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# Unveiling The Veiled Self

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Unlike the Bildungsroman written by a male author, which represents the hero as a mere apprentice to life, acquiring a perspective that would accompany him throughout his life, the female novel of awakening has a completely different aim. In her article “The Novel of Awakening” Susan J. Rosowski describes the female novel of formation as a form of awakening to limitations and points out:

The direction of awakening follows what is becoming a pattern in literature by and about women: movement is inward, toward greater self-knowledge and the nature of the world. (Horner, 49)

In the light of what Rosowski suggests, Erendiz Atasü’s novel *The Other Side of the Mountain* can be taken as a further step for the female *Bildungsroman*: the narrator starts with the realization that her real self is hidden, buried and covered, but then proceeds from this point towards an act of unveiling that reveals the type of limitations that surround the female sex. This understanding pervades the novel with an abundant use of metaphors of containment, concealment, hiddenness and burial at different levels. These metaphors identify the repressed self which is uncovered, in Rosowski’s words, through an “inward movement;” to put it simply, through a self-seeking journey.

The narrator of the novel realizes how she is expelled from the given discourse when she rejects her prescribed role and as a result starts to employ a metaphorical discourse so that she can verbalize the fact that her will and her desire are hidden. Starting from this vantage-point, she sets out to uncover the imposed role:

(You refused to admit that you were buried up to your neck in the common fate of woman. You closed your eyes tight, saw neither mud nor marsh. You had to marry, had to become a faithful wife and mother that is what you thought. You were scared to death of losing your innocence.) (13)

As the title of the chapter, “The Last Decade of Innocence,” indicates, the assigned role dictates to women a false conception of innocence, which merely means an unquestioned compliance with the expectations. This patriarchal perception of innocence which equals lack of insight into one’s own experiences starts to dissolve in the course of the narrator’s inner journey. In other words, she unfolds her mother’s and her real identity as she moves through the steps of her self-seeking journey, which are given symbolic titles to describe its nature.

In fact, the metaphoric chapter names, listing the phases of the narrator's journey towards unveiling the repressed self, correspond both to the building up of the self of the narrator and the motif of concealment. To quote Gardiner, the narrator realises the "alienation between outer and inner selves" and with an inward movement traces back the influences that make her what she is now only to find that she needs "another shore" (190). After setting off for freedom in "Towards Freedom," where she comes to the realization about the limitations which are metaphorically represented by "a great shawl spread over the incoherence and incongruities hidden in the depths," she swims "Towards The Open Sea . . . Memories and Illusions." Then in need of creating her own set of values, which would guide her in the deep blue sea of freedom, she makes her past an island to stop at and revise her experiences: "Islands of the Past. . . Photographs and Letters of Bygone Days." Having had access to the details of her past, to the worlds of the narrator's mother Vicdan and her three brothers, to use Atasü's words, to the "worlds which, although they drifted apart and grew remote, still—at least from Vicdan's point of view—remained linked by the threads of love loose, drawn thin, but nevertheless enduring" (Letter to the Reader, 281), the narrator finally finds herself "On Another Shore." Thus, the narrator's process of unveiling her hidden identity takes on a route in which she first meticulously examines the self of the others whom she relates to. The relational nature of the self-seeking process, according to Chodorow, stems from the fact that "Throughout women's lives, the self is defined through social relationships; issues of fusion and merger of the self with others are significant, and ego boundaries remain flexible" (Abel, 178). So the narrator first sets out to enter into the repressed self of her mother to find a clue about her own self.

This attempt to uncover the hidden self of Vicdan is visualized by the use of imagery of containment. In other words, metaphors become the single most powerful tool of discourse in this part of the journey as well. Since for her the first and foremost plane of reality that has been hidden is the matrilineal one, she understands that it is only through unearthing the mother's buried past that one can start the journey seeking the self. At this point, she confronts the initial net covering her most immediate past. Upon listening to the speech that accompanies the presentation of "the token of affection and esteem" at the ceremony to honour her now dead mother's memory, she encounters a striking contradiction between others' perception of her mother and her own. The description of Vicdan from the mouth of the speaker by no means complies with the narrator's picture of her. Thus she comes to a point at which she feels herself alienated from her mother and starts questioning why Vicdan failed to reveal herself to her: "Oh mother, why do you hide yourself from me? Why? . . . I want to get to know you, the mother whom I had never known" (23). With "a curiosity that almost hurts" the narrator starts her inner journey in pursuit of her mother's past. Proceeding from the memories, she attains her freedom through reading her mother's nourishing letters and writings. Reaching her mother's formulation of truth, she also faces her own formulations and dares to ask challenging questions, the answers to which provide a perspective allowing her to shatter the old formula. To reach her mother's self that has not been verbalized in the male order, however, the narrator has to reveal the nets spread layer after layer. Only after the shawls are taken off, after the iron curtain falls down, after the old way of seeing things is shattered, can she find a new way of expression. As Kadiatu Kanneh suggests in her article "Love, Mourning and Metaphor: Terms of Identity," the narrator in the novel is required to go deeply down into the layers to find a liberating language that would bring the repressed lives to the surface:

To liberate women, the answer is not to do a little rearrangement of the system but to begin an explosion at the very iron roots of the male language, explosion that will shatter the old way, not just of speaking and writing but of the thinking behind it. (138)

Going back to where the narrator sets sail “Towards Freedom” one can see that the narrator’s initial unconsciousness, the site of her repressed self which starts to emerge, is visualized with the metaphor of a shawl. Just as metaphor in general creates a new reality in language, so this specific metaphor points to a new reality in the growth of the narrator, in the sense that it gives the reader access to her awakening. Metaphor as a linguistic substitution of one thing for another, Ricoeur asserts, is also “the primary function of language in that it has the capacity to provide untranslatable information and accordingly . . . to yield some true insight about reality” (de Weever, 61). The shawl metaphor, then, elucidates the hidden meaning by becoming a tool for illustrating the limiting aspect of the given discourse. Thus, the shawl points to the nets of male order that give no way to release:

(All the shawls that had covered the incongruities, the incoherence, were torn to shreds. Everyone stood naked. And as for me, I saw myself for the first time clearly, and I saw all the others.) (14)

So uncovering the nets throws splashes of light on to the dark and shadowed area, whereby she can follow the pattern of her unconscious, reach her inner space and “hear the rhythms of her own desire in the unconscious.” In her article “This Sex Which is Not One” Irigaray says “women lie breathless beneath an oppression which denies them the power of their own speech and writing.” In other words as female sexuality is theorised within masculine parameters, “to have or not to have a Phallus,” a woman’s desire is alienated from her. The relation between desire and language might seem very farfetched at first, yet bearing in mind that no word about the characters’ sexual interests has been mentioned, one can easily see how the narrator is discouraged from articulating her desire in the male discourse. Accordingly, remembering her past days when she was estranged from her desire, the narrator in the novel relates her experience with a conscious shift from the first person narration to the third and says:

Her body was yielding and docile; the selfsame body that had withdrawn itself angry and frustrated, when years ago she had thoughts of jumping in the river . . . Her body that had been hungry for touch when young, had ached with yearning as if it were tearing apart . . . (27)

With a growing awareness of the forces that suppress the female self, she now realises her desire: “That same body was now satisfied, no longer wanting simply to accept but longing to overflow. She enjoyed sensing the flesh that was stirred and roused by the touch of rose petals” (27). In order to accompany a movement from enclosure to openness, the narrator makes use of a metaphor of a fallen curtain, which points to disclosure. A curtain falling metaphorically corresponds to the narrator’s loss of innocence as well. Thus in “The Last Decade of Innocence,” comparing herself to the tragic heroines of world literature, she says she “slammed the door” and “walked straight ahead,” “fell in love,” “reunited with [her] missing body,” “survived,” “made journeys” and “had lost all innocence”: “The ‘iron curtain’ has been torn down! You cannot hide any more on either side of it, in a state of mock innocence” (15).

The iron curtain that screens the real self of women and makes it invisible operates not only in the public sphere but also in the private lives of Vicdan and Nefise. To put it simply, the iron curtain refers to a net acting as a barrier to make the mother–daughter relationship

impossible. The nature of the mother–daughter relationship then becomes a mere tool for the mother to pass her experience of incommunicable inner life onto the daughter. In other words, hiding the true self from the daughter becomes hereditary for the female sex. To illustrate, when Gazi Kemal calls Vicdan for a meeting at Dolmabahçe Palace, this net between Fitnat Hanim and Vicdan becomes visible. Vicdan’s and Fitnat Hanim’s expectations from this meeting are very different. While Fitnat Hanim takes this as a release from the poverty she suffers and “secretly wants the Gazi to keep her daughter,” Vicdan sees it as a chance for advancement in her career. Vicdan assumes that a meeting with Gazi will make her a more respectable person who commits herself to her country’s development. So Vicdan tries to understand the tension and watches “the changing expressions on her mother’s face”:

For a fleeting instant, through the overwhelming weight of her weariness and the mists of her longings, she can catch a glimpse of her mother’s true self. A face taut with pain. Vicdan is startled.

“Mother” . . . Placatingly, her voice tries to reach Fitnat Hanim. But the space that divides them swallows Vicdan’s words. Fitnat Hanim does not hear. (240)

Analysing this tension under a magnifying glass, the narrator senses that “Vicdan’s mind had inherited from Fitnat Hanim”; therefore she can understand the similar net between Vicdan and herself. In fact, the inherited “ability” only provides the means for Vicdan to veil her sincerest emotions (242). On that account, one can suggest that Vicdan is taught to hide the “incongruities and incoherencies” between her and the others: “Revealing even the outer layer of her heart’s hurt would wound Vicdan’s self-respect. And what of the deeper layers? Impossible!” (39) This is exemplified by the fact that just as she locks her writings in a case, she “has locked up her longing for England and her hurt about Nefise in hidden compartments of her soul, along with many other distresses” (39). Actually, Vicdan’s choice of Nefise as her best friend has a lot to do with their similar nature in the sense that, though Nefise seems to be a more unreserved and spontaneous person, she is not. In fact, she is just another girl brought up to comply with the image of woman as a container of her real self:

Vicdan will read her friend’s letter once more and discover some quality that she can respond to, Nefise’s vulnerability and frailty hidden beneath her impetuosity and aggression. (40)

Bodily symptoms of Vicdan and Nefise suggest this hiddenness on a metaphorical level. Since the discourse within which they move and define themselves provides no language for the expression of their deepest desires, they hide themselves behind masks of respectability. Yet, these women’s masks of respectability only hide a mind and a heart that are submerged by the coercive nature of patriarchy.

In a sense, neither Vicdan nor Nefise can manifest the pain in them directly. As a result, the silenced souls and bodies of these women start speaking in diseased tissues that finally explode in bursts of pain:

A summery day in autumn . . . The year is 1932. There will be seven years before the outbreak of war, ten before Nefise’s death from cancer of the pancreas, sixty before Vicdan’s body extinguished, tiny and shrunken with Parkinson’s disease. (75)

The description refers to Vicdan’s learned rigidity that directs her to screen whatever she has within, whether it is sorrow or happiness. On the brink of losing her only close friend Nefise, Vicdan manages to look quite calm “to an outsider’s eye.” (77) Thanks to the

composure she feigns, which “keeps her inner self and its suffering under control,” she complies with the conventional image of women at the cost of laying the grounds for Parkinson’s disease. (77)

Failing to be strong enough to confront her friend Nefise and talk about the “blundering”—Nefise’s romantic attachment to Hugh Eliot who has long flirted with Vicdan—she locks her anger and frustration inside and finds excuses for the pain. Concealing the real cause of her disappointment, she blames Nefise for going to the Ministry without informing her as well: “Nefise’s attempted duplicity at the Ministry is only the label you have, to your secret relief, hurriedly pasted over the compartment where you crammed the pain that question caused you” (41). She is trained to hide her self in such a strict way that she herself is scared to see her repressed soul in its stark nakedness, let alone revealing it to others. As is apparent in the narrator’s comment, she does not know that she “would have a more tranquil old age if the curtain of mystery within her were raised” (206).

Being accustomed to accumulating the pain and suppressing the joy, although “she has a revolutionary soul,” Vicdan fails to activate her free will, and becomes “reserved” (59). The narrative voice enters a parenthesis here and makes a comment on Vicdan’s ambiguous nature: “Throughout her long life, Vicdan will suffer from the torment of being torn between her eager, energetic spirit and her patina of reserve” (59). In an attempt to understand which of these two aspects of her character dominates Vicdan’s soul, the narrator asks: “Is this you, Vicdan, calm, considerate, always courteous? You can’t recognize yourself, can you? How did you manage to conceal your rage until now?” (60). Actually retracing her mother’s past and raising an awareness about the possible dangers caused by the concealment, the narrator questions her mother with a tone of bitter criticism blaming this sort of an attitude as the begetter of further pain that destroys the body:

Where are your demons, Vicdan? Where have you hidden them? A day will come when your demons will become your inquisitors. Life and history are not forgiving, and make us pay even for the concealment of your demons . . . Even virtue comes at a price. (62)

After the last decade of innocence the narrator is now well aware of the fact that virtue is not now and never was rewarded; hence, innocence is just a façade that fosters the use of the mask of rigidity. In other words, it is just a sweet lie that covers “the incoherencies and incongruities” with a shawl.

Since Vicdan becomes anxious to maintain the mask of rigidity that the social codes call for, she trains her soul and body so that her suppressed emotions do not leak out. So she establishes a firm attitude:

Sorrow is a physical sensation for Vicdan, carving out a painfilled hollow from heart to belly. She does not weep, perhaps cannot. She is no longer the little girl, who wept her heart out when her father died, until her eyesight failed. She has learned to confront misfortune steadfastly. (77)

This same plane of concealment is well represented by the metaphor of a crystal jar which “had sealed up the fiery essence of her being.” (79) The metaphor of the crystal jar with a burning flame in it is used in the text several times to correspond to the idea that the female soul is repressed by the body operating in the male order. As Max Black suggests regarding the nature of metaphors, it is apparent that the image of flame in the jar is “not really a statement, but just a fresh way of looking at things” (Quilligan, 67). This fresh way of seeing Vicdan leads the reader to question how her flame finds the oxygen to keep on

burning. As stated by the narrator, Vicdan draws the energy to live on from writing, by expressing her most inner self in the form of writing. Accordingly, the fact that Vicdan could never feel secure enough to live the person inside her is revealed by the narrator's painstaking attempt to reach her mother's lost soul through reading again and again the file that "contained her mother's letters, journals, reflections, and poems." (289) Symbolically, the narrator tries to touch the flame within the crystal jar. Following the footsteps of her mother, she writes a manuscript. Then, in a regenerative act, the narrator puts her mother's name on the manuscript in order to render her mother's soul free from the confinements of the jars, boxes, shawls, curtains and veils. In a sense, identifying herself with her mother functions as a medium both for her self-knowledge and for Vicdan's liberation. In a ritualistic manner, the narrator writes her own manuscript and puts on her mother's blue satin evening gown in order to gratify her mother's unfulfilled desire to become a writer in a metaphorical fashion. In other words, frustrated by the representation of her mother at the commemorative ceremony, now the narrator organises her own unique ceremony, which will be more meaningful as it will touch the flame, not the glass only:

She arranged her hair the way it was done in the photo of her mother wearing that same gown. She looked in the mirror: my mother holding her pen and the notebook she kept *secretly* was looking back at me, with a sad smile on her lips and a playful gleam flickering in her eyes. (28)

Thus, the narrator's enthusiastic attempt to release her mother from the nets spread upon her is once again described by the help of a metaphor. Vicdan as a flame is reflected in the crystal jar as "a fine sight," but it remains "cool to the touch" (79). In other words, containment of the self is made evident by the use of the jar metaphor. In fact, this "cool touch" discloses how illusory the patriarchal system is. Thus, although she acted the "real" mother, "real" wife, "real" woman, her true self remained a mere illusion, "a fine sight with a cool touch." Naturally, the narrator finds it really difficult to touch the flame in this jar whereby she could know both her mother and herself: "Oh mother, why do you hide yourself from me? Why? Isn't it unfair to me? I want to get to know you, the mother whom I had never known . . . Where are you, mother?"(23). The quest for her mother's (and of course her own) "real self" seems to lead the narrator into the realm of the inexpressible, metaphorically represented by the texts written secretly and kept in a case. Only after reading what she has written can she learn about her mother.

Being a woman who is destined to have a similar fate, Nefise becomes "the first, and perhaps the only person to break the jar, to touch the flame" (79). Her being able to break the jar, however, does not promise any salvation from suffering the imprisonment of Vicdan and Nefise's desires. In other words, Nefise is also the embodiment of the underlying principle of the patriarchal order: "Conceal your self." It is interesting to see that the representation of Nefise as a woman in the male order who is doomed to conceal her real self matches the representation of the downtrodden woman in her mind as well:

Nefise did not recognise the femininity enshrined in her tense muscles, sexuality that quivered with instinct, intuition, inspiration . . . For her womanhood was a female figure crouching, frightened and vindictive, bearing the marks of slaps and kicks on her skin and deep in her heart, bleeding secretly in lavatories. (71)

Seeking a way to escape such a fate, Nefise first takes refuge in Hugh Eliot's and then Ted's love, then soon realizes that men cannot be "the ray of hope to lighten the dark and crushing doom the centuries had heaped on the womanhood of her country" (71). Studying the literature of Anatolian people, she comes to the realization that the way out for her would be Turkish, "her mother tongue" (71).

Once again, Atasü puts an emphasis on the significance of finding a medium to express one's hidden, confined and untold story with Nefise's realization that it is never men that liberate women:

Ted, who called her, "my dark tulip" . . . Hugh used to call Vicdan "my Turkish tulip" . . . What lack of imagination! Nefise was disgusted with men with their lack of imagination, as she lay awake in her bed, battling questions, searching for answers, struggling with feelings of guilt. (70)

In order not to be a "Turkish carpet to be trodden on until threadbare," not to become "an Oriental shawl, to be worn-out, owned by the uniformed aristocrat" though her whole being suffers "torments in the traps of passion," she gives up a further relationship with either Hugh or Ted. She decides to channel the "dauntless energy of youth" that pervades her heart and mind towards becoming "one of those great writers, poets, translators who create their own tongues" (72). Only through the production of this language does Nefise find "the way out" in the patriarchal order:

She would link the nomadic freedom, the steppe-like simplicity, the Eastern tranquillity and the Muslim patience of the Turkish language with the refinement, the riches, the dynamic vitality of the West . . . (72)

Upon awakening to the limitations encircling her, she formulates a language carrying the diversities that are repressed in the standardizing male order. Just by looking at how this language is created, one can realize that in this woman-made language binaries do not operate. As it is constructed by an act of conjoining instead of an act of eliminating the idiosyncrasies, no matter how diverse the components of this language may be, it still remains all-inclusive and embracing. Nefise's attempt to liberate herself from the culturally imposed female role is promising in the sense that including the elements of many different realms the language she devises is a move away from the fixed standpoint of patriarchal discourse. This language is similar to the language of the female sex that Hélène Cixous suggests in her article "Sorties":

What is inscribed in the movement of a text which divides itself, breaks itself into bits, regroups itself, is an abundant, maternal, pederastic femininity. A phantasmatical mingling of men, of males, of messieurs, of monarchs, princes, orphans, flowers, mothers, breasts, gravitates around a marvellous "sun of energy" love, which bombards and disintegrates these ephemeral amorous singularities so that they may recompose themselves in other bodies for new passions . . . (*Newly Born Woman*, 98)

Since it is through this feminine language that the repressed lives emerge, Vicdan can only find Nefise's real nature, "her sensitivity, hidden beneath the calloused tissue of Nefise's soul, in the superb prose Nefise will produce when translating works of English literature into Turkish" (40). It is again the written language that will translate women's enclosed soul and experience into a readable, communicable, graspable, thus real, being. The language Nefise employs as a translator serves as a catalyst to uncover what lies beneath a language that fails to communicate the other. Metaphorically, so as to be able to express her true self, she needs to translate experiences into another language. In this sense, the narrator's regenerative act of identifying with Vicdan in the mirror equals Nefise's effort to translate the texts written in a foreign language. The use of feminine language enables these women to make their suppressed lives come to the surface: the narrator raises the dead mother while Nefise makes the mute texts speak. So language and writing which are used for articulating experiences and inscribing them become metaphors for the work of self-making. As the narrator works through her search for identity and through a new understanding, the



selection of language and writing as the domain of the metaphor contributes to the fact that just like language, “female identity is a process.” As Gardiner puts it, “. . . writing by women engages us in this process as the female self seeks to define itself in the experience of creating art” (191).

So, as Cixous says, then “bodily territories which have been kept under seal” can be reached through writing and through finding a feminine language:

Write your self. Your body must be heard. To write. An act which will not only “realise the deconstructed relation of women to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal. (“Laugh of the Medusa,” Warhol and Herndl, 338)

In other words, experiences that have been contained in the body will eventually reflect themselves in the writing. In this respect, in Atasü’s novel, the conception of the body as home for the unvocalized, uncommunicated and repressed experiences creates a distinct plane of concealment. In that sense, it will be illuminating to look at the metaphors of the body as vessel which correspond to the fact that the inscriptions in the body are the seeds of the feminine language. To put it simply, the body in the novel is often represented as a container, which can escape destruction only by being transformed into a text.

Considering the fact that the narrator inherits Vicdan’s mind, just as Vicdan inherits Fitnat Hanim’s, it can be sensed that her “hungry body” repressing its desire recalls her mother’s body. Upon arriving in England, the “feverish intensity” of Vicdan’s longing for the lost homeland turns into a “heartache” to be kept within for years (47). Similarly when she lands at Dover “on a wet, grey day,” she “feels in her bones the loneliness borne in by the humid smell of the ocean” (55). Vicdan’s body does not simply harbor deeply felt loneliness but also subdues the sexual abuse experienced years ago in her uncle’s house, which makes her also repress the desire she feels for Raik even in her quite secure marriage. Sensing that it is impossible to articulate this abuse, she lets herself remember only the “elegant halls, airy and full of light with their lofty ceilings [that] linger in her memory like dark, stinking ghosts” (49). Although these are the things she can tolerate to recall of the “corrupt household,” she still asks:

Why does this graceful house make her think of gasping for breath in foul nooks and crannies, and of fumbled gropings in the dark? Was it reality or illusion? Hard to tell . . . dreadful, ill-omened and masked . . . (49)

Years later, when the narrator wants to tease her mother into talking about sexuality, Vicdan shows no intention of speaking about desire. As the narrator insists, Vicdan slowly opens up and relaxes, confessing that she used to be afraid of letting herself go “. . . as if some inner obstacle got in [her] way” (203). Trying to learn the reason why her mother felt that way, the narrator can hear only broken fragments: “After my father died . . . during the years of the occupation . . . I don’t know” (203). Hence, unable to speak the repressed, Vicdan has to bury the reasons and the feelings aroused by these reasons deep in her body. With the rigid role imposed on her, she has to silence the voice of her inner soul. As Vicdan cannot live her real self, she is bound to lock the pain inside the vessel, inside her body which becomes a tool for keeping things secret. Thus, to acquire an understanding of the suppressed feelings and to decipher the meanings, she turns to her body. To illustrate, when she sets out to find an answer to “Where is home?” through which she gains access to who she is, she looks for the traces in her very body:

Forget, Vicdan, forget, erase from your subconscious if you can, the tremors of terror and anguish your infant body picked up from your mother's flesh, on the migration routes. (57)

It is significant to note that Vicdan's body freely experiences joy for the first time on the summit of Uludağ, where she recalls the mother goddesses: Mother Cybele, Artemis, Demeter, Isis and Lat. Feeling that she is under the protection of the Mother Goddess, "a sense of security enfolds Vicdan." For a short while, however, she feels free of the patriarchal discourse and enjoys the feminine perspective in this realm of Mother Goddess: "Mother Earth, symbol of endless life and of endless death . . . Mountains, plains, plateaus and hundreds of husbands are yours!" (83). The knowledge that her brothers are proud of her and feel protected by her motherly affection gives Vicdan a sense of superiority. This air of superiority reverberates in her body: "Our bodies have dissolved into voices passing through the stones into the earth which still cradles the groans of Troy" (98). Actually the perception that all human beings inevitably merge with soil to become an indispensable part of mother earth elucidates the nature of feminine language, which operates in compliance with the prejudice-free and inclusive language of mother earth. It reminds the fact that once the reflection of the inscriptions in the body merges into the text, binaries in writing and thinking will cease to exist.

In pursuit of Vicdan's self, the narrator goes through a similar process of recognition. Upon awakening to the limitations surrounding Vicdan, she also realizes that she has developed identical personality traits to repress her real self. However, she finally sees that "pushing dishes into the oven while [her] heart never ceased to bleed" is not "fecundity" but just a means of survival in the male order (209). When she engages in questioning her mother's state of mind, the operation of the male order dissolves before her eyes. Answering her daughter, Vicdan declares "I have no regrets," which makes the narrator sense that in fact Vicdan has already inscribed the regrets in her body: "But what of the subconscious, the spinal cord, the muscles, veins, nerves and blood?" (208). In other words, she comes to the realization that the body should stop being a vessel and start pouring the experiences into writing. That the experiences crystallize when the body pours itself into the language manifests itself in the image of "the interplay of body and time" which grows clear to Vicdan (213). Thus, the narrator's recognition immediately follows Vicdan's. She articulates the fact that for Vicdan, language is something "more than a conscious skill, it [is] instinctive" (213). This understanding leads her to write "Journal for My Daughter" in the last chapter "On Another Shore" where body ceases to be a metaphor and becomes literally solidified.

With the epiphany she experiences, the narrator is led to make the long-missed contact with her surroundings. This epiphany regarding her body makes her realize that "the self is identical with the other in the collective unconscious of the eastern people who merge the Eastern soil" (259). In due course, she formulates that all she needs to do is "to keep in touch" with the flesh of this homeland "as intimately as" she does with her own (259). In a sense, starting from her own flesh, she sets out to disclose a graver truth regarding the life cycle and notes that Neruda's assertion, "the flesh of the earth is made up of people," is "not a metaphor" but the truth itself. So, she writes the journal to her daughter with such a perspective, which bears the reminiscence of Cixous' understanding of female writing:

It's with her body that she vitally supports the "logic" of her speech. Her flesh speaks true. She lays herself bare. In fact, she physically materialises what she's thinking; she signifies it with her body. In a certain way she inscribes what she's saying. . . she draws her story into history. (Laugh of the Medusa, 339)

Thus, we can suggest the narrator's conclusion: the only refuge can be "the natural universe" since female bodies, just like male bodies, ultimately melt there so as to generate new lives. She reflects her state of mind with an assertion:

No other way out exists! The flesh of earth, which finds fresh life in decaying human corpses to breed the plants which are my sisters and brothers, bears the name of 'homeland'! (258)

In other words, the narrator perceives that in the domain of mother earth, the physical being dissolves, penetrates and "mingles with the molecular chains of matter," namely with the loving, all-protecting mother earth dissolving the antagonism between male and female (258).

In conclusion, it can be suggested that in Erendiz Atasü's *The Other Side of the Mountain*, the metaphors of shawl, net, curtain, and the metaphor of the body seen as vessel enunciate the thematic dimension of the novel and elucidate the hidden meaning. There is a dynamic relationship between the metaphors and the network of meanings that evoke the boundaries effected by patriarchal discourse. Illustrating the metaphorical dimension of the text, Atasü elaborates on the narrator's attempt to uncover the hidden parts of female identity and to dissolve the social and linguistic construction of the self under the male order. In this respect, the narrator's act of unmasking the female selves corresponds to Atasü's statement in "Letter to the Reader":

My reader will know me as a feminist writer, and this book he or she is holding at the moment may come as a surprise. The feminist sensibility of this book is masked, and reveals itself only to the observant. (282)

This "masked" feminist sensibility in Atasü's novel is in fact the very source of the female Bildungsroman as a new developing genre of the woman's self-discovery. While the men's Bildungsroman works to represent a man in the making who is in search of an outward persona to aid him in the discovery of the world outside, the women's counterpart attempts to define something inward. Atasü's novel prolongs this inward-looking gaze of the female Bildungsroman through the process unmasking the sensibility of the narrator. This unmasking of feminist sensibility goes hand in hand with the submerging of the buried selves. To use Cixous's metaphor, "writing in white ink" ("Laugh of the Medusa," Warhol and Herndl, 340)—in milk sucked from the mother's breast—the narrator of the novel reaches the submerged selves, her mother's and her own, which also corresponds to Atasü's vantage point:

If, after my mother's death, I had failed to find whole piles of letters in her room which she and my father had exchanged throughout the thirties and forties, this book would never have been written. . . . The spirit of the past. The toughness of the hide concealing that spirit, which is to say the harsh outlines of everyday events, had no place in the language of these courteous and rather shy people brought up under the strict family discipline of Ottoman society. The letters unlocked a door for my own insights, intensified by the pain of loss. (Letter to the Reader, 277)

Then, allowing the narrator to gain her freedom through writing, Atasü's act of writing itself becomes a rejection of the cultural inscription of womanhood and of the cultural and linguistic constraints made solid by the metaphors.

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