination of a certain man. I mean, you cannot say that the state is patriarchal. Delphy says that in patriarchy you have a relationship for production, she analyses this. It is important to call women a class in terms of this analysis.

For example, sex is also a very important field of domination, but in my opinion, it is not possible to solve these relationships of domination by analysing the relationships of production. There is culture, there is ideology, there is the state, and separately there is the production of life in the public. This is a perspective that does not say much concerning these things.

MELTEM AHISKA: You are always talking about materialism, about material foundations, and in the end the world, these material foundations are constantly changing. On the one hand we are talking about the need for the feminist movement to be independent. And, what is more, we say that there is differentiation, there are different women, there are different organisations. Is not there a need for some concepts that will emerge from the analysis of today's material world and that will help these different women to unite. I see that I keep coming back to this point.

AYŞE DÜZKAN: If different women could come together on a different platform, maybe we could talk about their getting united. In Turkey, there has always been an effort to bring them together. There was no organisation carried out in terms of differences. Whereas, feminist organisation is something that traditionally proceeds on differences. But in Turkey there was no organisation taking these differences into consideration. Of course, the small number of women also had a role to play in this, but everybody thought that they had to go to all the meetings. People began to think about these differences in the last years of our active period and to base things on these differences. But we need to ask some questions and to find answers for them, not so much to unite, but to explain our present life and of course our lives in the past. I think

this is what we mean when we say a theoretical perspective.

MELTEM AHISKA: Only accepting the differences is not enough to generate a policy, you see. In post-feminism the lack of a policy based on differences is obvious enough.

AYfiE DÜZKAN: In Turkey we have not made an analysis of the differences. I think that we need to talk about differences and also to analyse them. Only after doing this can we talk about our common lives. I am saying this because sex is one of these areas; how do different people make sex, for example? Different women should tell us about their experiences; they should come up and say different things so that we can make an abstraction and bring them together. These things do not happen. I mean, nobody has come up and said yet, "How do we make love? Write about how you make love." I do not know whether all women would do so. But we asked, for example, "How do you get beaten?"

MELTEM AHISKA: I don't think feminists in Turkey have had subjects like sex, freedom of sex on their agenda and thought about these subjects.

AYfiE DÜZKAN: Not very much. For some women sexual freedom was extremely important, to become free in terms of sex, to express their desires more easily, to be able to live more easily, to be able to make love with more men and women. For some women, while they were experiencing their own feminism, this came to the fore. For some women it was less important. I personally believe that sexual freedom is not everything. Sexual freedom is always a very important thing both for women and for feminists, but it does not guarantee that sexuality will be redefined.

In fact, sexuality has not been discussed much. We can even say that, in some cartoons there are always those half nude women, wearing famina earrings, you know. I have never seen such women in this movement. Sex has not been a subject that is often discussed. And it is a difficult subject to tackle, to talk about. One of the most difficult things to talk about. Especially in communities like ours where consciousness raising is not practised very often.

MELTEM AHISKA: And rebelling against the heterosexual model, criticising that model, was not on the agenda either . . . What kind of a relationship was there between the homosexual movement and the feminist movement?

AYfiE DÜZKAN: We have always been in contact with the



homosexual movement since its emergence in Turkey. We met them and we have kept contact ever since. They wanted to undertake a common activity with us. Then we were more willing to do such a thing than we are now. In Turkey, homosexual movement proceeded more in the form of men's homosexual movement. And I think this is normal. Their getting liberated is an important thing, but I have always been of the opinion that this was not something directly on the agenda of the women's movement.

And among the lesbians inside and outside of the women's liberation movement, there were not many who expressed themselves within a perspective of liberation. Lesbianism has always been a subject talked about, experienced, and sometimes joked about a little bit – this is a serious matter, that is why. But there was no policy generated about it. I think that lesbianism is important in breaking down the heterosexual imposition. But I did not meet many political-minded lesbians in the West, and those I met gave me an uneasy feeling, I must confess. As far as I know from the discussions made in the West, I came to the conclusion that this contradiction has not always been very fruitful. Of course, in the United States, lesbians have really been subjected to a witch-hunt. But all of these things are an imposition. Lesbianism is also an imposition. Why do we define ourselves as such? All these are conceivable. But I think lesbianism is a revolutionary tool in questioning our sexuality in general. It does not mean anything beyond that. It seems to me that only when we have used all the means can we arrive at a meaningful point concerning our sexuality.

MELTEM AHISKA: Here also, an utopian aspect comes into the question, if you ask me. For example, when we say a revolutionary transformation, this means the transformation of the material things, but in what direction? A change in all aspects of life, but in what direction?

AYŞE DÜZKAN: In a revolutionary transformation, should one ask in what direction, or should one ask which of the things that are bothering us we should do away with, I do not know. For example, why do we feel uneasy in connection with sexual matters? First of all, it is quite obvious that this is something that makes everybody uneasy, anyway, because we are doing it away from the public eye. But we sometimes pretend that we are doing it just like that. When I say this I mean pornography. There is something very strange here. We never show what we are really doing. It seems to me that we can discuss where we can reach by thinking about these matters. But

how far can sexuality is a field that can be determined socially, this is also questionable.

MELTEM AHISKA: If you like, let me sum up. We have talked about the difference between the East and the West. At the moment, Europe is re-defining the East, as a foreigner. It is my impression that on the one hand there is a process in which everything is joining with each other, histories are disappearing, everything is melting into each other; on the other hand, there is another level at which the absolute difference, separation, is being emphasized. It seems as if all differences are disappearing, but still everything is separate. You said that we have not been able to analyse this difference, this is very true, but on the other hand I always find myself asking that same question. Don't we have to re-discover what is common again? At first there was the whole humanity, then all women got separated, then the white women and then the black women . . . Now, how can we find a common point in this differentiation at the same time that we acknowledge this differentiation, leaving some space, a margin for this separation? I think this is something very hard to accomplish, but it is the very same thing that has to be accomplished . . .

AYFİE DÜZKAN: But if the reason for this separation is unification, if it is the delusion that everything is the same, that nothing is different from the other, if it is this imposition, if it is this illusion, then the way to doing away with this separation is opposing this imposition. Nothing is like the other, but why isn't it, where do they differ? They differ when it comes to power. For those who base themselves on this difference do not analyse the difference by looking through power, they do not define it looking through power. We know that being a man and being a women are two different things. But why? Because one of them is in power. The same is true for being a white and a black . . . We would never have been aware of this difference if it had not been for power. For instance, there is not so much difference between having blue eyes and having green eyes. But there is a difference in terms of power in this country between having green eyes and brown eyes. If you have green eyes, that means you have the most beautiful eyes. Beauty is a very serious tool in obtaining power. Why are some differences important? Because they create power. I think defining these things is gradually being forgotten. People behave as if power did not exist. I am saying this as a human being, that is as an individual comprising all definitions; it is probably when you define all these different kinds of power that you become an individual. Where do I stand, in which

point of power? At this point, individualism is a very complex thing for everybody; we can almost say that there is a different synthesis for each person; and it is only after this, again on the basis of this power, that we can come together and define these differences.

MELTEM AHISKA: Very well. but don't we have to define the hierarchy of these powers, or are they perhaps all at the same level in terms of value?

AYŞİE DÜZKAN: No, they are not at the same level in terms of value; some relationships of power affect the organisation of the society more than others.

MELTEM AHISKA: I think that this matter of defining power is also very important. To start from power, to start from the analysis of power and to know that hierarchy will show us the points where we can come together.

AYŞİE DÜZKAN: But in the end, I think that the relationship of power between labour and capital plays a more significant role than the relationship of power between bisexuals and heterosexuals in organising this hell, which we call the society. But I think that the hierarchy between the powers does not have to have one to one correspondence with the hierarchy in the organisation of the opposition. For then, the bisexual opposition will have to be subject to the opposition of labour; for then, the power defined by this contradiction will be more comprehensive than the other at the social level. I think it is wrong to arrive at such a conclusion. Each individual, each movement can place itself at a different position.

MELTEM AHISKA: Well, when it comes to this point, it seems very difficult to me to be able to arrive at a project.

AYŞİE DÜZKAN: There is no project anyway. There cannot be one.

MELTEM AHISKA: It is difficult to arrive at a large number of projects.

AYŞİE DÜZKAN: I don't know whether it is difficult to arrive at a large number of projects. In my opinion what is essential is this: There will be clashes between these, there will be many different projects, many different opposing movements. For some want to go long a certain project and others say that they do not want projects. For example, bisexual opposition. And the men have the right to act without a project. This is not something very comprehensive, but there is a clash between them. And so are the women's movement and the socialist movement. They have a clash between them. If there were a socialist revolution, you would see what kind of a clash

they would have. The amount of money is there, the payments are there. I mean there are practical limitations. For instance, do you want to establish a common nursery school – I am saying this because socialists always come up with this suggestion; is a nursery a women's problem, that is something women demand; is it the parents' demand, or is it the baby's demand, that is a different question – or of the factory perhaps? Of course, this is a more concrete thing. But even when opposition movements proceed, there are clashes. For there are different interests involved. We become aware of this clash at one point. Those who are subjugated under the oppressor become aware of it. The clash is always there, otherwise. Silencing people is also a clash, but because they do not raise their voices the clash is not heard. Now, we have become aware of this; women have become aware of this.

MELTEM AHISKA: As the last point, let us discuss what effects this ten years' of feminist movement has had on today. How has this movement influenced women, how has it influenced the society, what kinds of things has it changed?

AYfiE DÜZKAN: I think that it has not changed anything. And this is still going on. I said this at the beginning of this interview; this movement has made people aware that another type of life is possible for women. It made people aware that you can look at everything from the women's point of view. It made people aware that some attitudes that are part and parcel of our daily lives are not so easy to put up with; and most importantly that men are hostile towards women. Now women have been aware of the fact that men behave towards them in a hostile way; women have begun to talk about this, they have begun to think about different forms of this hostility. This is something very important. For men exercise a very deep-set hostility towards women. This was something which had never been mentioned until feminists came. Maybe people talked about women's oppression, but this separation and this hostility came to be felt for the first time. I think that it was a very revolutionary thing for women to see this hostility. Maybe this is what feminism is really about. That is, being on the side of the women but to be aware of men's hostility, to react against this with hostility, to learn how to feel hostile towards any thing. And now, if women cannot go alone, they know that it is caused by a certain hostility on the part of men. And now it has been impressed in the memory of this society that – whether we will come to a reconciliation or not – there is a contradiction between men and women. I consider this very important. For instance, I think that,

again as a result of the women's movement in Turkey, a strange macho literature has developed in Turkey. I mean, those men who were not aware formerly that they were machos, have now become aware of this and they have adopted a certain attitude. In the humour magazines there is a macho type of creation. This is a macho attitude that started with the woman's movement and that has been defined by it.

MELTEM AHISKA: It is better to know about the clash; polarisation is better; at least you know what you are experiencing.

AYŞİE DÜZKAN: For instance, *Piflmifl Kelle* (*Roasted Skull*) is very interesting publication in my mind. It is something that defines itself very well; it is very instructive for women, and very useful too. Without reading it you would never know that men look at you like that, that men think like that. I mean, you may not be aware . . . And they are very consistent. For instance, we wanted to put an advertisement in it. They refused to publish it. They said that they were a men's magazine. I would be very happy if there were some women's magazines that reacted in the same manner. The League of Impudent Women! If we could have a similar women's language, that sort of a polarisation is an extremely nice thing.

MELTEM AHISKA: Cultural history, the history of lost culture has been largely written by men. In the end, it is a culture stamped by men. I do not think that there can be a women's culture outside this, which would be created in a laboratory. But this does not mean that women do not have any place in culture. Maybe there is a women's culture all along history that has been hidden, shadowed, covered up, lost. I consider it very important that this should be researched, that it should be brought to light. When this matter comes to be discussed on the agenda, when women's existence in history comes to be expressed, all of a sudden a new factor will be added to history. Looking at everything from a new angle, maybe a kind of disruption . . .

AYŞİE DÜZKAN: I do not believe in such sharp transformations, in such sudden disruptions. Not that they may not be useful; I do not believe that they can happen. These are things that have been written about, talked about, and discussed in the West . . . Personally, all the artists that I like are men. For instance, I admire Tarkovsky greatly. He is a woman-hater. I like *çsmet Özel\**, he is also a women-hater.

MELTEM AHISKA: But we don't have such a luxury. If you are

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interested in culture and in art, you mostly find men there. Of course you will like them, you do not have any other choice. It is not possible to remain outside this circle completely.

AYfiE DÜZKAN: True. I personally prefer art to be a somewhat autonomous field. There, you should have everything, including hostility towards women and towards men . . .