“GENDER VIOLENCE IN LITERATURE: RAISING AWARENESS IN TURKEY”

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Abstract - Comic books, a literary genre that dates back to the nineteenth century (Gabilliet vii) and that has developed as a cultural phenomenon in the twentieth century, were initially written for “youngsters,” (viii) and are now mostly consumed by males; in general, few female heroes ever make it to the forefront, and even fewer female comic book writers exist. In addition to the low female presence in the genre, violence committed against those few female characters is quite alarming; as Gail Simone identified in a study conducted in the late 1990s, a high percentage of the few female comic book characters always suffer horrendous violence and deaths. In an era in which feminists strive for equal rights and gender violence elimination, the low percentage of women participation in this genre combined with the high percentage of violence female characters endure is an issue worth exploring, and this proposal will investigate whether that phenomenon is also a concern in Turkey. In order to understand how we can use comic books in literature classes to promote equal rights, I am interested in examining how female characters are portrayed (both linguistically and visually), and which roles they embody in Turkish comic books. To that purpose, I will conduct a visual rhetorical and discourse analysis of comic books written by Turkish writers. This conference paper proposal will report on results from aforementioned visual rhetorical and discourse analysis, especially in terms of female presence in Turkish comic books. This presentation will outline the most prevalent gender roles those female heroes/characters represent, and also examine symbolic representations of womanhood. Finally, this presentation will also report on discourse analysis conducted on comic books to understand how language, discourse and images are used to talk about and talk to women in order to identify whether violence (both physical and verbal) is perpetrated. Based on research results, some suggestions for utilizing comic books as resources to raise awareness in the classroom will be recommended.