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BATI DİLLERİ EDEBİYATLARI ANA BİLİM DALI
İNGİLİZ DİLİ ve EDEBİYATI BİLİM DALI

**CARYL CHURCHILL'İN *ZİRVEDEKİ KIZLAR* VE PHILIP
PULLMAN'IN *KARANLIK CEVHER* ESERLERİNDEKİ
FEMİNİST FANTASTİK ÖĞELERİN KARŞILAŞTIRMASI**

Hazırlayan
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Yüksek Lisans Tezi

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**T.R.
ERCIYES UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND
LITERATURE**

**THE COMPARISON OF FEMINIST FANTASTIC
ELEMENTS IN CARYL CHURCHILL'S *TOP GIRLS* AND
PHILIP PULLMAN'S *HIS DARK MATERIALS***

**By:
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Assist. Prof. Dr. Hatice EŞBERK**

Master's Thesis

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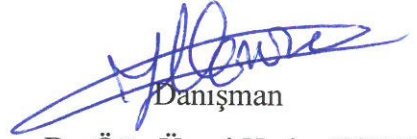
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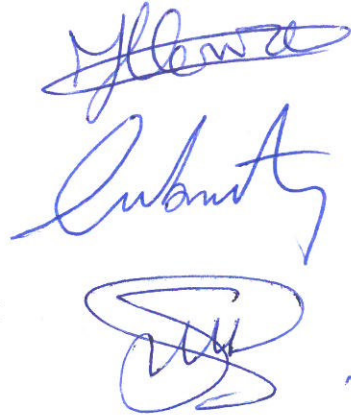
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KISA ÖZET

Bu çalışma, fantastik edebiyatın, belli bir konuda yazarların fikirlerini yansıtmada diğer edebiyat türleri kadar etkili olduğunu göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Fantastik edebiyat yalnızca doğaüstü, gerçekleşme olasılığı düşük kurgusal olayların yansıtıldığı metinler bütünü olarak algılanan bir edebi tür olarak düşünülmemektedir. Bir edebi tür olarak fantazi, tıpkı diğer edebi türlerde olduğu gibi, gerçekte bağdaştırılabilen, önemli konuları ele alan ve bu konular üzerinde etkili bir türdür. Bu yönüyle ele alınarak, bu çalışmada fantastik edebiyat, feminizm ile ilişkilendirilerek metinler üzerinden analiz yapılmıştır. Bu doğrultuda feminist fantazi ve onun tarihsel gelişimi çalışılmıştır. Fantastik tür ve feminizm ilişkisi Philip Pullman’ın *Karanlık Cevher* serisi ve Caryl Churchill’in *Zirvedeki Kızlar* oyunu üzerinden analiz edilmiştir.

Bu çalışma dört bölümden oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölümde fantastik türünün tanımı ve fantastik edebiyatta feminist yaklaşımın kronolojik bir sıra ile gelişimi incelenmiştir. İkinci bölümde, Philip Pullman’ın fantastik üçlemesi *Karanlık Cevher* serisindeki feminist fantastik öğeler incelenmiştir. Üçüncü bölümde, Caryl Churchill’in post-modern oyunu *Zirvedeki Kızlar*’da geçen fantastik öğeler ve bu öğelerin yazarın feminist görüşlerini yansıtmada kullanımı incelenmiştir. Son olarak, dördüncü bölümde iki eser fantastik öğelerin kullanımı ve feminist yaklaşım açısından karşılaştırılmıştır. Kısacası, Bu çalışmada fantastik edebiyatta feminist yaklaşım analiz edilerek, fantazi türünde gerçeklik kavramını ve türün gerçeklik üzerindeki etkinliğini sorgulamayı amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: fantazi, feminizm, ataerkillik, fantastik edebiyat, feminist fantazi, baskı

**THE COMPARISON OF FEMINIST FANTASTIC ELEMENTS IN
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*HIS DARK MATERIALS***

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Advisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Hatice EŞBERK**

ABSTRACT

This study aims to show that fantastic literature is as effective as other types of literature for reflecting the authors’ ideas about a certain issue. Fantastic literature should not be considered only as a type of literature which is perceived as a compilation of supernatural and unlikely fictional texts. As a literary genre, fantasy, like other types of literature, deals with important, real life issues and has an effect on them. In this study, fantastic literature is studied on this point of view, it is associated with feminism and two different texts are analysed through feminist fantasy. Accordingly, feminist fantasy and its historical development is viewed. The relation between fantastic literature and feminism is analysed through Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* novel series and Caryl Churchill’s play, *Top Girls*.

The study consists of four chapters. In chapter 1, the definition of fantasy and the development of feminist approach in fantastic literature in certain time periods are studied. In chapter 2, the feminist issues in Philip Pullman’s fantastic trilogy, *His Dark Materials* are examined. In chapter 3, the fantastic elements in Caryl Churchill’s post-modern play, *Top Girls*, and how these elements are used to reflect the author’s feminist ideas are analyzed. Finally, in chapter 4, the two works are compared due to the use of fantastic elements and the feminist approach. In short, this study analyzes feminist approach in fantastic literature.

Key Words: fantasy, feminism, patriarchy, fantastic literature, feminist fantasy, oppression

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Introduction

This study aims to analyze the development of feminist perspective in fantastic literature and the reflection of feminist thoughts throughout history by using fantastic elements. The main aim of the thesis is to prove that fantasy can be used as effectively as other literary genres to reflect feminist ideas, since fantasy as a literary genre has strong propositions to subvert the commonly accepted notions which can also be available for feminism that is reactionary towards patriarchy. For this purpose, two different works will be studied, Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy and Caryl Churchill's play, *Top Girls*. The focal point of the study is feminist fantasy. Thus, the use of fantastic elements to tell the story of the female characters and how they rebel against the patriarchal society is the core of this work.

Fantastic has a lot of definitions, but these definitions have a common point: the distinguishment from the real. For Eric Rabkin and Christine Brooke-Rose, the fantastic is not the real but the unreal or the nonreal. For Nancy Traill, it is not the natural but the supernatural. Lucie Armitt believes that the fantastic is not the "here" but the beyond. For Todorov, it is not the certain but the uncertain, and for Brian Attebery— not the probable but the improbable. For Todorov, the perception of the fantastic is attributable to the perceiver's incertitude about the nature and effects of the object perceived as well as to the feeling of fear engendered by the object (qtd. in Confino, 112). C. S. Lewis, in *Experiment in Criticism* (1965), defines fantasy as "any narrative that deals with impossibles or preternaturals" (qtd. in Sullivan, 279). Also, Zizek defines ideological fantasy as the "unconscious illusion" that structures "our real effective relationship to reality" (qtd. in Miklitsch, 48). For Zizek (as for Kant), the aesthetic realm is a place where the symbolic network of ideological fictions can perhaps be suspended; it is this

space that he seeks to occupy and to defend as the last refuge of the real from ideology (qtd. in Herbold, 125).

But, these definitions do not mean that fantastic elements cannot be used to tell real matters. If a book can attract, hold, and then excite the imagination of a reader, it has been the instrument of effecting a change upon the mind of the individual (Davidson, 43). Fantasy can do this very effectively. “An imagination educated in part by reading fantasy might be more able to solve problems here and now because it isn’t hampered by words like ‘impossible’. Things that seem impossible in our world – finding love or peace, growing up – are wonderfully possible in fantasy” (Owen, 76).

In fact, many authors choose to use fantastic elements in their works to tell their opinions about various subjects. One of the most significant writers who used fantastic elements in his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is Oscar Wilde. In his famous novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, he tells the problematics of identity, the mystery of a visible yet invisible self, and the unsuspected traps of sensorial perception as of truth and appearance, and he tells these matters through his main character, Dorian Gray, who pledges his soul to stay young forever. Also, Jean Cocteau and Jacques Renaud have an adaptation of the novel for the stage, which emphasizes the fantastic aspects of the play. They even changed the title as *The Supernatural Portrait of Dorian Gray. A fantastic play in four acts and five scenes* (Confino, 114).

Maurice Maeterlinck is another writer who used fantastic elements in his works. His play, *Sister Beatrice*, tells the story of a French girl, Beatrice, who is torn between her religion and her love for a prince. After she chooses her love, the statue of the Virgin magically comes alive and takes her place in the convent where she lives. As it can be seen, the issues of the meaning of life or the meaning of self is exposed in all

their complexity in Maeterlinck's play. "Also, the inexplicable and the irresolvable in ordinary life are enhanced by his use of the fantastic, which is shown to be an integral part of everyday life" (Confino, 114).

Jean Cocteau is also an important playwright who used fantastic elements in his plays. One of his most significant plays, *The Infernal Machine*, can be given as an example for his topic. Cocteau retells the story of Oedipus in his play. The fantastic in its various manifestations takes the center stage, to the delight of the audience, and overshadows the deeper import of Cocteau's strategy and techniques in the play (Confino, 111). Fantasy helps Cocteau while exploring such notions as identity, love, ethics, and taboos.

This study, on the other hand, surveys the place of women in fantastic literature. Moreover, it focuses on the reflection of feminism in fantastic works through history. In addition to that, it includes the transformation of the use of feminist elements in fantasy through different eras. This study aims to examine that fantastic literature is as adequate as any other type of literature for depicting the author's ideas about important subjects such as women's rights. In addition to that, the place of women in fantasy is important, contrary to the general belief. The examples of this point can be seen especially in science fiction works. For example, in Mary Shelley's famous novel, *Frankenstein*, female characters are central to the underlying critique of the misuse of technology. "The appropriation of female reproductive functions by male scientists who are not held accountable for their mistreatment of other human beings serves as an allegory for the threat posed to society when the results of scientific research are employed for selfish reasons rather than collective benefit" (Lacy, 57). Justine, Victor's fiancée in the novel, plays an important role here. After Frankenstein's monster transfers the responsibility of

his murder to her, she is executed, and this shows how a society presumably founded on rational, impartial legislation could nonetheless perpetrate injustice against one of its own citizens. For Shelley, this cold sacrifice of an innocent to the rational logic of impersonal laws extends beyond the suffering of one woman to menace all people equally (Lacy, 59).

To exemplify this opinion, two works are chosen. One of them is Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, which is a fantastic novel telling the story of the adventures of a young girl, Lyra Belacqua. The author retells the story of Eve and corrects her image in the series. The second work is Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*, which is a postmodern play. Since the study of the fantastic in theatre, unlike the study of the fantastic in film, has not yet been given the attention it deserves, *Top Girls* is chosen specifically for this study. (Confino, 4) This play is chosen because Churchill uses fantastic elements to reflect her ideas about the domination of patriarchy on women.

The study falls into four chapters. Chapter 1 gives information about the history of fantastic literature and feminist fantasy. In this chapter, fantastic literature will be analyzed through eras and the transformation of feminist thought through these eras will be examined. Chapter 2 focuses on the first work chosen for this analysis, *His Dark Materials*. A general information about the work will be given and after that, two important female characters of the novel will be analyzed. The protagonist of the novel, Lyra Belacqua, plays the role of the second Eve in history, and the author aims to subvert the role of woman as the original sinner and the main cause of the fall of humanity by creating a second Eve and depicting her as the saviour of the worlds and the "new mother of all" (Sundman, 10). The antagonist of the novel, Marissa Coulter is

the second character who will be studied here, and she is created by the writer to subvert the Madonna/whore dichotomy by giving her the qualities of both archetype.

Chapter 3 analyzes the second work chosen for this study, *Top Girls*. Even though *Top Girls* is not a fantastic play, the writer uses fantastic elements to reflect her ideas about feminism, so it is appropriate to use it in this thesis, since this study aims to prove that fantastic elements can be used to tell the authors' opinions about serious matters, such as the oppression of women. The most significant part of the play is the dinner party in Act One, because it shatters the image of what is real and what is not real in the audience's imagination. This part and all the characters in the party will be thoroughly analyzed from feminist perspective. After that, the main character of the play, Marlene and her sister Joyce will be studied and compared due to their perspective about feminism.

The last chapter focuses on the comparison of the two works in this study. Although *His Dark Materials* and *Top Girls* are two very different works, the use of fantasy to reflect feminist ideas in both works links them together. The similarities and the differences in the methods of reflecting feminist ideas will be analyzed in the last chapter of the study.

As it is stated above, this study aims to show the validity of fantastic literature while showing the authors' ideas about serious subjects. Even though the attitude towards fantastic literature has evolved in recent years, there are still some parts of the society who undermine the fantastic literature, even find it dangerous. For example, in Poland, some Catholic priests burned *Harry Potter* books, because they thought these books promote sorcery ("Harry Potter books"). As Prothero says, "a work of science fiction or fantasy can be taken quite seriously as a Hemingway novel or an Eliot poem.

But two misunderstandings abroad must be cleared up: First is the common notion that fantastic literature is not serious and is, therefore, for kids” (32). So, the main goal of this study is to overrule these kind of outdated opinions about fantastic literature and to show that it is as valuable as any other type of literature.



CHAPTER 1

DEFINITION OF FANTASTIC LITERATURE AND FEMINISM IN FANTASY

1.1.Fantasy As A Literary Genre

Since fantastic is acknowledged as a neighboring genre to all types of fiction, it is a difficult concept to grasp. However, this slippery nature of the fantastic is a part of what defines it as a genre. According to Rosemary Jackson, “literature of the fantastic has been claimed as transcending reality, escaping the human condition and constructing superior alternate, secondary worlds” (qtd. in Eşberk, 141). Also, one of the major fantasy writers, C.S. Lewis defines fantasy as “any narrative that deals with impossibles or preternaturals” (Sullivan, 279).

The history of fantastic literature can be traced back to the 16th century. Edmund Spenser’s “*Faeirie Queene*” is accepted as the earliest fantasy work which is not only fantasy, but also an allegory about the Tudor dynasty. Also in that era, Shakespeare had important contributions to the genre. His works *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* are considered as good examples of the fantastic. Also his significant works, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* contain elements of fantasy.

In the Victorian Age (late 19th and early 20th century) fantasy became a distinct genre. Grimm’s Fairy Tales and Hans Christian Andersen’s works are the pioneer works in that era. Also, Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, Bram Stoker and H.P. Lovecraft are the important writers of the age.

In the history of fantastic literature, the most important milestone is the publishing of *The Lord of the Rings*. The author, J.R.R Tolkien, who was an Oxford Professor of Anglo-Saxon language, created an entire imaginary world called “Middle

Earth”. Since he was a linguist, his main purpose was to create characters who speak the languages he invented. As a matter of fact, “the fiction of Professor Tolkien’s languages is so consistently faithful to rules governing known languages that students can actually be taught the generative principles of their own language by means of the author’s appendices”(Roos, 1178). Also, he complained about the lack of mythology in Britain and he wanted to create one.

The work was a huge success and it created fantasy as a mass-marketing reality. Fantastic literature was seen as children’s literature before *The Lord of the Rings*, but Tolkien succeeded to change this prejudice. So, history of fantastic literature is divided into two parts: pre-Tolkien and post-Tolkien era. Tolkien was the first writer who challenged the very concept that fairy tales and fantastic stories were only for children, and the success of his works encouraged other fantasy writers to do so. In his essay *On Fairy Stories*, Tolkien wrote, “The peculiar quality of the ‘joy’ in successful fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth. It is not only a ‘consolation’ for the sorrow of this world, but a satisfaction, and an answer to that question, ‘Is it true?’. The answer to this question that I gave at first was (quite rightly): ‘If you have built your little world well, yes: it is true in that world’” (155). He emphasized that a fantastic work does not destroy reason, on the contrary, the value of a fantasy work lies under the clear and keen realities in it.

The success of Tolkien’s works encouraged the other fantasy writers of his age to publish their works. As this counterculture kept fantasy books continually in print, fantasy was divided into sub-genres; sword and sorcery, epic/high fantasy, sword and planet and other science fantasy, historical fantasy, alternate histories. Michael

Moorcock, Terry Brooks and Stephen R. Donaldson are the important writers who follow Tolkien's path.

Todorov defines fantasy as "the hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event" (25). Therefore, the common idea in the definition of fantastic is the interruption of daily life by supernatural. In fact, the fantastic is a representation of that breach into the unsteady ramparts that surround the ever-changing concept of reality, a breach that enables us to comprehend and accept the illogical, the seemingly impossible, and the out of ordinary as part of human experience (Confino, 112). Todorov writes about various peoples' ideas on fantastic. For example, Castex writes that the fantastic is characterized by a brutal intrusion of mystery in the context of real life. Vax says the fantastic narrative generally describes men like ourselves, inhabiting the real world, suddenly confronted by the inexplicable. And Caillois writes that "the fantastic is always a break in the acknowledged order, an irruption of the inadmissible within the changeless everyday legality" (qtd. in Todorov, 26).

To sum up, there are three conditions for a work to be counted as a fantastic work.

First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work – in the case of naive reading, the actual reader identifies himself with the character. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with

regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as poetic interpretations (Todorov, 33).

As it is mentioned before, it is hard to define exact rules for the genre, since it has no boundaries. But almost all critics agree that it should strike readers, unsettle them and make them hesitate or doubt the nature of what they are reading. Theodore Adorno remarks that “fantasy was closely associated with the originality of the artist and his or her capacity to invent or make something out of nothing” (qtd. in Zipes, 80). It is a challenge for an author to make the reader believe in a character or situation which would ordinarily be regarded as imaginary or absurd (Parish, 92). Although it may seem so, the main concern of fantasy lies here, because the willing suspension of disbelief is one of the most important terms in fantastic literature. “I nearly reached the point of believing: That is the formula which sums up the spirit of the fantastic. Either total faith or total incredulity would lead us beyond the fantastic: it is hesitation which sustains its life” (Todorov, 31).

Another important function in fantasy is, escape. The escape from real world in fantastic literature has its own purpose, and this purpose is not to make reader forget the real world. On the contrary, it makes people see the problems and solutions more clearly. Fantasy drags people out of the secure land of reality and expose them to the world of the unknown. In this strange world, readers feel insecure and this insecurity leads them to search, resist, think and criticize. It allows people to see themselves more clearly precisely because it takes place in the imagination, whether that place is called Middle Earth or Earthsea or Narnia (Owen, 76). As it can be seen, “fairy tales and fantasy do help to shape great minds” (Polette, 1).

Another theory about fantasy was made by the critic Kathryn Hume. She suggests that the real and the impossible should be seen as separate ends of a continuum that includes all fiction (qtd. in Sullivan, 279). There are two features in literary fiction: Mimesis and fantasy. Mimesis is the need to imitate, to describe events, people and objects with such verisimilitude that others can share the author's experience. Fantasy, on the other hand, is the desire to change givens and alter reality. According to Sullivan, all literature is part mimetic and part fantastic, with realistic fiction toward one end of the spectrum and fantastic fiction toward the other. So, this theory is against the disparagement of fantasy, claiming that fantasy and reality are the pieces of a whole.

All these definitions and theories lead us to this question: what do fantastic elements contribute to work? The answers of this question can be summarized in three titles. First, the fantastic produces a particular effect on the reader – fear, or horror, or simple curiosity – which other genres are less effective. Second, the fantastic serves the narration, maintains suspense: the presence of fantastic elements permits a particularly dense organization of the plot. Third, the fantastic has what at first glance appears to be a tautological function: it permits the description of a fantastic universe, one that has no reality outside language; the description and what is described are not of a different nature.

The most important criteria while evaluating a fantastic work is to view the events through the genre's own terms. In a fantastic work, the main purpose of the author is to create a secondary world, which has its own reality and own rules. What is true, what is wrong, these should be according to the laws of that world. According to Tolkien, this Secondary World should be created as believable as possible. The moment

disbelief arises, the spell is broken and the magic, or rather art, has failed. The use of language is the most important thing here.

In fact, the supernatural is born of language, it is both its consequence and its proof: not only do the devil and vampires exist only in words, but language alone enables us to conceive what is always absent: the supernatural. The supernatural thereby becomes a symbol of language, just as the figures of rhetoric do, and the figure is the purest form of literality (Todorov, 82).

As it comes to the common themes in fantasy, the most common theme is the neverending war between the good and the evil, which is also used in all fictional narratives frequently. It is told as the monsters vs. human in the fantastic works. As the fantasy is a pure art form and the hardest to realize, the message is not very clear sometimes, but it is always there who can read it. The most popular series of the genre like Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series, C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, tells the story of ordinary people who are fighting against the forces of evil. In these books, the fate of an entire imaginary world hangs on the action of perfectly ordinary people who somehow find themselves the protagonists. "The forces of good rule through a harmonious relationship with nature. The evil forces seek to violate or pervert the natural law" (Owen, 77).

The second common theme in fantasy goes in a parallel line with the first one: finding yourself and facing the difficulties of growing up. Reaching puberty is a tricky subject, and fantastic works are more successful than other types of literature. Since there are no boundaries in fantasy, writers can say things about life which cannot be said within the naturalistic frame of reference. Ursula K. LeGuin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* is a perfect example for this theme. The main character, Ged, is a young wizard who has to

face and master the dark side of his personality, his ignorance and arrogance. Also, a more recent series, Patrick Rothfuss's *A Kingkiller Chronicles* tells the story of Kvothe, a young musician, alchemist and adventurer. Kvothe goes on a journey to find his parents' killers, and he discovers his identity, his abilities, his strength and weaknesses through this journey.

Of course, the perfect example of the second common theme is the *Harry Potter* series by J. K. Rowling when it comes to facing the difficulties of growing up and finding yourself. The main character, Harry Potter, is an eleven year-old boy, who is struggling with the complexity of being an orphan, dealing with the cruel behaviours of his guardians,- his aunt and his uncle - and trying to protect himself from the overbearance of his cousin; when he finds out that he is a wizard. And not just an ordinary one, the entire future of the wizarding world hangs on the shoulders of this eleven year-old. While trying to make friends and find a place for himself in the world (Nelson and Quackenbush, 97). Harry has to make difficult choices every now and then, and face the consequences of his wrong choices like every teenager does.

Works of fantastic literature put an emphasis on important values in life, like love, friendship, family and perseverance. These universal values have crucial roles in the story. In fantasy novels, love conquers all most of the time, main characters need a friend to complete their quest, and all heroes have to persevere in the face of danger. They have to overcome their fears to finish their journey for the good of themselves and the others. Sometimes, they have to make sacrifices and it shows people that sometimes, saving the world depends on great personal sacrifice along with suffering and loss (Owen, 77).

By looking at these common themes, it can be said that, in fantasy works, the journey is more important than the destination most of the time. We are to read an ordinary (non-fantastic) novel, a novel by Balzac, for instance, from beginning to end. But if, by whim, we read the fifth chapter before the fourth, the loss suffered is not so great as if we were reading a fantastic narrative. “If we know the end of a fantastic narrative before we begin it, its whole functioning is distorted, for the reader can no longer follow the process of identification step by step; now, this is the first condition of the genre” (Todorov, 89).

Fantasy does three things better than other fiction. First, it provides exercise for the imagination. It allows us to see ourselves more clearly precisely because it takes place in the imagination, whether we call that place Middle Earth or Earthsea or Narnia. Last, fantasy allows escape and generates hope (Owen, 76). Thus, it allows us to develop higher imagination skill and enables us to expand our view to our daily life issues and problems.

Fantasy allows us to project our desires onto reality. “Fantasy works open the mysteries of life and reveal ways in which we can maintain ourselves and our integrity in a conflict-ridden world. We all have fantasy, and through fantasy we seek to encounter the voids in our lives by generating visions of how we want to live and realize whatever potential we have” (Zipes, 90). So, it is through fantasy, not through reason, that we try to make sense of the world. It is through fantasy, that everything that cannot be said within the naturalistic frame of reference, can be told.

Fantasy drags people out of the secure land of reality and expose them to the world of unknown. In this strange world, readers feel insecure and this insecurity leads them to search, resist, think and criticize. As Sheila Egoff claims, “fantasy has been a

vehicle used by writers to express their dissatisfaction with society, to comment on human nature” (qtd. in Eşberk, 143).

Sometimes, reality can blind people to the truth. It is hard to see the true values of life in this hard, materialistic world. Fantasy teaches people to see with their hearts. As Antoine De Saint-Exupery says in the back cover of *Little Prince*; “it is only with the heart that one can see rightly, what is essential is invisible to the eye.” Thus, fantasy enables people to see the truth behind the surface, to look at the things deeply.

The most important advantage of fantasy is that fantastic literature has no boundaries. “The fantastic blurs the lines between commodities produced for children and for adults and between boundaries built by governments” (Zipes, 83). The word “impossible” does not exist in fantastic literature. The author is free to create a world of hobbits, elves, wizards, witches, ogres or any other different races without fear of shattering the reader’s willing suspension of disbelief. Actually, the main quality of fantasy is to transcend reality and violate dominant realistic normative assumptions. It gives reader the idea that everything is possible, that they are in the land of the pre-real and they must be prepared for everything. So, things that seem impossible in our world, and not just wizards, ogres or witches, things like finding true love, defeating evil, bringing peace, or growing up and finding yourself, are wonderfully possible in fantasy. As Neil Gaiman says in the epigraph of *Coraline*; “Fairy tales are more than true, not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.”

As it is mentioned before, fantasy puts emphasis on universal values. It is possible to use fantastic literature to teach these values. Since fantasy and science fiction are accepted as the present-day form of mythology, they have the same mission

of ancient mythology stories. C.S. Lewis wrote in his *Selected Literary Essays*; “For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning.” Myth teaches meaning, not by realistic logical exposition but rather by imagination and metaphor, entering the backdoor of the mind through the imagination (qtd. in Prothero, 33).

Different fantastic works focus on different subjects in life. For example, Antoine De Saint-Exupery’s *The Little Prince* concerns about discovering the place of men in universe and defining the fundamental values of life (Wagenknecht, 437). On the other hand, J.R.R Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* deals with issues like the war against the power of evil in the world, and the triumph of the good at the end of the book makes us believe that the world can be rescued. Middle Earth is fictional, but it is related by name to an existing place, our planet. The Third Age of Middle Earth is fictional, but it is related to the present age by association with the beginning of the era of man’s domination of the world. The action of trilogy is universal; Sauron’s power of evil affects all free peoples, and the fellowship that rides out against him is comprised of representatives of all free peoples. The conflict is middle-earth-shaking, and its resolution is universally creative. Here is myth at its peak (Roos, 1180). Also, there are various efforts to connect *The Lord of the Rings* to history, for example, C.B. Cox says some believe that its development during World War II reflected Sauron, the antagonist of the novel, as Hitler (qtd. in Boswell, 189).

Ursula LeGuin’s *A Wizard of Earthsea* mainly focuses on the pains of growing up and finding yourself. LeGuin, who is an important female figure in fantastic literature, deals with power and the limits of power, with ontology and ecology, and with the Taoist concept of the Yin-Yang nature of all things. And all this she does in

books that can be read and understood by children (Parish, 91). The success of the protagonist's self-improvement gives people hope about the possibility of their own personal success.

One of the most popular works of fantasy, *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling, has an important politic background besides the themes of good vs. evil and self-improvement. The entire plot is driven by ethnic tensions, questions about social responsibilities, and fights over political power. Also, in these books, "terrorism is used both to sow fear and to throw the government into disarray, making it easier to take over" (Deets, 742). They teach valuable lessons about tolerance, encourage thinking and empower readers to trust their own thinking.

A good novel is one that allows all its complex characters to have their own worldview and to tell their own opinion, in this way, a novel is called democratic – not that it advocates democracy, but that by nature it is so. It is a common mistake to evaluate a novel by its genre, because of this common mistake, fantastic works are seen as children's literature. But the important point here is the plot, and most of the fantastic works have as serious plots as non-fantastic works.

When we look at the most important examples in fantastic literature, it can easily be seen serious matters they deal with serious matters. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* takes the World War I and II as the base of the story. The antagonist of the novel, Sauron is considered as the representation of Hitler by most of the critics. His idea of world domination, his discrimination of other species and the fear he causes are very familiar subjects for everyone.

Also, *Harry Potter* series by J. K. Rowling is a good example again. Some critics find parallels between Nazis and Death Eaters, for their blind faith in Voldemort

and their ideas about the importance of the pureness of blood. They use terrorism to manipulate people and to fulfill their aims. “Terrorism is also used to sow fear and to throw government into disarray, making it easier to take over” (Deets, 742).

One important subplot in *Harry Potter* books, which can be related to real life, involves the role of reporter Rita Skeeter, (an ambitious and cruel journalist who works for the official newspaper, *Daily Prophet*), who clearly shapes public perceptions on several issues and has close links to the government, and how the Quibbler, which isn’t taken seriously by public at first, becomes an important alternate news source (Deets, 743).

The fantastic is frequently employed in all forms of popular culture to project utopian possibilities for developing a humane community in which differences among people are resolved through mutual support, the fantastic also serves to provide a persistent critique of the norm that appears to be so perverse and incongruous that the only hope for spectators, young and old, is laughter – and a laughter that does not necessarily provide relief or hope for a better world (Zipes, 87).

In contrast to these writers, some other writers have employed the fantastic to suggest alternatives to decadence – that is, societies in decline – there is clearly a strong dystopian tendency in popular culture for young people suggesting that social conflicts and injustice may never be resolved, and that the outcome to the struggles may be neo-fascist societies as projected in the famous works *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley and *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* (1949) by George Orwell (Zipes, 87).

Although by some scholars fantasy may seem as a mode rather than a distinct genre, it deserves to be considered as a genre with its own distinctive features. Through

fantas, we seek to encounter the voids in our lives by generating visions of how we want to live and realize whatever potential we have (Zipes, 90). Without fantasy, it is hard to develop critical thinking and creative work. It allows us to make our own choices, and to decide what is right and what is wrong with our own minds by making these choices. It gives us a clear mind to see things in their actual shapes.

1.2.Feminist Fantasy

Feminism is a very wide and detailed topic, but in this study, the feminist elements in fantastic literature, will be analyzed. To do this, the history and periodic development of feminism in fantastic literature will be viewed.

Feminism is, in an overall definition, the belief of equality of sexes in social, economic and political fields. The feminist movement involves sociological and political theories concerning with gender difference issues. The feminist framework also indicates how problems are defined and the kinds of questions to be asked. For example, according to definition in *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development* written by Jane L. Parpart et al inequality results from “the need to establish unequal incentives to motivate the most talented people to do the most important jobs efficiently in society”. Another definition from the same book also says that the inequality results from “the practice of providing differential rewards to keep a less powerful working class fragmented by gender and race” (qtd. in Halířová, 7).

Feminist criticism has followed three waves of feminism. These are called; first, second and third waves of feminism by the theorists and each wave has its own representatives and issues.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) is the main representative of the First Wave Feminism (late 1700s-early 1900's). She highlighted the inequalities between sexes. In her famous work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), she argued that girls and boys should be co-educated. Furthermore, she argued that women and men should share parenthood. These ideas of hers shed light to many feminist writers and critics (Vranken, 5).

After Wollstonecraft, another writer who is one of the touchstones of feminism is Virginia Woolf. Her most important argument is that what women need is the recognition of what they need to fulfil their potential and their own natures, not only equality. She states in *A Room of One's Own* that women's talents have been wasted. Her argument is not that women are better than men, but that they are equally necessary. To her, a mind that was able to reconcile both its masculine and feminine parts was the most creative. She wrote in *A Room of One's Own*:

The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two [genders] live in harmony together, spiritually co—operating. If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine (Woolf, 91).

Second Wave Feminism (early 1960s-late 1970s) was organized around women's liberation, and especially in the USA, it took its power from the civil rights, peace, equality and other protests. Simone de Beauvoir is an important figure in Second Wave Feminism, as she built a bridge between First and Second Waves, and she formed

a basis for feminist criticism with Elaine Showalter. She states that women to be oppressed by the political and economical powers is a substructure.

Third Wave Feminism (early 1990s-present), resisting the perceived essentialist ideologies and a white, heterosexual, middle class focus of second wave feminism, third wave feminism borrows from post-structural and contemporary gender and race theories to expand on marginalized populations' experiences. Third Wave Feminists have broadened their goals, focusing on ideas like abolishing gender role expectations and stereotypes. They believed that media portrayals of woman and language used to define women should change for better. Writers like Alice Walker work to "...reconcile it [feminism] with the concerns of the black community...[and] the survival and wholeness of her people, men and women both, and for the promotion of dialog and community as well as for the valorization of women and of all the varieties of work women perform" (Tyson, 107).

Although there are different approaches in feminist criticism, there are also some common grounds that feminist works deal with. Tyson lists these common areas in his work :

1. Women are oppressed by patriarchy economically, politically, socially, and psychologically; patriarchal ideology is the primary means by which women are oppressed.
2. In every domain where patriarchy reigns, woman is other: she is marginalized, defined only by her difference from male norms and values.

3. All of Western (Anglo-European) civilization is deeply rooted in patriarchal ideology, for example, in the Biblical portrayal of Eve as the origin of sin and death in the world.
4. While biology determines our sex (male or female), culture determines our gender (scales of masculine and feminine).
5. All feminist activity, including feminist theory and literary criticism, has as its ultimate goal to change the world by prompting gender equality.
6. Gender issues play a part in every aspect of human production and experience, including the production and experience of literature, whether we are consciously aware of these issues or not (92).

The scope and the different modes of the fantastic literature has displayed various transformations through different eras. In addition to this, this transformation has affected the use of feminist elements in the genre. These periods can be studied under five titles: Greek mythology, Middle Ages, Renaissance era, 19th century and 20th century.

The history of feminist fantasy reaches back to Greek mythology. This era is important in the history of fantastic literature, since according to some critics, the first notion of fantasy began in Greece, with classical Greek literature. From the Homeric epic on, the nature of Greek literature was focused on the epic tradition initiated by bards. Homer introduced three prominent elements of fantasy: the travels to fantastic lands, the theme of transformation, and a critical eye for mistaking the apparent for the real. The contribution of classical literature to fantasy is complex, but also substantial.

Greek literature was heavily influenced by fantasy and had a strong effect on Western literature.

As it comes to feminism, women always have an important role in ancient Greek culture, and they share the same authority with men when we look at Olympus gods and goddesses. Hera shares the throne with Zeus, and the one who symbolizes wisdom, is a female figure, goddess Athena. The authoritative female figures are not just in Olympus. Odysseus's wife, Penelope, is a perfect example for that. The wise Penelope, bears her husband's absence during a period of twenty years. During this time, she maintains his authority and is not eager to step down when Odysseus returns from his voyage. He calls the nurse to make up a bed, and goes to sleep by himself. He describes him woman as having a heart of iron. Nausicaa, another female character in Greek literature, does not feel shy when Odysseus sees her half-naked, as she is in control of what is visible to Odysseus from behind a tree (Vranken, 10). Also, Helen's escape to Troy can be considered as a feminist rebelling. Her flight from a domestic life and a controlling husband to her one true love can be interpreted as the feminist rebelling against patriarchy. Of course, women were depicted as housewives and harem woman, too, but also as goddesses and priests.

However, from the Greek tradition to the Middle Ages, there is a significant change in the attitude towards women. "There is a clear misogynistic tradition in literature from the Middle Ages onward; which could be explained by the emergence and dominance of Christian beliefs which, through its creation myth, develops the Madonna/whore dichotomy" (Vranken, 10). Religion has a massive influence on literary works in this period, and Biblical stories come out in literature. Since women

are seen as the reason of the fall of humanity, this belief shapes the appearance of women in literature.

Technically, fantasy, science fiction, and horror did not exist in medieval times in the sense that those genre terms are now used to describe modern literature and the worldview to which the fantastic belongs (Polack, 1). Most of the fantasy works in medieval era can be studied under the title of sword and sorcery fiction, since the most famous story of this era is the legend of Arthur. Also, religion and its effects have a vast influence on medieval tales. Biblical stories and lives of the saints play an important role in the literary works of this era.

Because of the Church's drastic influence on literature, women occupied liminal roles because of their intrinsic nature, just as Jews did (Polack, 2). The female characters in medieval fantasy literature are mostly depicted as extremely beautiful, but cunning characters, who try to seduce and manipulate male heroes. For example, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the main character is tempted by Sir Bertilak's wife. She tries to seduce Sir Gawain every night. Another example is, King Arthur's wicked half-sister, Morgan La Fey. She also uses her femininity to achieve her goals and fulfil her desires. On the other hand, there is Guinevere, Arthur's wife, who has no characterization whatsoever. She's pure, docile and beautiful; in others words: she fulfils all the basic tenements of Christian womanhood and is thus framed as the "good woman." When she begins her affair with Lancelot; she falls from grace and it is her fall that causes Arthur's kingdom to collapse. It gives Mordred the leverage he needs to start a war. Guinevere is a re-write of the Garden of Eden myth, where the fall of the good woman dooms all of mankind (Vranken, 12). These female characters are the perfect examples of how women should not behave according to Christian imagery.

Therefore, ideal woman picture is depicted as the Virgin Mary, and it is emphasized that women should be a Christian and not a temptress.

There are some certain archetypes of female characters other than this Madonna/whore figures in this era. The first female archetype is; ancestresses. These are the female ancestors of major dynasties such as Plantagenet, Lusignan and de Bullon. These women are described as beautiful but also monstrous. The most significant example of this archetype is Melusine, who is the ancestress of the Lusignan dynasty whose story is told by Jean D'Arras. Melusine protects Raimondin when he has killed his uncle by mistake. She will give him wealth, power, and all he needs as long as she is left alone on Saturdays. Together they found a dynasty. Many years later, Raimondin spies on Melusine at his brother's urging. She is not human—one of the words used to describe her is “faee.” The marriage is doomed—as soon as Raimondin accuses her of being monstrous, she leaves. The March entry in the Duke of Berry's *Tres Riches Heures* shows her flying around the castle held by the Lusignan family in her guivre form (Polack, 10).

The second female archetype in medieval fantastic literature is cosmological and mythological literary figures. Although there are not so many examples of mythological stories in this time, there are some characters who are drawn from earlier writers. These include personifications of the Arts, the Muses, Dame Nature, classical goddesses, and Sybil. They appear mainly in learned texts, but there are passing references to them throughout medieval literature, especially to Dame Fortune (Polack, 10).

Another common type women is fairies and supernatural women. These women are depicted as exceptionally beautiful and cunning. A good example to this type is Morgan La Fey from *King Arthur Legend*. She is the most sophisticated fairy figure in

literature. Also, there are other examples like Grendel's mother from *Beowulf* and the Valkyries, who are the battle maidens of Odin in Scandinavian tales.

As it is seen, in medieval fantasy, women are mostly seen as evil and inferior to the men. In nearly all of the works in this era, male characters are the main heroes and protagonists. Female characters are either the antagonists of the story, or silent and obedient wives who have no characterization. The effect of Biblical stories, especially the story of Genesis, is clearly visible in this period. As Eve, a female character, is the reason of the fall of humanity in Bible, the female characters in medieval fantasy reflects this common belief.

The Renaissance period can be considered as a transitional period for fantastic literature. The popularity of Arthurian legends continued at this era, since the elements of fantasy and supernatural started to gain importance again. Also, the introduction of supernatural ghosts on stage gave fantasy a new boost. At this era, the Gothic stories and novels started to receive attention, especially from female readers and writers. Gothicism was considered as a way to express their feelings of entrapment, depression and doom.

When it comes to nineteenth century fiction, a well-established tradition of fantasy can be seen. A lot of successful authors all around the world like Cervantes, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Ludwig Tieck, Clemens Brentano, Alexander Pushkin, Horace Walpole and Mary Shelley started to use fantastic and supernatural elements in their works.

Since the issue of social roles, especially gender roles were in question in this period, the feminist thoughts in fantasy works arouse again. "Although many of the authors from the early portions of the period are male writers producing male-centered

works, their work was based in the female-dominated tradition of the fairy tale” (Pilinsky, 12). As nineteenth century is a time when women were coming into their own, defining their roles in the society, the effects of this tumultuous period can be seen in literature. The discussions on the social roles and gender roles arouse in this century, and thus, the effects of Christian belief in literature gave their place to these discussions.

One of the most important figures of the era, Anne Radcliffe began writing fiction as an amusement and quickly became one of the most popular authors of the period. Of her many works, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) is considered to be the most influential one. Radcliffe’s novels differed from those of her male peers most specifically in that, whereas she, like Walpole and Matthew Gregory Lewis (*The Monk*, 1796), focused on the travails of heroic young women cast into mysterious dangers, her dangers were explained away as mundane malevolences, whereas theirs depended more heavily upon fantastic devices. In 1798, Jane Austen would extend the movement of women rejecting the novels that were purportedly most popular among them by parodying the gothic genre in *Northanger Abbey* (published 1818), in which her somewhat fanciful heroine, Catherine, imagines herself quite incorrectly to be in similarly threatening circumstances. Austen’s listing of Catherine’s reading material (the majority of it written by women) became known as the “Northanger Horrid” novels (Pilinsky, 13).

Another important female figure of the 19th century, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley was born in 1797 to two of the great political thinkers of the day: William Godwin and seminal proto-feminist thinker Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). She produced her famous novel, *Frankenstein*, after some dramatic events. She wrote the novel under the influence of

the loss of her first-born child. Although the female characters of the novel function as pawns, the metaphor of birth, as a central female concern, is transposed onto Shelley's masculine protagonist. The issues of power and gender are eloquently addressed, albeit at a remove (Polinovsky, 14).

At this period, there was a big revision on especially fairy tales. Most writers tried to set back the origins of the fairy tales rather than the subverted, softened versions. One of the most significant examples of this revisioned fairy tales is Thackeray's *The Rose and The Ring*. In 1853, William Makepeace Thackeray composed *The Rose and the Ring* (1855) as a distraction for his daughters. Parodying the conventions of the "traditional" fairy tale, and pointing toward the growing dissatisfaction for its stringently policed contemporary constraints, *The Rose and The Ring* satirizes the tropes with a bored fairy godmother, the Fairy Blackstick, who grants her charges bad luck for the purpose of character-building. "The frustrated figure of female authority can be seen as a fascinating metaphor for the feminine response to the stagnation of the genre, which had previously been owned by her and all her ilk" (Polinovsky, 16).

As it is stated before, feminine tradition strongly rooted itself in fantasy at this era. Female characters in science-fiction and fantasy novels, has important roles even if they are not the main protagonist. One of the best examples which can be given for this is Mina Harker from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. In this gothic fantasy, Mina Harkers serves as not only a victim, but also a savior.

Also, authors like Margaret Fuller and Nathaniel Hawthorne, used strong feminist elements in their works. Although the major works of these authors are considered as not fantasy, but romances, they use fantastic elements in their works.

Their idea of feminism is like Mary Wollstonecraft. They believed that women should have more rights in society. “Women deserved a more important role in life, next to their domestic functions and should be respected as rational individuals” (Vranken, 13). In the nineteenth century, a time when women were coming into their own, that movement was represented in their fiction and in the fiction produced concerning them. “Women were present, not in “science fiction” or “fantasy” as the coalescing genres came to be known, but in speculative fiction— said speculation concentrating upon who they were, what their roles would be, and where the future would take them” (Pilinsky, 12).

Women in other worlds, or worlds not too wildly disparate from our own, serve as alluringly unfamiliar sources of temptation, either for good or ill: in many of these narratives, the female characters represent either fantasy (not used in the genre sense) representations of idealized womanhood, foreign and yet compliant, or fearful extrapolations of the abuses to which women might put power. This trend, a predictable reaction to the changes in society that were reflected in the subversion of the more established field of fantasy, might be considered a form of backlash: certainly, it was soon to be rectified in science fiction as in fantasy with the women of the future, as authors and as subjects, although a trace of the initial attitude affected the field well into the twentieth century (Pilinsky, 21).

Fantastic fiction reached its highest level in twentieth century after the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*. As the popularity of fantastic works increased and the fantasy was divided into sub-genres, the twentieth century fantastic fiction can be analysed through three categories: fantasy, science-fiction and comics.

The works published in the earliest years of the twentieth century established narrative patterns that continue to influence the development of fantastic literature today. The cornerstones of epic fantasy include the figures of the heroic male warrior or adventurer and the dangerously erotic woman, sometimes worshiped as a goddess because of her beauty and sexuality (Mains, 34). In this type of fantasy, male warriors and gods are on the front lines and female characters are notably absent.

One notable female figure in 20th century is Dorothy Gale, the protagonist of L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900). Dorothy is helped and hindered by other important female characters in the book, witches both good and wicked. Later works become even more intriguing from a gender perspective. In *The Marvelous Land of Oz* (1904), the young girl Ozma is actually a young boy, Tip, until it is safe for her to be revealed as the queen (Mains, 35).

Also, a female writer of the time, Netta Syrett should be better known. Her novel *Judgement Witheld* (1934), features a lesbian heroine, Mimi Landsfield, which a really brave move for that period. Although Mimi is a minor character, she became one of the most important figures of the age.

The years between the two World Wars are an important period for the fantasy genre. This period is marked by some important male and female fantasy writers, who followed the path of J. R. R Tolkien. Different fictional worlds, war between good and evil, giving the responsibility of the welfare of humanity to one hero; these are the common subjects of the fantasy works in this era.

Although some authors did little contribution to change the stereotypical roles of men and women in their works, there were also authors who gave a closer look at some famous female characters. John Erskine's works can be given as an example of that. *The*

Private Life of Helen of Troy (1925) recounts Helen's unhappy domestic life post-Troy, while *Penelope's Man: The Homing Instinct* (1927) sheds a different light on the great Greek hero Odysseus. The biblical story of the Garden of Eden, long used to justify female oppression, is re-envisioned in Adam and Eve, though *He Knew Better* (1927), featuring a weak-willed Adam caught between an unconventional and rebellious Lilith and a powerful, albeit manipulative, Eve. Erskine's short-story collection *Cinderella's Daughter, and Other Sequels and Consequences* (1930) contains fairy tales commenting on social issues, including the sexual politics of the time (Mains, 37).

Another important writer of this period is Lord Dunsany. His novels contain detailed portrayals of female characters. His female characters mostly suffer from being a woman in the male-dominated world, but at the end, they find a way to free themselves from these boundaries.

There were also many women who wrote fantasy in this period. They mostly wrote about the meaning of being a woman and the changing role of them. There is one writer who has an important contribution of feminist fantasy in that era, Rebecca West. She wrote essays for the feminist newspaper, *Freewoman*. She is also famous for her love affair with science-fiction author, H. G. Wells.

Although most of her work is firmly in the realist mode, novelist and feminist Virginia Woolf did publish one fantastic novel, *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), about a time-traveling, gender-switching hero/ine who was modeled on her friend and lover, the openly bisexual Vita Sackville-West. The pseudonymous protagonist is born a man in Elizabethan England, but after an affair with a princess from Muscovy (Russia), Orlando journeys through four centuries of history, eventually transformed into a woman who struggles against gender oppression both in politics and in her literary

career. “Lady Orlando must contend with the disdain of male poets, including Pope and Addison, as well as with the pain of childbirth and the unfairness of patrilinear inheritance” (Mains, 38).

Thematic explorations of witchcraft and virginity were popular in this period. For example, in *Seven Days in New Crete* (1949), Robert Graves provides a fantastic treatment of his theory, described in *The White Goddess* (1948), of the triune goddess of poetry. “The narrator wakes in the far future, in a peaceful utopia ruled by witches, where everyone worships this goddess; the peace is destroyed when he seduces two young witches who become jealous of his affections, ending in murder and suicide” (Mains, 41). As we can see, the gender roles of the Medieval era is switched here. In this work, male character plays the role of the seducer and the destroyer of lives.

Witchcraft is not depicted as something evil and dark, but something as empowering and liberating by the female authors of this period. Also, some authors like Hilda Lewis mentioned the moral consequences of sentencing to death of women because of witchcraft. They try to explain that, witchcraft is actually a belief system and a way of life which is originated before Christianity, and it fosters free thought and will of the individual, encourages learning and an understanding of the earth and nature thereby affirming the divinity in all living things.

The most famous fantasy writers of this era, J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, didn't give much place for female characters in their works. Their stories based on the journeys of male heroes and their male companions. But, still, the female characters in their stories are strong and away from the restrictions of the gender roles. Especially in *The Lord of the Rings*, the female characters appear as authoritative figures, like the Elven Queen, Galadriel, or Eowyn, the warrior maiden. Although there is no female

presence among the presence of the Fellowship, it does not imply that there is no female power. On the contrary, the female characters depict Tolkien's critique on the traditional and masculine power. Unlike most wars, Tolkien depicts the idea that wars should be fought to protect rather than destroy. Tolkien has a lack of female characters, which is problematic. However, the few female characters he does have seem to rebel against patriarchal force, but not against domesticity in general (Vranken, 19). "C. S. Lewis's treatment of female characters is inconsistent in his famous work, *The Chronicles of Narnia*; while Susan is given a bow and arrow by Father Christmas, and Queen Lucy rides to battle with her brothers, the evil villain of *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950) is the White Witch, the same arrogant, violent Queen Jadis who despoils the Narnian Garden of Eden in *The Magician's Nephew* (1955), taking on the familiar role of temptress and deceiver" (Mains, 43).

When it comes to science-fiction, it is considered as a newer sub-genre of fantastic literature, even the term science-fiction did not exist until 1920s. However, some writers, both men and women, wrote science-fiction stories before they were called like that, like Mary Shelley or H. G. Wells. These works are called proto science-fiction.

Most proto science-fiction and early science-fiction stories appeared in magazines first, before they were published as books. For instance, "My Invisible Friend" by Katherine Kip (in the *Black Cat*, February 1897) preceded Wells's *The Invisible Man* into print by four months. Indeed, the very first issue of the popular pulp the *All-Story Magazine* (January 1905) carried a science fiction story by Margaret P. Montague: "The Great Sleep Tanks," which supposed that sleep was a tangible thing which could be captured and stored in huge tanks (Davin,46).

The period between the years 1920 and 1950 is important for the socialist and feminist utopias in women's science-fiction. In this period, explicitly feminist social arrangements started to be seen in utopias and dystopias written by female authors. "They also portrayed strong female characters who broke out of the Cult of True Womanhood stereotype to become active agents of social transformation in their own right" (Davin, 49). Various ideas on this issue is stated by several scholars. In general their ideas reflect that, in these stories, there are two categories about revised gender roles. The first category focuses on women as social reformers, fitting the ideals of Victorian feminism about women's work. The second category explores the idea of the equality between men and women, and seeks for the need of education and free choice of career for women instead of the idea of women's roles in society.

Typical of these was M. F. Rupert's "*Via the Hewitt Ray*" (*Wonder Stories Quarterly*, Spring 1930), a story about Lucile Harris, a commercial pilot, who finds a world ruled by women in another dimension, aided by a woman scientist. "At one point, the word feminism is used; the word, along with feminist, was coined in Greenwich Village in the 1910s and became widespread among the "New Women" in the 1920s. Their use by Rupert suggests her awareness of this larger social milieu" (Davin, 50).

As we can see, there are not so many examples of feminist writings or female writers in this period, and most of the stories were published in science-fiction magazines. But these stories help us see the gender difference of the writings before 1960s. The 204 known women writers who published almost a thousand stories in the science fiction magazines between 1927 and 1960 represent a tradition of women's science fiction that existed long before the commonly accepted appearance of such "women's science fiction" in the 1970s (Davin, 53).

When it comes to comic books, the introduction of Superman to the American public in Action Comics #1 in June 1938 ushered in the age of superhero comics and the period that has been defined as the Golden Age of comics. This was also a golden age for women heroes, and by the war years, the pages of comic books were full of beautiful, competent, costumed superheroines (Robbins, 54).

After World War II broke out, and men went away from their homes for war, then the true age of powerful women began. Because of the absence of men, women started to enter professions: They built ships and planes, and then started to use them. They also drove buses and trucks, and worked in factories. They embraced the motto; “We can do it!”, and at this period, the superheroines started to show their faces in comic books.

The first female superheroes did not have superpowers, but they use their daily life abilities to fight crime. The Woman in Red and Miss Fury are the examples of these non- superheroine female heroes. However, these are the exceptions. Majority of the Golden Age superheroines possess superpowers.

During the World War II, patriotic superheroines flourished, like Liberty Belle and Moon Girl. Sometimes, the fantasy-oriented superheroines were simply not human. The first examples of these kind of heroines can be seen in the Marvel Comics line, under the editorship of Stan Lee. In Namora, the Sea Beauty, the main character is a fish-woman with winged ankles and a bathing suit made from fish scales.

“Also, pseudoscientific origins, often accidental, abounded among Golden Age superheroines. When sixteen-year-old Madeleine Joyce found herself trapped during a thunderstorm in the high-voltage cabinet of her uncle’s scientist friend, she acquired super powers and became the Marvel superheroine Miss America. In the case of girl

detective Invisible Scarlett O'Neill, her scientist father accidentally exposed his daughter to an experimental ray in his lab, giving her the power to render herself invisible by pressing a nerve on her left wrist" (Robbins, 57).

Despite the success of these comic books, they didn't survive the war. Either they didn't find a story to tell after the war, or the female characters were sent back to kitchen after the return of men from war. Only one heroine made it through 1950s, and became an icon and a symbol for feminists. This heroine was Wonder Woman, who was created by Dr. William Moulton Marston in 1941.

Wonder Woman's history was based on Greek mythology. Marston created an island, the world of beautiful, immortal Amazons. Their peaceful, man-free life is shattered when Steve Trevor's plane crashes on the island. The Amazon Princess Diana saves him and decides to return him to his world and helps him for his fight against fascism.

Marston gave Wonder Woman a subversively feminist origin. Most mythological heroes are the products of a union between a deity and a virgin; in the case of Wonder Woman, Marston gives this tradition an all-woman twist. The virginal Amazon Queen Hippolyta wants a baby, so the goddess Athena instructs her to mold one from clay. Then the goddess Aphrodite breathes the breath of life into the statue, and little Diana, product of three mothers, is born (Robbins, 59).

Despite all the criticisms, accusations and insults, (about being lesbian, bashing males and of sadism), Wonder Woman managed to survive through the second half of the twentieth century as a feminist icon. After the movie release, it became a popular figure again and nowadays, we can see both male and female admirers of Wonder Woman all around the world.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the interest on fantastic works started to grow due to the publishing of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Although the genre had little market presence before that, it became a best selling category and also accepted as a serious genre by critics. There were still some critics who claimed that fantasy works were for children and they had little validity, but for the fantasy writers, it was a way of defining themselves and describing their way of perfect world. "Women writers in particular have used the mode of fantasy to recuperate female archetypal roles that have fallen into stereotypes; to recover a lost matriarchal tradition in myth and history; to deal explicitly with women-centered issues such as rape and gender inequality; and to reenvision traditional fantasy from a feminized perspective of caring and community" (Mains, 62).

One of the most important writers of this period is Ursula K. Le Guin, who was an iconic writer known for her science-fiction and high fantasy works. She also wrote essays on fantasy fiction and feminist issues as well. Her reputation as an author of the first rank, and her role as ambassador for the genres of the fantastic, began in 1968 with her fourth novel, *A Wizard of Earthsea*. The second volume of the series, *The Tombs of Atuan* (1971), is a feminine coming-of-age story, in which the young Tenar, a female Chosen One, rebels against a matriarchal community of priestesses to aid a male wizard. Le Guin returned to Tenar's story with a very different perspective in the 1990s: *Tehanu* (1990), condemned by some readers as a feminist polemic, usefully calls into question many of the gender conventions evident in the earlier books (Mains, 63).

Her novel, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), was considered as a revolutionary work in gender and became a central feminist text. In *The Left Hand of Darkness* an ethnologist from Earth visits Gethen, a distant planet populated by human-like beings

whose nature transgresses his earthly frame of biological understanding: for they are androgynous, only electing to become male or female at the height of their sexual cycle. The ethnologist's trek across the snowbound planet with a native of Gethen gives some deep lessons about our parochial understanding of the nature of gender. The balanced incisiveness of the tale seems almost anthropological, though infused with story. The novel won a Nebula in 1960 and a Hugo in 1970, and it is considered to be the first gender-based SF novel to win both critical and commercial success (Higgins, 77).

After the reputation of *The Lord of the Rings*, the quest fantasy set in secondary worlds became popular. Multibook series such as Terry Brooks's *The Sword of Shannara* and Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* continued this trend. Many of these series focused on the journey of a male hero, and the role of female characters were restricted to being princesses or damsel-in-distress.

So, the female writers of the period tried to end this male domination and created secondary worlds in which women can be warriors, wizards and rulers. Patricia McKillip's *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld* (1974) is a coming – of - age story of a young female wizard who enters the world of men to take revenge for an attempted rape; the novel won the first World Fantasy Award. The second volume of her *Riddle-Master* trilogy, *Heir of Sea and Fire* (1977), transformed Raederle from the object of the hero's quest into a questing hero in her own right, surrounded by female companions (Mains, 64). There are also other examples like Joy Chant's *When Voiha Wakes* (1984), Mercedes Lackey's *Arrows of the Queen* (1987), Jane Yolen's *Sister Light, Sister Dark* (1988) and its sequel *White Jenna* (1989), Lois McMaster Bujold's *Paladin of Souls* (2003). In all those works, the authors created a secondary worlds featuring strong female characters that can be anything they want.

There are also some themed anthologies, which focused on exploring and reimagining traditional female archetypes. These anthologies especially centered on woman warriors, witches and enchantresses. For example, Jessica Amanda Salmonson's *Amazons!* (1979), Esther Friesner's *Chicks in Chainmail* (1995), and Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Swords and Sorceress* series, published annually from 1984 to 2004, Susan Shwartz's *Hecate's Cauldron* (1982) and two volumes by Kathleen Massie-Ferch: *Ancient Enchantresses* (1995) and *Warrior Enchantresses* (1996).

In these attempts of rewriting the female archetypes, the writers of the period used another rich source, fairy tales. Feminist versions of retold fairy tales allow for the reclamation of the female hero, from damsel in distress to rescuer in her own right or seeker on a quest. Passive fairy-tale heroines—Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty—no longer wait for their princes to come to them, in works such as Sheri Tepper's *Beauty* (1991), Robin McKinley's *Spindle's End* (2001), and Lee's *Silver Metal Lover* (1981), a science fiction fairy tale. "Other tales recover a lost tradition of more active female heroes, as in the many versions of Beauty and the Beast, or Juliet Marillier's *Sevenwaters* trilogy in which a girl must rescue her seven brothers transformed into swans, or the English Katie Crackernuts tales that inform Charles de Lint's *Jack the Giant Killer* (1987), featuring Jacky Rowan and her friend Kate Hazel" (Mains, 66). There are also other examples like Kara Dalkey's *The Nightingale* (1988), about a singer in medieval Japan; Patricia C. Wrede's *Snow White and Rose Red* (1989), setting the tale about two sisters in Elizabethan England; and Pamela Dean's *Tam Lin* (1991), in which a group of 1970s college students find themselves living the Scots ballad about a pregnant young woman who saves her lover from the Fairy Queen—the same ballad that underlies Patricia McKillip's *Winter Rose* (1996) and Diana Wynne Jones's *Fire and Hemlock* (1985).

Another source for the writers who tried to fix the female roles was the legend of King Arthur. Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* (1982) retells the story from the point of views of the female characters; Arthur's mother, Yvgraine, his half sister, Morgan La Fey, and his wife, Guinevere. Also, Zimmer's decision of setting the tale after the Roman occupation of Britain, opens up a new theme of the clash of worldviews between a reimagined matriarchal paganism and a patriarchal Christianity. There are also some other major works about King Arthur legend and Camelot such as Mary Stewart's *Arthurian* series, Vera Chapman's the *Three Damosels* series, Gillian Bradshaw's *Arthur* trilogy and Sharan Newman's and Rosalind Miles's novels which focuses on Guinevere's adultery in the context of the constraints placed on women by marriage.

Morgan le Fay, in tradition Arthur's enemy, and other enchantresses such as Nimue and Morgause, are often recuperated in feminist revisions of the Arthurian mythos. The primary narrator of Bradley's *Mists of Avalon*, Morgan is also the central character of Fay Sampson's *Daughter of Tintagel* series; her life as a follower of the old religion is recounted by her nurse in Wise Woman's Telling (1989), the first volume. The Lady of the Lake is an ambiguous figure in Phyllis Ann Karr's *The Idylls of the Queen* (1982), Andre Norton's science fantasy *Merlin's Mirror* (1975), and, indirectly, Patricia McKillip's *The Tower at Stony Wood* (Mains, 68).

It is not unexpected for feminist writers of fantasy to rewrite the history besides these legends, since history is never kind to women. They tried to change the image of women who were only depicted as wives and mothers of great men in history. The feminist writers in this period especially created female characters as a response to the

medieval age fantasy writers, who depicted the women as either evil seductress or silent wife type.

A usual theme of historical fantasy set in the Middle Ages is the intolerance of the Christian religion toward other faiths, particularly those more accepting of women (Mains, 69). Susan Schwartz's *Shards of Empire* (1996), Guy Gavriel Kay's *The Sarantine Mosaic*, Marie Jakober's *The Black Chalice* (2000) and Katherine Kurtz's series of *Deryni Chronicles* are the examples of this.

The Renaissance period also attracted the attention of the fantasy writers. The Renaissance, with a powerful queen on the throne of England and a number of historical figures claiming to be magicians, is the setting for several works. R. A. MacAvoy sets her *Damiano* trilogy in Renaissance Italy; the eponymous protagonist is the son of a witch who encounters both Satan and the archangel Raphael. Elizabethan London is the setting of Lisa Goldstein's *Strange Devices of the Sun and Moon* (1993), where bookseller Alice Wood finds herself entangled along with Christopher Marlowe in a war between the faery folk (Mains, 69).

Of course, fantasists are not only interested in the past, but also the present. Some writers chose to create their setting parallel to today's world. For example, Teri Windling created Bordertown, a place in North America, whose citizens are both elves and human beings. Then, Da Lint created Newford, a common North American city to express his ideas about social activism and community building. Also, in Jane Linskind's *Brother to Dragons, Companion to Owls* (1994), the story is told from the point of view of a young woman who is released from a mental hospital and joins a street gang. Sometimes, environmental issues are related to feminist spirituality, as in

Louise Lawrence's *The Earth Witch* (1981), informed by myths about fertility goddesses and the sacrifice of their seasonal lovers (Mains, 71).

Fantasy also gives writers the freedom to write about gender-bending or homosexuality, and this freedom is especially appreciated by female writers who like to explore the diversity of sexual identities. The characters in Elizabeth A. Lynn's series beginning with *Watchtower* (1979) are openly homosexual; in the sequel *Dancers of Arun* (1979), the young protagonist falls in love with his elder brother.

The most liberating area for feminist writers in this period is science-fiction, since science-fiction offers opportunities of alternative social experiences. The technological progress and liberating social changes caused the new generation writers to resist the current limitations of the genre. They were eager to use sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll in their works and criticize the social and political conditions of their time. And of course, there are important and visible contributions made by women in this period.

"The feminist science-fiction writers' main objective is to criticize the social norms about sex, race and gender. For example, Lillian Craig Reed's novel *Armed Camps* (1969) tells the story of a decaying America where neither a male soldier nor a female pacifist can offer a solution to entropic decline" (Higgins, 75).

This big impact of feminism in late twentieth century also changed the representation of female characters. More realistic female heroes began to emerge in the works of both male and female fantasy writers. Naomi Mitchison's *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (1962), Robert A. Heinlein's *Podkayne of Mars* (1963), Samuel R. Delany's *Babel-17* (1966), Alexi Panshin's *Rite of Passage* (1968), Russ's *Picnic on Paradise* (1968), and McCaffrey's *The Ship Who Sang* (1969) all focus on capable

female protagonists. So, we can say that the imaginative flexibility of science-fiction allowed writers to write about women in different settings and circumstances.

“Joanna Russ is one of the female writers who stood out in this period. She is one of the first science-fiction writers who uses lesbianism openly in her works. Russ won a Nebula in 1972 for “*When It Changed*,” a story depicting a completely female society. Her novel *The Female Man* (1975) is a feminist classic that tells the story of four women (Jeannine, Janet, Joanna, and Jael) who come together from realities with alternative gender norms” (Higgins, 77). There are also some male writers who followed Russ’s path and used gay and lesbian characters in their works such as Samuel R. Delany, Joe Haldeman, Kim Stanley Robinson, James H. Schmitz, and John Varley.

After the success of *Star Wars* in 1977, science-fiction became more visible in the mainstream culture, and this caused more and more women to be drawn into science-fiction, although they had to experience a backlash against feminist work. The works of female writers were published regularly, yet many writers were feeling pressure to avoid being labelled as feminists, because there was a conflict about whether including the feminist works as legitimate science-fiction or not.

There was another division in science-fiction writers in this era, humanist science-fiction writers and cyberpunks (a genre of science fiction set in a lawless subculture of an oppressive society dominated by computer technology). If the humanists adopted a mainstream literary style and focused their work on human choices and philosophical problems, cyberpunks focused on cybernetic and information technologies, a literary style inspired by film noir and hard-boiled detective fiction, a distrust of Big Business, and an embrace of left-wing and/or libertarian sensibilities. Female characters in cyberpunk fictions often occupy secondary roles as dominatrixes,

sex objects, whores, victims, or femme fatales, and several cyberpunk stories lack active female characters at all (Higgins, 80).

Besides the humanist and cyberpunk science-fiction, there were also some writers who focused on feminist utopias and distopias, such as Joan Slonczewski, Margaret Atwood and Sheri S. Tepper. Slonczewski's *The Door into Ocean* (1986), a response to Frank Herbert's *Dune*, focuses on a utopian female society of pacifists. Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) imagines a dystopian society where women are forced to assist in their own oppression (Higgins, 81).

The backlash against feminist writers started to diminish in 1990s and women had gained acceptance in the science-fiction community as readers, writers, and editors. By this acceptance, some authors, such as Linda Nagata and C. J. Cherryh, began returning to the genre of space opera to develop alternative science-fiction visions. In response to the gritty near-future fiction of the cyberpunks in the 1980s. Other writers, including Lisa Goldstein, Theodora Goss, Vandana Singh, Lori Anne White, Ursula Pflug, and Karen Joy Fowler have moved toward slipstream or interstitial fictions that blur genre boundaries with influences from science fiction, fantasy, and magical realism (Higgins, 83).

As it comes to comics, the second half of the twentieth century is called as Post-Golden Age. During this time, comic book pulp fiction was replaced with the heroic exploits of super-powered men and women in masks and brightly colored spandex uniforms (McDaniel, 84). Also, the common idea of "male superheroes are strong" and "female superheroes are just pretty" started to change. Writers and editors of the era tried to give the characters a woman's perspective of feminism. This feminist vision is

presented as a woman who is motivated to serve and protect humankind without dominating or being subservient to men or trying to fight like a man (McDaniel, 86).

The effect of this point of view can be seen especially in Wonder Woman. In earlier versions, she was depicted in a range from warrior to ice princess to potential love interest of various super-powered members of the Justice League of America. In the Post-Golden Age, the editor avoided to describe Diana Prince as a dominator or submitter to men, or sexulize her character. Her feminine features weren't enhanced with revealing clothes. Also, the influence was seen in Diana's ability to resolve conflict. In the initial story arc, Princess Diana defeated Ares, the god of war, in his campaign to rule the world. However, the contest did not end with a predictable physical confrontation. Diana did not beat Ares because she fought him physically; she emerged victorious because she used her golden lasso (a gift from the female gods and the Earth Mother Gaea) to show Ares that he could not rule the world by destroying everyone on it. Wonder Woman was not physically strong enough to defeat the god, so she used what was available to her as a woman to find a way to help him see the truth (McDaniel,87).

There is an important name in this era who has great contributions to the superhero genre with her positive portrayals of female superheroes, Barbara Kesel Randall. A good example is her noteworthy depictions of Barbara Gordon (aka Batgirl). Kesel's version of Batgirl established her as a character separate from Batman and Robin: a woman motivated to do what men do, but alone and in her own way. Her *Secret Origins* (1987) and *Batgirl Special* (1988) countered the victimized and objectified presentation of Barbara Gordon/Batgirl in Alan Moore's acclaimed *The Killing Joke* (McDaniel, 88).

The last tradition the feminist writers tried to break in comics is commodified femininity. “Commodified femininity” is a term used to reference the visual objectification of women by the media. It means that media agents signify femininity by visually emphasizing the line and curve of the female body, along with a code of sexualized poses, gestures, body cants, and gazes (McDaniel, 90). Feminist writers tried to fight with this trend by creating physically different characters. The perfect example of this trend is She-Hulk.

She-Hulk is a lawyer named Jennifer Walters who turns into a giant green monster during the times of stress and anger. But she is aware of her other personality during this transformation unlike the male version of Hulk. The character possesses super strength and a fierce independence, and her narratives contained a strong, feminist message, slightly more anti-man than prowoman.

“The Post–Golden Age superhero genre has benefited from the contributions of women during comic book production. As editors, writers, and artists (pencilers, inkers, and colorists), women have influenced the perception of the female superhero by injecting multiple feminist perspectives into their stories, creating more opportunities for character development and decreasing objectification” (McDaniel, 92).

CHAPTER 2

THE ANALYSIS OF PHILIP PULLMAN'S *HIS DARK MATERIALS* THROUGH FEMINIST FANTASY

2.1. Feminist Undertones In Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*

Philip Pullman is a British author who writes novels for children and young adults, and best known for his trilogy, *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000). Pullman is a successful fantasy writer, he is even seen as the successor of J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis by some of the critics. However, unlike Lewis, Pullman is a strong atheist and projects his ideas about the abuse of Catholic church in his novels, especially in *His Dark Materials*. It can be seen that he adopts the idea of humanist morality and criticizes the strict rules of an organized religion in his works.

His Dark Materials series consist of three books: *The Northern Lights* (*The Golden Compass*) (1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997), and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000). The trilogy basically tells the story of Lyra Belacqua (also known as Lyra Silvertonque), an ordinary girl on a perilous journey through parallel universes. Through her journey, she meets witches and armored bears, fallen angels and soul-eating specters. In the end, the fate of both the living and the dead, will rely on her.

The story consists references to John Milton's *Paradise Lost* by inventing a modern version of Genesis: the story of Eve and Adam committing Original Sin in the Garden of Eden – but instead of condemning this “Fall of Man” the trilogy celebrates mankind's “fall” into knowledge and consciousness (Sundman, 1). The Church is the main antagonist here, who is trying to eliminate consciousness and free will (knowledge and consciousness take a physical form here, named “Dust”). Their opponents, on the

other hand, counter Church's attempts by trying to destroy the main force of Christianity, in other words, killing the God himself.

There are two important female characters in the trilogy; Lyra Belacqua, the protagonist of the story, and her mother, Marisa Coulter, who also plays an important role in the series. They represent the opposite poles in the story and they fight with each other most of the time, but they also resemble in some aspects. They are two women who try to change the rules in their own way in a man-dominated world.

2.3. Lyra Belacqua: The Second Eve

Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series' most important feature is, its brave rewriting of the story of Genesis. Pullman deneutralized and overthrew conventional gender roles in his novel. "Eve, the stereotypical female figure, is taken apart from the Holy Bible, re-inscribed and reassembled to form a fresh and subversive ideological configuration. Pullman's rewriting of Eve has, in many ways, transgressed traditional gender boundaries, implicating new possibilities in gender representation" (Bo Tso, 29)

We can see that Pullman embraces the same attitude with 20th century feminist fantasists. Exploring and reimagining female archetypes is an important aspect of feminist writings in this era and Pullman subverted the role of woman as the original sinner and the main cause of the fall of humanity by creating a second Eve and depicting her as the saviour of the worlds and the "new mother of all" (Sundman, 10).

Lyra is eleven years old when the story begins. She lives in the Jordan College in Oxford under the protection of her uncle, Lord Asriel (who turns out to be her father indeed). From the very beginning, she is described as the exact opposite of a

conventional female character. Since she grows up in a patriarchal society, she bears the qualities of a stereotypical tomboy

“Within five minutes Lyra had told her everything about her half-wild life: her favourite routes over the roof-tops, the battle of the Claybeds, the time she and Roger had caught and roasted a rook, her intention to capture a narrow-boat from the gyptians and sail to Abingdon, and so on” (*The Northern Lights*, 67).

She is wilful and disobedient, and the first scene of the story reflects her nature very well. She secretly enters to the Retiring Room in the college with her daemon, Pantaleimon (daemons are the representations of human souls, and every daemon takes the form of an animal that symbolizes its owner’s character), in which only the scholars – male scholars - in the college are allowed. Even female servants cannot enter the room, and Lyra breaks this rule by spying on the meeting there. The Retiring Room here represents knowledge prohibited to women, and Lyra gladly refuses to obey this rule (Sundman, 11). By secretly listening to the conversation of the scholars, she learns about the Dust and this is an important event for the beginning of her journey.

Although Lyra plays the role of a heroine from the beginning until the end of the story, it is not her main objective. “Lyra is a girl who believes in her power. She does not fight to become a heroine and have a place in hero’s book or to be recognised by people, she just wants to do what is right, helping people and helping to find disappeared children” (Cavalcante, 2). She begins her journey to save her friend Roger, who is kidnapped by a group of people that are known for taking children and experimenting on them. So, Pullman converts here the main rule of fairy tales by sending a girl to save a boy (Sundman, 13). She accomplishes lots of things and impresses a lot of people in spite of her young age throughout her journey.

In the progress of the story, we learn that the witches have a prophecy about Lyra. The nature of this prophecy is not exactly clear, but it is understood that, Lyra has to make a choice and this choice either will be the salvation or the damnation of mankind.

“There is a curious prophecy about this child: she is destined to bring about the end of destiny. But she must do so without knowing what she is doing, as if it were her nature and not her destiny to do it. If she’s told what she must do, it will all fail; death will sweep through all the worlds; it will be the triumph of despair, for ever” (*The Northern Lights*, 308).

It is also emphasized that she has to make this choice without knowing about the prophecy or her destiny, so Lyra’s free will plays an important role here. Lyra is destined to be the new Eve, which means she is reformed from being the biblical scapegoat to the saviour of all living (Sundman, 12).

As Pullman aimed to subverse the story of Eve, he told the story in a whole new point of view. The original tale of Genesis focuses on Adam, who is introduced first as primary and superiour to humankind. He is created first, and just because he cannot find a suitable helper, woman is created to save Adam from his loneliness. Also, Eve is made from Adam’s rib, whereas Adam is created from the breath of God. And later, by giving her the name Eve, the mother of all living, Adam assigns her traditional role (Bo Tso, 32).

In *His Dark Materials*, on the other hand, such male-centeredness does not exist. Lyra is the first character that is introduced to us and the story goes around her throughout the majority of the books. “The new Eve is described as the sole person who

makes the decision of going against the evil church, rescuing kidnapped children, and tricking the powerful Ice Bear King” (Bo Tso, 32).

There is also a male protagonist in the story, Will Parry. He is introduced to us in the second book of the series. Although he represents Adam in the story, he is not the center of attention here. This is Lyra’s – Eve’s – journey, and Will only plays the part of a side kick and a companion. Pullman again reverses the gender roles here, because after Will joins Lyra in her adventure, he becomes the domestic one in their relationship. He does the cleaning and the cooking, and he makes sure that Lyra takes good care of herself.

On the other hand, Lyra has no experience in these kind of works. She does not know how to cook, she does not know how to do cleaning and since her self care is taken by servants before, she has little knowledge about body care and hairstyling. So, while Lyra is incompetent in domestic chores, Will is definitely a house keeper and a caretaker. Pullman breaks the rule of women being responsible for all the chores of the house here and he subverses the traditional gender roles. Readers are shown that the domestic sphere, a sphere that is often thought to be “more or less defined by the predominance in it of biological reproduction and motherhood, of emotional ties and kin relations” is not necessarily the exclusive province of women (qtd. in Bo Tso, 33). We can easily see that a male like Will can be more domestic and talented in house chores than a female, and a female like Lyra can be more powerful and influential in public relations than a male. Gender roles are not designated by nature and they can be reversed.

Another important change in the Pullman's rewriting of Eve is that, in his version Eve transforms from an immoral, weak sinner to a true pursuer of knowledge and truth.

In the original Genesis story, Eve is considered as morally weak, so she is easily tempted by the serpent to eat the forbidden fruit. She is also responsible for Adam's sins, because she leads him to eat the forbidden fruit, because of this, she is seen as the only person who can be blamed for the fall of humanity. As we can see, Eve is described as weak, unreliable, untrustworthy, faithless, greedy and insatiable in the Bible. Also, while she was eating the forbidden fruit, she was well aware that she was committing a sin, so this shows her as selfish, too. "The impact of this negative portrayal of Eve has been so deep and powerful that over the millennia, according to Daly (1973), Eve has been continually considered as the universal woman and as the incarnation of evil" (qtd. in Bo Tso, 34).

Lyra, on the other hand, is portrayed completely different from the first Eve. She is selfless, brave, and good-hearted, and at the beginning of the first book, she starts her dangerous journey to the North, just because she promises to save her best friend, Roger, from the evil child snatchers. In the third book, she even agrees to do the only thing she fears most in her life, she agrees to be separated from her daemon, (her soul) to go underground in the land of dead to find Roger.

"Will could hardly watch. Lyra was doing the cruelest thing she had ever done, hating herself, hating the deed, suffering for Pan and with Pan and because of Pan, trying to put him down on the cold path, disengaging his cat-claws from her clothes, weeping, weeping. Will closed his ears: the sound was too unhappy to

hear. Time after time she pushed her daemon away, and still he cried and tried to cling” (*The Amber Spyglass*, 283-284)

This emphasized her selflessness and her desire to do the right thing, no matter what the consequence is. Unlike the first Eve, the second Eve bears all the Christ-like virtues such as love, courage and self-sacrifice, and in favour of truth and rightness she suffers great pain to bring hope, freedom and happiness to others (Bo Tso, 37).

The representation of The Fall in *His Dark Materials* is completely different from the Bible, either. Pullman changes the reasons, the process and the results of the Fall completely in his work, and describes the positive effects of the event on humanity as peace, serenity and universal balance.

First of all, there is no deception, betrayal or temptation at that moment. Lyra and Will’s encounter with the serpent, who is represented by a former nun, Mary Malone, contains no deception. Mary just talks about her true feelings about love and how she decides to leave the Church, and the scene ends with Lyra and Will kissing. At the moment of “tasting the forbidden fruit”, there is not options of obeying the God or obtaining the knowledge of good and evil, this moment is about Lyra and Will’s coming of age and sexual awakening. Here Lyra does not play the role of “the first temptress” or “the original sinner”. There are no tricks, plans or stratagems set beforehand. “. It just happens that the two teenagers fall in love and experience love for the first time. The love, passion and attraction between the lovers are real, sincere, natural and mutual” (Bo Tso, 38).

In the Holy Bible, immediately after Adam and Eve have eaten the fruit, “the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked”. They feel so afraid and ashamed that they hide and make coverings for themselves. As a punishment

for their disobedience God curses Eve and all women, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you”. For Adam, God gives him a life sentence of hard labour on the ground, “through painful toil will you eat of it all the days of your life” (qtd. in Bo Tso, 39).

In the series, Pullman changes these consequences completely. There are no punishments, sins, or embarrassment after Lyra and Will kiss. Instead, what follows their kiss is peace, serenity and universal balance. Everybody can feel the difference in the air, and shortly afterwards, the Dust-flood stops and Dust-stream returns.

“The terrible flood of Dust in the sky had stopped flowing...it was in perpetual movement, but it wasn’t flowing away anymore. In fact, if anything, it was falling like snow-flakes...The Dust pouring out of the stars had found a living home again, and these children-no-longer-children, saturated with love, were the cause of it all” (*The Amber Spyglass*, 473).

Since Dust represents the life spirit, knowledge and consciousness here, we can see that after Lyra and Will’s tasting of forbidden fruit, the life spirit returns and nourishes the starved Nature. Lyra and Will feel joy, happiness and love instead of shame and guilt here. Their whole encounter after speaking to Mary Malone is full of love and sweetness. So, “Lyra, the new Eve, plays the role of the mother of all living not by giving birth, but by re-diverting the flow of life spirit into the universe” (Bo Tso, 39).

However, the most significant part of Pullman’s Fall of Humanity version is its ending, because the young lovers does not have a happy ending.

Since Lyra and Will are from different parallel universes, they need to open a portal to be in the same world. Soon after their confession of the love of each other, they learn from their daemons that opening portals to different dimensions causes the Dust to leak out to nothingness, this would be the end of their efforts to bring the Dust to the world again. Also, they know that one person cannot live in another world more than ten years, he/she will get sick and fade away. To restore balance and stability, they must separate, return to their worlds and close every single doors they opened before. Even though Will is tempted by the idea of opening a single door to trespass between the worlds for seeing each other whenever they want, Lyra objects this idea, insisting that they should do the right thing for the sake of ultimate universal balance and the welfare of all the living. As we can see, Will is the one who is tempted by sin in this story, and unlike the first Eve, Lyra becomes the saviour of all by preventing Will from making a mistake. In the end, with broken hearts, they close all windows and break up forever. They sacrifice their personal happiness and suffer intolerable loss, rage and despair to save all humanity (Bo Tso, 40).

2.3. Marisa Coulter: Subversion of Madonna/Whore Division

Marisa Coulter is Lyra's mother and one of the antagonists of the series. She is described as vicious, cruel and heartless in the story, but she seems to have a soft spot for her daughter, Lyra. She saves Lyra's life on many occasions through the series, and in the end, she sacrifices her own life for Lyra and thus she proves her great love for her daughter.

Mrs. Coulter is a woman who fights for power in a patriarchal world. In her world, the men do not have to work so hard to gain power. Even their physical appearance is an advantage for them, since they are bigger and muscular, they look

more “powerful” than women. For example, Lyra’s father and Mrs. Coulter’s ex-lover Lord Asriel is described as strong and fierce by most of the characters in the story.

“a tall man with powerful shoulders, a fierce dark face, and eyes that [seem] to flash and glitter with savage laughter. It [is] a face to be dominated by, or to fight: never a face to patronise or pity” (*The Northern Lights* , 13).

His power fascinates everyone who meet him, and it is seen as “infinite” and “innate”, even “supernatural” to both his friends and foes (Sundman, 3).

Mrs. Coulter, on the other hand, has to fight for gaining power, she has to find other ways to get it since power is not seen as a natural quality of a woman. Also, it is implied that her personal agency is limited by a ruthless patriarchy and this highly patriarchal society does not allow women to have power as the men are. Mrs. Coulter uses the main way of women to get power, she achieves it through marriage. She marries Edward Coulter, a rising politician and one of the King’s men whom she cheats on with Lord Asriel later. However, a wife “is allowed no direct influence upon the future nor upon the world” and when Mrs. Coulter’s husband dies, she continues her quest for power outside of a marriage contract (qtd. in Greenwell, 236). And although she cheats on her husband with Lord Asriel, gives birth to a child, and her husband dies as a consequence of this affair, she does not continue this relationship after that.

“...your mother’s always been ambitious for power. At first she tried to get it the normal way, through marriage, but that didn’t work... So she had to turn to the Church. Naturally she couldn’t take the route a man could have taken – priesthood and so on – it had to be unorthodox; she had to set up her own order, her own channels of influence and work through that ”(*The Northern Lights*, 371-372).

Mrs. Coulter eagerly gives up her daughter to continue her search for power, while Lord Asriel agrees to pay for Lyra's maintenance and sends her to Jordan College to be raised there. Here, Pullman subverses the gender roles again. Mrs. Coulter does not hesitate to turn her back to her daughter, while Lord Asriel is caring enough to take Lyra under his wings and raise her. Also, Pullman implies that maternal feelings are not something that are given to women by nature. Because, Mrs. Coulter starts to like and protect Lyra, after she meets her and spends time with her.

"Pullman does not describe women as powerful in the way men are, but he repeatedly points out the power they have over men in using their femininity and sexuality; in fact, this is how Marisa Coulter finally eliminates the greatest enemy, the regent of heaven, the archangel Metatron, who cannot resist her as she lures him into his death" (Sundman, 5). Here, femininity is not described as the weakness of women, instead her femininity is what makes Marisa Coulter powerful and a master of manipulation. She combines her beauty and charm with wine, coy conversation and physical intimacy to extract information from male scholars and businessmen to reach her purposes (Greenwell, 237). She uses her strong qualities for the sole purpose of being powerful, and this separates her from the traditional portrait of women.

"Mrs. Coulter had more force in her soul than anyone she had ever seen" (*The Subtle Knife*, 312)

Marisa Coulter bears all the qualities of an evil seductress archetype of the literature of Medieval period, yet she has a quality that separates her from those characters. Even though she acts like a cruel, heartless villain, she has a soft spot for her daughter, Lyra. Her motherly feelings for her distinguishes Mrs. Coulter from stereotypical villains who has no concern for anybody and willing to do whatever means

necessary to achieve their goals. This distinction is seen clearly in the Bolvangar episode, where Lyra is captured by the child snatchers. Mrs. Coulter is the one who saves Lyra from silver guillotine just before she is separated from her daemon, and she seems “haggard and horror-struck” while doing that. After rescuing her, she lays Lyra on her bed gently and “strokes her head with a tender hand” (qtd. in Greenwell, 242).

At the beginning of the third book, Mrs. Coulter kidnaps Lyra and gives her a sleeping potion. Although this seems like a behaviour that fits with her villainous character, her purpose is completely different. She learns in the end of second book that Lyra is seen as the second Eve by the Church and they are hunting Lyra, so she kidnaps and hides her to protect her from the Church. And she does that in spite of all the possible consequences, knowing that the authorities of the Church won’t be pleased from her actions.

It is no doubt that her most significant action is sacrificing herself to save Lyra in the third book, *Amber Spyglass*. She collaborates with Lord Asriel to prevent the archangel Metatron from killing Lyra. And here, she applies her usual method to trick Metatron; she uses her femininity to seduce him and lures him to his own death. As she is well aware of the point of view towards women by men and her success is predicated upon his need to dominate a woman, she uses Metatron’s patriarchal desire for female submission to defeat him (Greenwell, 251).

“I wanted him to find no good in me, and he didn’t. There is none. But I love Lyra” (*The Amber Spyglass*, 406)

As Pullman likes to break the rules, he subverses the roles of a traditional hero and villain as well as male and female roles. Although Mrs. Coulter acts like a villain most of the time in the series, she dies like a true hero at the end of the book. In her final

fight with the archangel Metatron, she possesses the role of a hero who “brings knowledge of the secret of the tyrant’s doom” as Metatron can be seen as “the dragon to be slain by the hero” (qtd. in Greenwell, 251). Pullman emphasizes the courage and strength of Mrs. Coulter, since she is able to trick and defeat a powerful, uber-intelligent angel.

To sum up, as Pullman subverses the story of Eve with Lyra, he subverses the Madonna/whore division of Medieval times with Marisa Coulter. By giving her the qualities of both a hero and a villain, he dissolves this division “that has plagued female characters for centuries” (qtd. in Greenwell, 252). She is a strong and independant woman who seeks power in a men-dominated world. She is described as attractive, dominant and sensual and men-eating femme fatale most of the time (Sundman, 8). But it is her sacrifice that enables Lyra to fulfill her journey. “In the end, she performs as betraying seductress and loving mother, her heroic act of throwing out the tyrannical patriarch who has been aiming to squash the selfhood of all conscious life” (Greenwell, 252). Actually, the author summarizes the feelings Mrs. Coulter arouses in the reader through the speech of Serafina Pekkala: “I saw that woman torturing a witch, and I swore to myself that I would send that arrow into her throat. Now I shall never do that. She sacrificed herself with Lord Asriel to fight the angel and make the world safe for Lyra” (qtd. in Greenwell, 253).

CHAPTER 3

THE ANALYSIS OF CARYL CHURCHILL'S *TOP GIRLS* THROUGH FEMINIST FANTASY

3.1. Fantastic Elements For Feminist Purposes In Caryl Churchill's

Top Girls

Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* is not a traditional fantastic play, so it may seem strange to use this play for this thesis. But the aim of this thesis is to prove that fantastic elements can be used to reflect the author's ideas, and Churchill used fantastic elements to tell her opinion about feminism and the conditions of women in different ages. The dinner party in Act One is the most significant part of the play, and that part is the one which contains fantastic elements. Also, one of the women in the dinner party, Dull Gret, claims that she fights with monsters and demons, and she literally opens the mouth of hell, so her story proves that Churchill used fantastic elements in her play.

Caryl Lesley Churchill (born September 3, 1938, London, England) is a British playwright known for her plays about feminist issues, the abuses of power and sexual politics. She likes to push boundaries in her works by writing about identity crisis and obsession with power. Her most famous works are *Objections to Sex and Violence* (1974), *Cloud 9* (1979), *Top Girls* (1982), *Serious Money* (1987) and *A Number* (2002).

Top Girls, which will be analysed through a fantastic feminist point of view in this study, is one of Churchill's most famous plays. The play is set in London during the early 1980s, and tells the story of Marlene, who has been just promoted to managing director at the employment agency where she works. The main theme of the play is the difficulties that the working women encounter against an oppressive patriarchy. The

play is particularly concerned with the tendency of 1980's feminism to equate liberation with financial and professional success, especially since this archetype often excluded working class women.

Churchill's play has been analysed by many scholars and critics since it was published and these studies mostly focus on its feminist aspects. Since the play has an open-ending, the interpretations are different. But there is one general opinion about the feminist perspectives of the play: There are two different perspectives; the liberal feminism represented by the protagonist, Marlene, and the socialist stance, in the voice of her sister Joyce (Blay, 3).

It is important to know the period when the play was written to understand Churchill's motives. The play was written in 1982, during the early years of Margaret Thatcher's first term as a Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Thatcher opposed the idea of society and she claimed that "there are only individual men and women and there are families" (qtd. in Vasile, 244). The results of her ideas and her economic measures were the increase of unemployment, inflation, deindustrialization and economic recession. These outcomes are captured successfully in *Top Girls*. As Vasile states:

"Thatcher's emphasis on individualism was creating a new climate in Britain, offering a small privileged part of the population the possibility to earn much more money than before, but at the same time depriving the vast majority of employment opportunities, thus producing an ever wider divide between social classes. It is exactly this reality that Churchill captures in *Top Girls*." (244)

In *Top Girls*, there are two main topics: dead women coming back which can be taken as the fantastic element of the play and women working. The dead women from

the past appear in act one, taking place in a restaurant, a celebration that Marlene organizes, because of her recent promotion, we see other characters such as Lady Nijo, Dull Griet, Pope Joan who celebrate their femininity with each other. Churchill uses these different women to express her ideas about how “distinct groups of women their contradictions and deal with their communalities in different contexts” (Vasile, 242).

Top Girls begins with a dinner party, which is hosted by Marlene to celebrate her promotion as a managing director in her company. This opening is the most significant part of the play, since it shatters the image of what is real and what is not real in the audience’s imagination. There are five guests, five women from the past: the English traveller Isabella Bird (1831-1904);

ISABELLA: Such superstition! I was nearly murdered in China by a howling mob. They thought the barbarians ate babies and put them under railway sleepers to make the tracks steady, and ground up their eyes to make the lenses of camera (15).

the Emperor’s courtesan and later Buddhist nun, Lady Nijo (1258 – after 1307);

NIIJO: I can’t say I enjoyed my rough life. What I enjoyed most was being the Emperor’s favourite/ and wearing thin silk (4).

Dull Gret, the woman in an apron and armour who leads a host of women fighting the devils in the Brueghel painting Dulle Griet;

GRET: We come into hell through a big mouth. Hell’s black and red./ It’s like the village where I come from. There’s a river and a bridge and houses. (27-28).

Pope Joan, who is thought was a woman disguised as a man who reigned as pope between 854-856;

JOAN: They took me by the feet and dragged me out of town and stoned me to death (17).

and Patient Griselda, the submissive wife of Chaucer's "*The Clerk's Tale*" in *The Canterbury Tales*.

GRISELDA: No, no, it was on the wedding day. I was waiting outside the door to see the procession. Everyone wanted him to get married so there'd be an heir to look after us when he died,/ and at last he announced a day for the wedding but nobody knew who the bride was, we thought it must be a foreign princess, we were longing to see her. Then the carriage stopped outside our cottage and we couldn't see the bride anywhere. And he came and spoke to my father (21).

These women share their lives and experiences throughout the dinner party. These six different women from different time periods share the same table, crossing the conventional boundaries between reality and fiction, cultures, place and time which can also be considered as one of the features of fantasy (Vasile, 245).

As they continue to tell their story, it is revealed that they experienced rough events in their lives and more importantly, they accept these sufferings as natural and well-deserved punishments. All these women from the past accept and internalized men's domination over them. We can especially see this internalization on Nijo, emperor's mistress. For example, when Marlene asks her if she was raped, she objects.

NIJO. ... No, of course not, Marlene, I belonged to him, it was what I was brought up for from a baby. I soon found I was sad if he stayed away. It was depressing day after day not knowing when he would come. I never enjoyed taking other women to him. (3)

As we can see, she accepts the patriarchal discourse in which women are only seen as sexual objects and tools. Besides, the confrontation of women is told over Nijo (Blay, 17). Although she is in love with the emperor, she is the one who must take the other women to him, no matter how bad she feels. When a priest becomes her lover, she thinks she is guilty because that priest will go to hell. She says; “Misery in this life and worse in the next, all because of me” (11).

Another character who reflects the acceptance of men’s dominance is Pope Joan. She has a passion and hunger for learning, she wants to know everything, but she thinks she cannot do that as a woman. She accepts Church’s proclamation; “Women, children and lunatics cannot be Pope” (15), which equalizes women’s capabilities with children and lunatics. So, she disguises herself as a man, and due to her wisdom and hard study, she becomes Pope. At first, she feels very happy, she thinks that now she can know everything, that God will speak to her directly, but she feels disappointed and abandons her goals (Blay, 18). She says; “I had thought the Pope would know everything. I thought God would speak to me directly. But of course he knew I was a woman” (14).

The character that most clearly resigns herself to accepting her tough times is Griselda. She is a peasant chosen by a marquis to be his wife on the condition she must always obey him in everything, which she finds very normal and acceptable, since “of course a wife must obey her husband” (21). And she also accepts that a woman’s social position depends on her marriage and her husband’s status: “I’d rather obey the Marquis than a boy from the village” (21). She continues to obey him even though she gives birth to two children and her husband takes her children away from her. She always finds a way to justify his actions: “Walter found it hard to believe I loved him. He couldn’t believe I would always obey him. He had to prove it” (22). Also, “he tries to

prove her loyalty with the creation of an enemy by putting forward another woman to occupy her position, a tactic that has been seen yet with other stories” (Blay, 18). He sends her away from home, then she hears that he is getting married to a young girl from France and he calls her to prepare his wedding and help the bride. Even in this situation, she continues to obey him and tries to find logical reasons for his actions. “But he told me to come. I had to obey him. He wanted me to help prepare his wedding. He was getting married to a young girl from France and nobody except me knew how to arrange things the way he liked them” (24).

In the above analysis, the characters are investigated through their acceptance of patriarchy. However, this dinner party cannot be seen as the acceptance of the domination of patriarchy. Each woman suffers under the oppression of a husband, or a lord, or generally under the patriarchal institution, and yet, each woman finds their own way to rebel against men’s injustice.

The English traveller, Isabella Bird, tries to balance her life between her responsibilities against her family and her passion for living independently. Although she feels obliged to her family, she does everything to live as independently as possible. And also, she chooses not to marry until much later in her life due to her professional aspirations. Meanwhile, Nijo, has a life that can be divided into two clear halves. First, she lives a life as a courtesan in Emperor’s palace, and then, she becomes a Buddhist nun who is searching a life of spiritual simplicity. She lives most of her life as a mistress of the emperor, and not only she accepts her position, but also she thinks that being a concubine is honorable. However, when she beats the emperor to prevent his attendants from abusing the other courtesans, she feels proud of her defiance. This act of rebellion is a perfect example of proto-feminist response to patriarchal injustice.

Dull Gret speaks the least in the table, yet she is the most significant character among these women. She is a peasant from middle ages living in a village, and suffering from the tortures of Spanish soldiers. One day, she decides that they suffer enough and she leads her own army of women against Spanish soldiers. She describes the battlefield as full of devils, rats, lizards and so on. And she claims that these things do not bother her army because they face worse at the hands of the Spanish army. They literally enter the mouth of hell and beat the devil, in other words, they end the dominance of Spanish soldiers.

Pope Joan is separated from the other women in the table for her different lifestyle. She has a strong passion for knowledge and the pursuit of truth, so she disguises herself as a man since she thinks it is impossible for her to fulfill her dreams as a woman. She is a really brilliant woman with great knowledge of philosophy, metaphysics, poetry and theology. She manages to achieve the highest position of the Roman Catholic Church without anyone noticing that she is actually a woman. When she is finally exposed, it is not her persona or any other factor, but her female body that betrays her, because she gets pregnant and gives birth to her baby during a parade. After that, she is stoned to death, and all newly appointed Popes are made to sit on a chair with a hole in its center, and two other clergy look under his skirt to make sure he is a man. So, we can say that Pope Joan shakes the rules of the foundation by herself. Also, she is fond of living in an ivory tower built upon the knowledge of wise men, observing the folly of the world.

The most submissive character in the table is Griselda, the last one to enter the restaurant. Her fate resembles Nijo, that she has a cruel husband who emotionally tortures her and separates her from her children. But unlike Nijo, Griselda eventually

reunites with her children. Despite every hard condition, she remains loyal and stays with her husband. In every occasion, she finds a way to justify his actions. It seems that Griselda accepts her fate and stays true to her husband, the Marquis. Although her condition seems miserable, she energizes the women at the table through her story of patiently bearing the egregious hardships that the Marquis forced upon her.

After the dinner party, the story focuses on Marlene. The character of Marlene, who is portrayed as a successful top girl, is a perfect example of the woman image of 1980s, because she leaves behind her hometown, her origins and her own daughter in order to rise her way up the corporate hierarchy (Vasile, 245). Marlene is a representative of the right-wing feminism in the play, since she has a sisterhood consciousness and awareness. She wants to believe that her success is a collective success and she expects everybody to see this in the same way. Also, she supports the idea that every woman can be a top girl (Blay, 13). She gives an example about this: “I know a managing director who’s got two children, she breast feeds in the board room, she pays hundred pounds a week on domestic help alone and she can afford that because she’s an extremely high-powered lady earning a great deal of money” (80). Marlene’s idea of sisterhood is called as pseudo-sisterhood by some critics which is a term used by Marxist feminists, since it is claimed that although she would like to think that her individual accomplishment leads to a collective success, she is actually aware that her advancement only helps herself. Also, Marlene’s claim to an imagined sisterhood is seen as an indication of her feminism failing to encompass her less fortunate friends who cannot make it to the top (Vasile, 252). So, Marlene’s individualism, likewise Thatcher’s is centred in one’s own advancement and, as Joseph Marohl points out, “Marlene’s advancement helps no one but herself, however much she would like to

believe in a rightwing feminism ... She endorses a hierarchical system oppressive to the less fortunate women and men in society” (qtd. in Blay, 13).

As a matter of fact, Marlene adopts the phallogentric system oppressive to women. She achieves her position by the appropriation of masculine behaviour and domination techniques: “Our Marlene’s got far more balls than Howard and that’s that” (46). Since other women in the play embrace the domination of men and conventional gender roles, she is seen as a radical and abnormal person. For example, the wife of Howard Kidd, who thinks that her husband will be promoted instead of Marlene, pays a visit to her and asks her to leave the position for her husband. When her proposal is refused by Marlene, she gets angry and says: “You’ll end up... miserable and lonely. You’re not natural” (59).

We can see other examples of the internalization of patriarchal morals in the play. A 46-year-old woman, Louisa applies Marlene’s company for a change and she claims that she “passes as a man at work” (52). It is clear that she accepts that acting as a man at work is to act in the right way, since women do not belong this sphere (Blay, 16).

Another important figure in the play is Marlene’s sister, Joyce. She represents the perspective of the working class and domestic sphere. When Marlene abandons her hometown and her daughter to pursue her career, Joyce is the one who stays behind, take care of their family and raises Marlene’s daughter, Angie. Because of this, she feels resentful towards her sister and she blames Marlene for abandoning her daughter and forgetting all about her family.

Joyce’s opinions about women are the exact opposite of Marlene’s. “She does not see the perpetuation of class differences within a hegemonic system as an acceptable

feminist model for society. Joyce's character introduces the concept of materialist or socialist feminism in the play, with its focus on class-consciousness" (Vasile, 253). She has a more pragmatist point of view about feminism and she thinks Marlene is an extreme feminist. Her ideas can be seen clearly while they are talking about Margaret Thatcher:

MARLENE. ... First woman prime Minister. Terrifico. Aces. Right on. / You must admit. Certainly gets my vote.

JOYCE. What good's first woman if it's her? I suppose you'd have liked Hitler if he was a woman. Ms Hitler. Got a lot done, Hitlerina. / Great adventures. (84)

When we look at Joyce's life, it is natural for her to think like this, since she represents the oppressed at the expense of which women at top like Marlene can move their way up the social hierarchy. While Marlene is climbing the social ladder in her career, Joyce is forced to be trapped in her hometown, clean houses to earn money and raise Marlene's daughter with her own resources. So, Marlene's success does not impress her. She thinks upper class women are concerned about their beauty and physical appearance, whereas lower class women take care of their family and the people they love.

Joyce's opinions about women and class distinction make her pessimistic about future. While Marlene thinks positively due to her tendency to generalize her positive predictions to others, Joyce claims that "the future is only bright for Marlene and her class. Marlene is the superachiever/top girl/oppressor, whereas Joyce is the underachiever/working-class girl/oppressed" (Vasile, 254). She clearly marks the distinction between Marlene and her, and insists to point out that Marlene is one of "them"; even though Marlene includes Joyce in the same circle with herself.

MARLENE. Them, them. / Us and them?

JOYCE. And you're one of them.

MARLENE. And you're one of them. And you're us, wonderful us, and Angie's us / and Mum and Dad's us.

JOYCE. Yes, that's right, and you're them. (86).

The relationship between Marlene and Joyce is important to understand the gap between upper class and lower class women. As Marlene represents upper class here, her opinion about Joyce reflects the point of view to the lower class women. Although she sees herself as a feminist and she says her achievements are the collaborative achievement of all women, deep down she thinks this rugged individualism is for the upper class women, because she asks Joyce whether her cheating husband is giving her money. Contrary to Marlene's belief, Joyce has her own kind of feminist thoughts, as she refuses to take money from her husband and she chooses to clean people's houses to earn money instead.

Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*, although it is not a total fantastic play, reflects the feminist fantasy ideas of the late twentieth century. Churchill criticizes the social norms about sex and gender through her play. In the dinner party in Act One, she uses women from different time periods to criticize the traditional roles of women through ages, so the fantastic elements in the play have a crucial role for the writer to prove her point. She presents her opinions about seeing women as sexual objects through Emperor's lover Nijo, oppression on women in marriage through Griselda, the torture that women has to bear in war through Dull Gret, traditional gender roles through Isabella Bird and the ideas of Catholic Church on women through Pope Joan.

CHAPTER 4

COMPARISON

4.1. The Comparison of *His Dark Materials* and *Top Girls*

The fantastic elements and how these elements were used to reflect the feminist ideas in *His Dark Materials* and *Top Girls* were analysed in previous chapters. However, in this chapter, the similarities and the differences of the reflection of feminist elements will be explained. It is thought that the subject needs further comparison, since the use of feminist and fantastic elements in these two works display and illustrate crucial issues.

The works chosen for this study are from different authors, from different time periods and from different genres. But there are important common points of these two works and these common points make them be the subjects of this study. Both works have a feminist subtext, and the authors of these works use fantastic elements to give their messages. It is crucial for this study to compare these works, since one of them is not a fantastic work, but a postmodern play containing fantastic elements. The main aim of this thesis is to prove that fantasy can be used to reflect authors' ideas about important matters, so it can be seen that in both a fantastic novel and a postmodern play, fantastic elements are crucial to show the authors' main concerns.

His Dark Materials and *Top Girls* may seem two very different works, but there are important similarities of feminist reflections. Both works tell the story of women who are trying to stand up for their rights in a patriarchal world. They all struggle to prove that women can do everything that men do, and they are equals of men, not subordinates.

We can look at the characters, Marissa Coulter from *His Dark Materials* and Marlene from *Top Girls* to see the similarities between two works. Both Marissa and Marlene fight for power in a man-dominated society. In Mrs. Coulter's world, there is a highly patriarchal society that does not allow women to gain power. So, Mrs. Coulter has to use the traditional way of women to gain power, that is she marries a powerful man. However, she does not act like a dutiful wife, she cheats on her husband with Lord Asriel, and after her husband dies as a consequence of her forbidden affair, she tries to find other ways to increase her power. She is described as a tough and cruel woman, and she doesn't hesitate to make hard decisions for her ultimate goal. One of these hard decisions is to give up her daughter, Lyra, because she sees this child as an obstacle in her way.

Marlene, on the other hand, has a different world and different conditions. She is a working-class woman in a modern society. However, the general idea about the women is the same as *His Dark Materials*. Marlene has to struggle for gaining power and she has to make sacrifices for it. She has to leave her hometown and her family. Also, like Marissa Coulter, she has to give up her daughter for her dreams.

As we see, the time period and the conditions are different, but the aims of the women are the same in these books. In both works, the female characters find a way to rebel against the rule of men. In *His Dark Materials*, the protagonist Lyra always finds a way to sneak into the places which are strictly forbidden to women. This is her way of rebelling against patriarchal domination. Also, she does not accept the conventional roles of a woman, as she does not know how to cook or how to do cleaning. The subversion of the gender roles is the author's way of reflecting his feminist ideas.

In *Top Girls*, all the female characters in Marlene's dinner party, which can be seen as the most significant part of the play and contains fantastic elements, have their own way of rebelling against the patriarchy. We can give Isabelle Bird as an example here, since she chooses to live her life apart from her responsibilities for her family and as independently as possible. And also, she chooses not to marry until much later in her life due to her professional aspirations, which is not seen as a conventional woman's behaviour due to their need for a marriage to gain social status.

As we can see, both Philip Pullman and Caryl Churchill reflected their feminist ideas by using the female characters who are standing up against patriarchy. But also, there are some differences in their way of writing feminist female characters.

Caryl Churchill's protagonist, Marlene, prefers to embrace a man-like attitude to be successful in her patriarchal world. It is emphasized that she achieves her position by the appropriation of masculine behaviour and domination techniques. Also, other female characters accept that acting as a man at work is the right way to be successful, although it is seen as an abnormal and radical attitude by traditional female characters in the play. We can also give Pope Joan from the dinner party as an example here, because she chooses to disguise herself as a man to achieve her goals. She accepts that she cannot fulfill her dreams and her hunger for learning as a woman, and she manages to achieve the highest position of Roman Catholic Church, she becomes Pope without anyone noticing that she is actually a woman.

On the other hand, Philip Pullman never uses masculinity as a way of success for his female characters. Although Lyra is described as a tomboy at the beginning of the novel, this quality is only used to stress that she is different from other girls in the school and never overemphasized. Lyra's success in her mission is never connected to

masculinity and man-like behaviour, on the contrary, as she is declared as a second Eve, her femininity is the key point of the story.

The other important female character of Pullman's work, Marissa Coulter, does not bear any hint of masculinity. Indeed, she achieves her goals by using her femininity and sexuality. Her beauty and her charm is like a weapon for Mrs. Coulter, as she defeats her ultimate enemy with this. Masculinity is not presented as a power element. Both Lyra and Mrs. Coulter have no intention of acting like a man to gain power and access their goals.

As it is mentioned in the beginning, these two works can be considered very different from each other, but the use of fantastic elements to reflect the authors' ideas about feminisim is the most important common point of the works and this common point links them together.

CONCLUSION

Fantastic literature, although seen as children's literature and underestimated by some people, is as effective as other types of literature for reflecting the world views of the writers. As Sheila Egoff claims, fantasy has been a vehicle used by writers to express their dissatisfaction with society, to comment on human nature (qtd. in Eşberk, 143).

This study focuses on how especially feminist aspects are reflected in fantastic works. Feminist notions can be seen in fantastic works since the first examples of fantasy were written. From the early works of Greek mythology to the science-fiction and comic books of the 20th century, there are authors who used fantastic elements in their works to depict their ideas on feminism. Although the tones of the works and the styles of the authors change in different time periods, the significance of fantasy remains the same.

Two different works have been chosen to exemplify these opinions in this study. The first work is Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series. The series tells the story of a young girl, Lyra Belacqua, who is on a perilous journey through parallel universes. The story consists serious references to *Paradise Lost*, since the author, Philip Pullman writes a modern version of the story of Genesis. But here, Lyra plays the role of a saviour instead of the original sinner, and brings knowledge and consciousness to humanity. So, Pullman aims to correct Eve's image as the main cause of the fall of humanity.

There is also another important character in the series that Pullman uses to rewrite a female stereotype, Marissa Coulter. She is Lyra's mother, and described as a cruel and tough woman in the novel. Although she seems to bear all the qualities of an

antagonist at first, it appears that she has a soft spot for her daughter, Lyra, and she does a lot of things to protect her throughout the story, and even she sacrifices her own life to save Lyra at the end of the series. So, Pullman subverts the Madonna/whore dichotomy by giving Mrs. Coulter the qualities of both archetypes.

The second work which is analyzed in this study is Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*. *Top Girls* is a post-modern play which was published in 1982 and tells the story of a woman named Marlene, a career-driven woman who is heavily invested in women's success in business. *Top Girls* is not actually a fantastic play, but the author uses fantastic elements to prove her point about feminism. The fantastic part of the play is the first part. In Act One, Marlene organizes a dinner party to celebrate her promotion as a managing director, and her guests are five different dead women from different time periods. Churchill uses these women to criticise patriarchal domination and conventional roles of women in society. Since the guests of the dinner party are all from different time periods, the playwright has an opportunity to tell her opinions about the conditions of women in all these times.

The second part of the play focuses on Marlene and her sister, Joyce. The character, Marlene, draws the perfect picture of 1980s women image, as she abandons her hometown, her family and even her daughter to find herself a place in corporate hierarchy. Unlike her, her sister Joyce stays in her hometown, takes care of their family and raises Marlene's daughter, Angie. Marlene has a sisterhood consciousness and awareness, whereas Joyce embraces a more pragmatist approach in life. Marlene represent upper class women, and Joyce represents lower class and oppressed women. So, while Marlene thinks positively due to her tendency to generalize her positive

predictions to others, Joyce is pessimistic about the future and claims that the future is only bright for Marlene and her class.

To sum up, the main objective of this study to show that fantastic elements can be used to express the authors' opinions about serious matters, that fantastic literature deals with supernatural and unreal does not mean it cannot talk about subjects like racism, effects of war or facing the difficulties of growing up. It is intended to break the prejudice against fantastic literature and prove that it is as effective as the other types of literature. As the analyses of the fantastic elements in drama part in the introduction of this study suggests, apart from fantasists, other important writers such as Oscar Wilde or Caryl Churchill also used fantastic elements in their works to reflect their ideas about important matters such as problematics of identity or women's problems in society. Since there are still some people who underestimates the value of fantasy, this study intends to overrule the outdated opinions about fantastic literature. Consequently; "fantasy matters too much, because it has too much potential to subvert and explore the differential of freedom" (Zipes, 81). So, fantasy enables us to think freely, search the truth freely, criticise freely. It gives us conscience for not accepting the present consequences.

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