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Parrhesia as Journalism: Learning from the Truth- and Justice-seeking Women Journalists of twentieth Century Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Despite ongoing endeavours to decolonize and de-westernize journalism studies, the current literature offers very few clues about the history of women's journalistic practices and struggles in Third World/Global South contexts. The objective of this article is to help to fill this gap by focusing on the lived experiences and struggles of key Turkish-speaking women journalists who worked in private and public sector media outlets in Turkey in the period 1920–1980. Drawing on these women's self-narratives and biographical accounts, as well as arguments in debates on parrhesia and emancipatory journalism in dialogue with Third World/Global South feminist epistemologies, we explore the ways in which journalism has been a site of life-time resistance and struggle for women seeking justice and truth on behalf of the oppressed. Their conceptualization of journalistic identity as truth- and justice-seekers in an unfree media environment, and their determination to speak the truth to challenge intersecting forces of domination cannot be captured in the binary of "media freedom" and "media development" paradigms. Nonetheless, their struggle to dismantle oppressive reality by way of distinctive, courageous, justice-seeking and truthful communication can be educative at a time when the relationship between journalism and truth is increasingly being undermined.

KEYWORDS

Journalism history; women; Global South; intersectionality; truth; Turkey

Introduction

Since the mid-nineteenth century, journalism in Turkey has been an area where women have fought to challenge the intersecting forms of domination from imperialism to capitalism, racism and patriarchy through their own distinct journalistic styles, discourses and practices. Women's journalistic practices and epistemologies have evolved in the region in parallel with the development of women's rights and liberation movements. Thus, their journalistic writing and authorship in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, as well as other Southern contexts, have become resources for historical surveys exploring the history of women's movements, with special attention paid to the ideas developed and debated in women's media (see Akpolat 2004; Çakır 1994; Insel and Ilyasoğlu 1984;

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Öztürkmen 1998; Saygılıgil and Berber 2020; Schick 2011). However, this writing has rarely been analysed from the perspective of journalism as practice, and from the perspective of decolonizing and de-westernizing journalism in particular, to recover the distinct journalistic epistemologies and resistant practices developed in the past by women from the Third World/Global South (for some examples see Ma 2010; Ramirez 2015; Özel 2007 and for a similar observation see Joseph 2004).[1]

Instead, decolonizing and de-westernizing journalism studies have largely concentrated on contemporary discussions and practices to push the discipline beyond the Euro-Atlantic orbit (see Moyo 2020; Pasti and Ramaprasad 2018; Hanitzcsh et al. 2019 for recent discussions). In this regard, they have admirably deconstructed the west-centric normative assumptions in journalism studies that privilege liberal democracy and freedom of the press as "the lifeline of journalism", and the related journalistic norms, identities and values that have developed within the framework of liberal political theory and experiences of capitalist-modernity (Hanitzsch and Vos 2018; Khiabany 2010; Mehra 1989; Roudakova 2017; Shah 1996; Wasserman and De Beer 2009; Zelizer 2013). In a similar vein, some critical students of de-westernizing journalism studies have pushed against the media development paradigm that conceptualizes journalism as a practice that serves national development, modernization and social progress in underdeveloped areas. The idea of development journalism was not only instrumentalized by the colonial/imperialist establishments of the west to impose western and capitalist media systems and journalistic epistemologies on the non-west, but also used by Third World states to control and manipulate their national media systems (see Shah 1996). While opposing this binary of media freedom and media development, the de-westernizing literature rarely approached the lived experiences and struggles of women in the journalistic field to conceptualize journalism and journalistic practice in alternative ways (for some exceptional works focused on the history of women journalistic practices in the Third World/Global South, see Byerly 2013; De Bruin and Ross 2004; Made and Morna 2010; Sarikakis and Shade 2008).

Our article seeks to contribute to fill this gap by focusing specifically on the stories of key women who worked in the private sector print media and public radio broadcasting in the period 1920–1980, by using published (auto)biographies and journalistic works by women, as well as oral history interviews, to investigate: (a) how women defined their journalistic practice; (b) how to understand women's truthful communication in relation to power in an unfree media environment; (c) and how women maintained their persistence and passion for truthful communication in the face of various forms of oppression and exploitation. Our historical inquiry focuses on the period from the early years of the Turkish Republic to the transition of the country's political economy to neoliberal capitalism, which led to a total restructuration of the journalistic mediascape, as well as of journalistic practices, norms and identities. In other words, our historical inquiry will reveal the forms of truthful journalistic norms, values and identities that were embodied, developed and maintained by women in a period when journalistic forces were not fully subjected to commodification processes, but developed in relation to the multi-layered and diverse dynamics of Turkish modernity, as well as the instrumental power of the state over the media and the parameters of political and cultural modernization (Çelik forthcoming). We will explore the ways in which women developed their own distinct justice and truth-seeking journalism in connection with but also to critique modernizing

power by putting concepts such as *parrhesia* (a literary and philosophical concept whose historicity goes back to ancient Greek philosophy, on the one hand, and Islamic dervish literature, on the other) and emancipatory journalism (Hermant Shah 1996) in dialogue with the Third World/Global South feminist epistemologies.[2]

Following a discussion on the key tenets of the Third World/Global South feminist epistemologies, we debate parrhesia as journalistic practice, and emancipatory journalism in dialogue with decolonial and intersectional feminist thought. This is followed by a discussion on the resources for our historical inquiry and an overview of the structure of Turkey's public communications where women articulated their courageous communicative stance. A discussion on parrhesia in practice seeks answers to the three questions outlined above.

Third World/Global South Feminisms

Third World/Global South feminisms and theories consist of diverse histories and genealogies emerging from multiple locations. While these theories such as postcolonial, decolonial or Black/Third World intersectionalist theories have their own contesting trajectories and frequently discussed in relation to their differences, they epistemologically carry some commonalities in their context-based understanding, focus on collective and individual experiences of oppression, and plural visions of struggle and transformation within a complex and heterogenous understanding of the power structures (Asher and Ramamurthy 2020; Ruiz 2021). In this paper, we locate ourselves within these epistemological commonalities –that is to say, the call to recover the non-western(ized), racialized and black women's buried, hidden and masked pasts not merely with a focus on how the non-white women were oppressed but also resisted and accumulated the knowledge of lived experience that can inform us to challenge the hegemonic knowledge systems. Decolonial feminist Maria Lugones writes, what needs to be recovered from the past is not only the ways in which women of colour were oppressed, but also "the historicity of the oppressing resisting relation" and therefore the concrete, lived resistances to the forms of domination (2010, 748).

This form of inquiry is fundamentally different from what is variously called "civilizational", "white" or "western" feminism, which as Françoise Vergès (2020, 66) writes discounts "the participation and contribution of Global South women" in global histories of resistance, and also ignores the insurgent and intellectual capacity of women in the South to analyse and counteract the mechanisms and ideology of domination and exploitation. In the context of journalism studies, this stance would require us, as Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2004) reminded us, to actively challenge the representations of non-western women journalists as "the victim of male control" or "sexually oppressed" figures of patriarchy, tradition and religiosity who could be emancipated through the adoption of western capitalism, democracy and modernity. It would also require us to acknowledge and learn from the individual and collective lived experiences, wisdom and struggles of non-western(ized) women in journalism as well as their claims to liberatory truth and knowledge (see Jamil 2020; Salem 2017). In the light of these perspectives, we approach the history of women's journalism to "oxygenate" their forgotten struggles and experiences in order to "cultivate liberating knowledge" for present-day imaginings and politics (Shilliam 2019, 53).

Journalism as Parrhesia, or Speaking the Truth Against the Reality of the Oppressor

In her inspirational work on the transformation of political and public culture in Russia after the fall of Soviet Union, Natalia Roudakova (2017) employs the concept of *parrhesia* –courageous and frank public speech at the risk of angering the powerful—to reflect on the crisis of journalism as an institution of truth-seeking and truth-telling in the country. Roudakova shows the ways in which Soviet-era journalists performed parrhesiastic public communication through their truth-seeking journalism in a context where information control was routinized, press freedom was non-existent and journalistic independence from political organizations, in the way freedom and independence were conceptualized in liberal political/journalism theory, was impossible. The concept of parrhesia helped her perceive journalism as truth seeking and telling not as a by-product of media freedom (from the state) or capitalist developmentalism, but as an institution of public life in different political systems. Her conception of parrhesia draws on arguments from Foucault's lecture (Foucault 2001) on the genealogy of the concept in ancient Greek philosophy and literature.

Foucault emphasizes several distinct characteristics of parrhesia—but first and foremost that it is speech that reveals the truth. He writes: "the parrhesiastes says what is true" because they know "that it is true"; and they know that "it is true because it is really true" (2001, 14). This is a political act because it is publicly delivered by parrhesiastes who take the risk of angering the powerful or the majority. Thus, parrhesia is truthful criticism from a position of less power. By using parrhesia, the parrhesiastes risk whatever level of comfort in which they live and may even be risking their lives. Those who wield power, such as monarchs, rarely use parrhesia as there is rarely any risk involved in their public speech. It is an ethical act because parrhesiastes choose to speak the truth out of moral duty and a sense of responsibility. Those who are forced to speak the truth, such as under torture, are not parrhesiastes.

Although in many ways a useful way of considering truthful public communication, Foucault's genealogy of the concept has its own shortcomings. First, his genealogical study on parrhesia is designed to suggest that it is a critical tradition of western thought and practice whose historicity dates back to ancient Greece. In doing so, he dismisses the historicity of parrhesia in other traditions, such as the fifteenth century Islamic dervish literature in which dervishes are represented essentially as truth- and justice-seekers and tellers against various forms of oppression (see Akyol 2015). Importantly, the dervish is someone who has no attachment to the material and finite world, and thus has nothing to lose by telling the truth to the Sultan on behalf of the people—the poor, the peasantry and those who are suffering. Reciprocally, the Sultan or the rulers must listen to the dervishes to fulfil the necessities of social/religious justice in their country (see also Darling 2012). Second, as is the case in his other texts, Foucault provides no clear distinction between power and domination, and nor does he identify a principle of domination when discussing the relationship between courageous truthful speech, power and domination.

Third World/Global South feminist knowledge could provide a better vision for considering parrhesia in the context of women's truthful communication, power and domination. Articulating a resistant voice, as Maria Lugones (2006) reminds us in her work on

complex communication, should not be understood narrowly as standing outside of or away from power. It can instead be materialized by employing forms of power, such as communicative power or spaces of mediation, to stand against the intersecting and interlocking categories of domination and oppression, while also considering the relationship between power and domination. Theorists of intersectionality, which should be seen as a radical politics for social justice that arose from within the black women's and Third World women's liberation movement, emphasize the interconnections between different domains of power (such as structural, cultural, disciplinary and interpersonal) that underpin the social inequalities of race, gender, class, sexuality and nation (Hill Collins and Bilge 2020). As Vrushali Patil (2013) has pointed out, the race-class-gender axis has different meanings depending on spatio-temporal context, and as Sara Salem (2017) rightly identifies, the oppressive domains of power in the historicity of the Third World included imperialism, capitalism and racism alongside patriarchy. Thus, resistant positions are shaped by knowing, telling and acting against the interlocking systems of domination that are rooted in materiality, as well as the spheres of culture and interpersonal relationships.

Seen in the light of these perspectives, speaking truth to power through journalistic work could well be understood as claiming and employing the communicative power to confront and combat intertwined oppressions. The parrhesiastes women would therefore be courageous not only to speak out, but also to listen to others suffering oppression in order to build a communicative coalition or, as Lugones writes, "a loving connection toward liberation"(2006, 79).

Emancipatory Journalism, or Radical Communication for Social Justice

In an endeavour to transcend the simplistic dichotomy of media freedom or development paradigms in journalism studies, Herman Shah (1996) proposed an alternative model of "emancipatory journalism" for Third World journalistic practice. While critiquing the colonial and capitalist modes of modernity and modernization, this model proposed retaining the promises of emancipation, or what Shah called the "humanitarian visions of modernity", to place journalism in the context of struggles for an egalitarian, just society that brings an end to forms of oppression. His concept emphasizes the emancipatory role of communication, and the role of journalists as activists who play a role in claims for social change against oppression, domination and exploitation from patriarchy to capitalism, imperialism and authoritarian modernizing state power. In this way, journalists do not just provide the public with socially relevant information; they also inform the public to help "challenge and change the oppressive structures" (1996, 145). This form of journalism has little to do with the values and norms of west-centric normative journalism theories of objectivity, bi-partiality or seeking balance in news when reporting on a contested issue. Instead, it advocates siding with the oppressed, and bottom-up reporting that publicizes the needs and demands of oppressed communities by making them the resource and the voice of the reporting.

From the perspective of women journalists, emancipatory journalism can inform the justice and truth-seeking production of knowledge within a strictly defined politics or political news. It can also inform the production of critical knowledge about everyday life, which is a crucial site for producing against-the-grain knowledge and meaning.

Emphasizing the role of community within the production of everyday life, Lugones writes that one lives the life along with others and one is constituted through "the passing from mouth to mouth, from hand to hand of lived practices, values, beliefs, ontologies, space-times, and cosmologies". The production of the everyday as it contributes to the formation of a person within and in relation to a community also requires "affirmation of life over profit, communalism over individualism, beings in relation rather than dichotomously split over and over in hierarchically and violently ordered fragments" (2010, 754). When this understanding of the everyday and community is considered from the perspective of emancipatory journalism, it can help us to reflect on the ways in which everyday life could become integrated into the form and content of the truth- and justice-seeking journalistic work of women in their coalitional liberatory projects.

Methodology

Third World/Global South feminist epistemologies underline the significance of (auto)biographical and memory research to challenge the hegemonic forms of knowledge production that effaces or marginalizes the experiences and struggles of Third World women (Mohanty 2004; Costell, Lury, and Summerfield 2020; Salem 2017; Ruiz 2021). The (auto)biographical and memory work allow us to locate the standpoint and voices of women at the centre of historical inquiry. In so doing, these frameworks not only allow for new ways of interpreting and underlining the subjectivities of women, but also open up critical sites for consideration of women's lived experiences and struggles to challenge the structural, institutional, political and cultural pressures on their truth and justice seeking journalism using their communication power in the institutions of journalism. Recontextualization of the past within the lived experiences of women carries the possibility of reimagination and reconceptualization. In this regard, oral histories and biographical works offer a promising way, in Walter Benjamin's famous phrase, to brush history against the grain.

We will focus on eight women's stories by benefiting from their own writings and telling who witnessed different periods of Turkish and regional history from the 1920s to the late 1970s. This period begins with the foundation of the Turkish Republic as a modern, secular nation state in 1923 to the late 1970s, just before the application of neoliberal policies to the media environment as an extension of the wider structural and political changes that took place in the country. During this period, the state and its—changing and sometimes contradictory—political and cultural modernization policies, rather than the market and market imperatives, played a crucial role in the media and of organs in the journalistic field. Much as the state and the classes that organized themselves within and as the state were influential, the geopolitics of the region, from western imperialism in the 1920s to the rise of fascism and racism in Europe or the strategic alliance between Turkey and the United States during the Cold War, affected the components of justice- and truth-seeking and truth telling journalistic practice. Until the introduction of a multiparty system in 1945, the country had been run by a one-party regime. Electoral democracy was interrupted by military interventions from the left in 1960 and from the right in 1970, and again in 1980, the latter followed by a neoliberal globalization process.

The eight women journalists that we include in this study should not be necessarily considered as *the* most important parrhesiastes in the history of Turkey. Nevertheless, they were undoubtedly important figures in the Turkish-speaking journalistic field; and as important figures in journalism as an institution of justice- and truth-seeking and telling, their stories are inspirational for our current imaginations and reconceptualization of journalism. Although they lived in different periods of Turkey's modern history, they were all influenced by the radical political thought of their time and placed their journalistic work in a political space, regardless of whether they were part of a political movement or a party.

Whether they defined themselves as feminist or not, they were all in favour of women's liberation and their standpoint was directly or indirectly informed by the Third World women's movement, which conceptualized gender in relation to both geopolitics and the domestic conditions of structural inequalities. Marxism, socialism and anti-imperialist nationalism were crucial aspects of the public intellectual domain in the Middle East until the late 1970s and affected the ways in which these women considered structural inequalities in their society. Thus, their conception of oppression was rooted in materiality. They all came from urban backgrounds and had received significant levels of schooling—and hence could be considered members of the elite classes of the country. Nonetheless, they were particularly interested in the issues surrounding rural working class and peasant life.

Two prominent journalists, Sabiha Sertel (1895-1968) and Suat Derviş (1903-1972), practiced their parrhesiastic communications in the foundational years of Turkish modernity, governance and political systems. Although they shared the belief in the basic rightness of the republican project as a project of national sovereignty and independence, Sabiha Sertel and Suat Derviş were politically radical and expressed their political views from a strong socialist and feminist standpoint. They were also actively involved in various political parties at various points in their careers. Both reported and worked for privately owned print media from newspapers to the literary, women's and political magazines of the early 1910s to the 1940s (for Sertel) and up to the late 1960s (for Derviş). We follow their stories from their autobiographical accounts, such as Sertel's published autobiographical work (2019a) and the interviews published with Derviş and her published letters (Derviş 2018), as well as biographical studies of both journalists. Their journalistic works published in various outlets, such as *Tan, Cumhuriyet,* and *Resimli Ay* are also included in our analysis.

If the stories of Sabiha Sertel and Suat Derviş open a window to an understanding of journalistic struggles in relation to family/privately owned print outlets up until the 1960s, the personal memories of radio broadcasters of the 1960s and 1970s allow us to trace the continuities in struggles in the aural space of radio and the institutional structure of Turkish radio. Our intention is not to present a comparative view of the medium of journalism or among the subject positions of women in different time periods, but rather to underline the historical continuity of journalism constituting a space for women to speak truth and claim justice. Radio broadcasting in Turkey began in 1927. It continued to operate under state control until the establishment of Turkish radio and Television (TRT) as an autonomous institution in 1964, under the 1961 Constitution which brought a significant increase in liberties in public communication and in the reorganization of the public space. The increasing number of women working for the TRT meant

that radio formed a new space for women to expand their sphere of influence and enact their roles as knowledge producers.

For this study, we also trace the work of six radio broadcasters through oral history interviews conducted with Özden Cankaya, Tuğba Ayberkin, Melek Dener, Günseli Akol and Nursel Duruel between 2017 and 2020, and the personal archives of Filiz Ercan and Günseli Akol. All six women worked for TRT and witnessed political and institutional turmoil, including the military interventions of 1971 and 1980. Ayberkin and Dener, who began working at TRT in 1965, and Cankaya in 1970 were all unlawfully dismissed from their positions in 1981, among 101 radio and television broadcasters known as the 101s, due to their oppositional voices and programming strategies. Akol, Duruel and Ercan, who began work at TRTin 1965, 1964 and 1966 respectively, were among the prominent radio broadcasters who initiated, produced, wrote and/or hosted popular women's, youth and village programmes. They also left TRT in the 1980s.

Parrhesia and Emancipatory Journalism in Practice

The Journalist as Truth- and Justice-seeker

The various narratives of the women who practiced journalism in the press and in radio broadcasting in the period investigated show that they considered their public communication work to be more than a profession through which they earned a living and created or maintained their material comforts and economic independence. It was their profession and their career, as well as the job that brought bread and butter to their homes. Although the job was always precarious, it was also a life-time endeavour deeply attached to how they claimed their subjectivity and built relationships with others. At its core, it was their intention to seek the truth, and to seek justice for others who were oppressed, marginalized or forgotten. It is through caring for others through their communicative activity that they cared for themselves, their subjecthood and their identity. Coalition with others (both oppressed and resistant) was constitutive of their own selves.

In her autobiography, Sabiha Sertel recounts her experience of her parents' divorce as a transformative event that eventually took her to the avenues of journalistic public communication. According to sharia rules, which were in place before the adoption of secular marriage and civil law in the early republican period, a married man could divorce his wife for alleged wrongdoing after three oral warnings with no continuing material, legal or moral responsibility. Sabiha's mother was one of those women whose husband divorced her, leaving her with no money or shelter and six children. She writes: "seeing a mother of six beaten up and thrown out of her home left me with a deep hatred for all forms of coercion and oppression. I found myself rebelling against every injustice I witnessed" (2019: 10). Her first public journalistic appearance in print concerned the civil and legal rights of women in Muslim societies (see Sertel 2019b for her early writings; and Shissler 2008; Shissler 2007 for analysis of her early writings on women's issues). Many more articles in defence of the oppressed followed and these became the essence of her way of "mak[ing] something of myself, earn[ing] my own living" (ibid.).

In her letters, Suat Derviş identifies the emancipatory and transformative effect of the justice and truth-seeking journalism on herself, her subjectivity and her vision of the world. Derviş was one of the first practitioners of "sokak gazeteciliği", or street journalism, a format that addresses social and political issues through random interviews with people on the street (Saygılıgil 2014). Derviş reflects on this experience as practice where "I came to know my people and my country … I saw that misery and wealth were not so distant from each other but were in the same neighbourhood" (Necatigil 1977, 604). Derviş was a truth- and justice-seeking journalist but also a prolific writer whose literary writing was informed by critical realism and advocated for social justice. She defined her journalistic experience and identity as constitutional of her literary work and her emotional relation with what she wrote: "I began writing my literary works through the lens of realism after I became a journalist. Only then did I love what I wrote" (Ibid.).

For the radio journalists of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the meaning of journalism and their identities as journalists were defined in relation to the meaning of radio for the public and the responsibility and dedication they felt in their work. As noted above, the restructuring of radio broadcasting in 1964, which made the TRT an autonomous institution, was intended to transform state radio into a public service broadcasting platform to enlighten, educate and inform the public. The mission of the TRT until the military intervention in 1970 was conceptualized by the left-leaning bureaucracy of the time as fostering social change. In line with the critical changes in the political structures of the country that followed the 1970 military intervention, the autonomy of TRT was ended in 1972, and the programming strategies and organizational structure gradually changed alongside more authoritarian approaches to management and strict surveillance policies. The previous conceptualization of public service broadcasting was criticized for promoting leftist and communist ideologies and for "not being Turkish enough" (Cankaya 2015). During this period, some broadcasters were also arrested and put on trial for being communists.

The women broadcasters we follow in this article conceptualized their work as public broadcasters in the sense of working as a public servant for social justice for all, especially those faced with intertwined forms of oppression. This was not only the case in the 1960s when broadcasters were relatively freer but also in the 1970s under strict governmental and military pressure on the public communicators. Özden Cankaya who began her career at TRT in 1970 explains the meaning of public broadcasting for her:

> Our work was to underline the social problems … . As public service broadcasters, our crucial role was to inform the public, voice their problems, and enlighten people with the knowledge of the truth within the boundaries of constitutional rules … . For us the work was to be able to connect with the public and work for their good.

Being a public broadcaster also meant that one has the courage to respect, care, wonder and love for the people that public communication is supposed to serve. This was especially crucial against the governmental/militarist as well as the capitalist logic that divides and hierarchises the social fabric in terms of the good/docile citizens/consumers and others. Tuğba Ayberkin, who produced several different radio programme genres, including news documentaries, youth and village-based programmes throughout the 1960s and 1970s, explains her conception of journalistic work at radio:

> … first of all you need to believe in the equality of all people. Equality between rural and urban dwellers, women and men. As it is in the saying, you cannot look down on any human being. You need to approach people with love. You need to do your best to understand each person in their own conditions. You cannot impose anything on others [listeners]. You cannot put any form of pressure on the people [audience]. You must understand what kind of life they live and how they make sense of the world—the familiar and unfamiliar ones. This is what a radio broadcaster is all about. Radio broadcasting is not a totality of this song, that tune and some news. A radio programme [with journalistic content] is deliberation on an issue, discussion of an issue, a wide debate on an issue. Even those who are experts on the issue must learn new perspectives from a radio programme. That is real radio.

Thus, journalism for these women was not the mere transmission of information about newsworthy and timely issues. It was rather truth- and justice-seeking activity on behalf of their readers/audience, and of those who were subjected to wrongdoing, with respect, love and wonder for them. Like the transformative and emancipatory potentials of such work, there was also emancipatory and transformative power in the work for their own selves, their subjectivity and their standing in the world.

The Practices of Telling the Truth

> We had our microphones as ideal tools for broadcasting the voices of those who were excluded or forgotten. Yes, there were regulations, but we always found ways to say what we wanted to say.

The above quote is from Tuğba Ayberkin, but the practice and the norm of journalism as finding a way to speak the truth in public on behalf of the marginalized despite the obstacles was not specific to her or her experience. All the women of parrhesia negotiated the limitations on, techniques for and discourses, modes and styles of public communication of newsworthy content to be able to say what they had to say. This was not just because they had to develop strategies and practices of truthful speech/communication while up against the regulations, rules and censorship that apply to all practitioners of public communication. They also, as women, had to take a courageous and creative stance on the forms of gendered and gender-specific power, and their exercise, as well as the precarity designed to subdue their public voice. Much like the forms of coercive power applied to their communicative practices, the forms and practices they developed against information control were informed by their public personas and subjectivity, the media outlet they worked for, and the social and geopolitical conditions in which they produced their parrhesiastic communications.

While Sabiha Sertel wrote for other publications, most of her years in journalistic communication were spent in outlets owned or co-owned by her husband. However, her husband's journalistic business was never a guarantee that she would keep her job. Nor did it mean that she was protected from gendered or governmental power that aimed to delimit women's truth-seeking communications. Four times in her career, she lost her job while her husband kept his businesses. In two of these instances, her husband's business partners imposed as a condition of their investment that Sabiha Sertel would not write or report for the outlet. At other times, she was banned from writing by the government for her critical commentary on the country's foreign policy. Her writings were also censored or the publications she produced confiscated by the government. On one occasion, during the one-party period, the journal she launched was confiscated

after an article she criticized women parliamentarians as members of the bourgeoisie class for not doing enough about women's deteriorating working conditions. In a conversation with a government official about why she was subjected to continuous pressure from the government, she was told that her writing was especially harmful because she not only provoked marginalized people such as female workers, but also questioned the government if they did their duty; this was the kind of journalism "people noticed", she was told (2019a, 117). In her writing in daily newspapers, Sertel used polemical op-eds, which had been one of the most popular journalistic styles in the country since the nineteenth century, alongside several other journalistic genres and methods for speaking truth to power.

In the 1930s, Sabiha Sertel and Nazım Hikmet, a prolific poet and a communist activist, were responsible for responding to the readers' letters sent to the popular left-leaning mainstream periodical *Resimli Ay*. Both also contributed their own writing, investigations and ideas for special issues, such as those focused on the strikes of the 1930s. At a time when the one-party state was beginning to develop policies on the development of rural areas, they published a letter sent from a village teacher who wrote at great length about the lack of medical care and public sanitation in villages despite the fact that villagers were suffering from a number of contagious illnesses. It was a truth that the government did not want publicly known, and the letter writer, Sabiha and the managing editor of the periodical were put on trial accused of crimes such as fabricating news and undermining Turkishness and the Turkish state. This event was a first, as a woman journalist was being tried in court for her journalistic activities. However, the practice of speaking truth to the forms of domination by providing space for the listener/ reader who is being subjected to injustice continued to be one of the prominent methods of women's parrhesiastic activity in print and on the radio.

As a pioneer of "street journalism", Suat Derviş took journalistic inquiry and pushed it towards semi-anthropological studies of ordinary, everyday life as it was lived and experienced by the poor, the unemployed, workers and women. For her projects, she selected individuals to spend hours or days with, walking or wandering around the city with them as she talked with them about their lives, their wishes and their struggles. While many (male) journalists were conducting desk-bound journalism and journalistic identity was largely built on the skills and capacity to interpret existing and recycled news content, she went to the people and to the streets to cultivate knowledge about the everyday and daily struggles. In her interview series with working women, she showed the diversity of realities for women who aspired and were motivated to work. In contrasting the stories of university educated women who wanted to work in order to have an independent and free life outside marriage with a woman working in a factory to survive and a typist dreaming of a good marriage to escape from the troubles of working life under male bosses, she was not only challenging the homogenous conceptualization of women, but also revealing the diversity of the relationship between women and work (*Tan* 1937; see also Özel 1996). In another piece, she followed the story of an unemployed man who walked from one place to another all day, asking for work. She finished this story by highlighting the impact of the lack of governmental institutions for assisting the unemployed to find jobs (*Cumhuriyet*, 1936). Like Sabiha Sertel, Derviş was also closely watched by the government. Her journalistic style, let alone her political views, were considered increasingly dangerous in parallel with the rise of racist and fascist

politics in the country in the years leading up to the Second World War. Derviş never had a secure permanent job with a print outlet, just like the workers she wrote her stories about. She either worked freelance or was given temporary contracts, including with the outlets owned or co-owned by Sertel's husband (Derviş 2018).

Working in relatively more secure conditions but under more regulatory control, women in radio also managed to use their audible space to create a participatory realm for marginalized and forgotten populations to articulate and raise their voices. This was even the case in the context of increasing regulatory control and censorship mechanisms at TRT following the military intervention by the right wing of the military. Radio managers in this period increased the airtime for magazine and cultural programmes in the assumption that they would have less political content. Özden Cankaya remembers that she and her colleagues used this space for cultural content to address the interlocking forms of inequality in programmes on women's poverty, child labour, the housing problems of internal migrants from rural areas, and the deteriorating state of care homes, roads and transportation links, particularly in the eastern part of Turkey where mainly the lives of Kurdish ethic communities were subjected to constant pressure. Their work was criticized by the management as a "poor-mounting" narrative, and they were blacklisted as "cracked voices" of the radio.

Tuğba Ayberkin recounts how she used her programmes to open up space for those who faced multiple intertwined oppressions such as age, class and ethnicity/religion: "I spoke with working children. I saw how big their dreams were. My job was to convey their dreams through my microphone set against the conditions they were living in". Similarly, in a news forum called *Gençlikle Gelen,* or *That Which Comes with Youth*, where university students from different disciplines, universities and cities came together to talk about "serious issues" from their own perspectives, she managed to address political violence against the Alevi religious minority in Maras by Sunni Muslims in 1978. It was ground-breaking to be able to debate the massacre of Alevis on the radio.

In addition to creating a participatory environment for their listeners and democratizing public service radio broadcasting by including their listeners' views and voices in the content-making process, women challenged the mode, discourse and style of radio speech. Broadcasters were expected to appropriate the style of what was known as "quality radio" at the time, a format that took a cold, rational and educative approach to its listeners. Tuğba Ayberkin, who produced village programmes, challenged this:

> Continual contact with listeners was crucial for broadcasting. I believed that being didactic was not the right way to produce the knowledge about people that I was trying to communicate. I opposed the template for programming, which I thought did not give me any space to reflect on the realities of the people as the subject of the programmes. I went to remote places, spent time in the field, and experienced that the radio was always next to the farmer working in the field. They were listening to me while they were working. I loved producing "village" programmes.

Such statements could well be read as a vision of the ethics of the coalition-in-the-making in terms of being in relation to a journalist and her listeners. Knowing, understanding and listening to the listeners is one of the crucial components of this coalitional relationship. Melek Dener, who also made village programmes for much of her career at TRT, also

highlighted the dialogue that develops from within the process of speaking and listening between the broadcaster and her listeners:

> During the period I produced village news, I realized how closely the villagers were following the programmes. During our visits to their villages, they would speak with us and comment on the news stories they had heard during our programmes. They trusted the information we provided.

In a programme called *Nasıl Değişti?, or How Did It Change?*, Nursel Duruel conducted a series of interviews with elderly people in the country to address what she defined as "the sociological transformations" that the country's people had seen in the recent past. One of the topics she visited and revisited in her programmes through interviews with the most marginalized people in the country, such as the poor, the elderly, children and women, was the migration that Turkey experienced throughout the 1960s and 1970s. While many migrated from rural areas to European countries in the hope of finding better economic conditions for themselves and their children, many others found homes in the shantytowns of the big cities of industrializing Turkey. In similar ways, *Kadın Dünyası*, or *Woman's World*, co-produced by Filiz Ercan and Günseli Akol, created a lively dialogic format not only among themselves, but also with listeners through letters and home visits, and became a forum for women to speak up for themselves rather than listen to others talking about their rights, problems and grievances. Akol recounts how their programme contributed to the problematization of power relations between mothers and daughters by highlighting the forms of oppression that could come through the domain of interpersonal/family relationships. She noted that: "the relationship between mothers and daughters was never seen as a problematic area before. We were keen to reveal these hidden areas of problems. That was the main mission of our programme". The inspiration for such topics was always found in the letters that they received from their listeners.

Like Sertel and Derviş, parrhesiastes women on the radio were also closely monitored by the institutional bureaucracy, and warned about and censured for the issues they covered, for their aesthetic style and for their tactics and strategies. They were not given allowances for their journalistic travel, quality control checks were conducted by conservative male administrators in the institution, and they were often verbally, emotionally or psychologically intimidated by their male managers. Many women joined the union formed at TRT in the late 1970s to protect the professional rights of broadcasters, and to maintain the continuity of public service and quality programming. However, as noted above, the three broadcasters that we cite here were dismissed from their positions in the early 1980s following a more brutal military intervention from the right than the one in 1970. In other words, all the women parrhesiastes suffered from military, governmental, institutional and patriarchal forms of domination and oppression due to their truth- and justice-seeking behaviour and communicative acts.

Persistence and Will, or the Transmediality of Truth- and Justice-Seeking Communication

When women were unable to write or communicate through their usual platforms because the pressures were too great, they found new avenues for public communication,

new platforms for truth- and justice-seeking and new strategies for communicating with the public. This meant moving across media, genres, languages and discursive modes.

When Sabiha Sertel lost jobs working in periodicals due to investor pressure or government bans, she quickly moved into other realms of writing, communicating and reaching out to the public. She recounts these moves and shifts in her career as traumatic events, but also as incidents that gave her some form of independence and freedom from the daily struggles and pressures of journalistic work. The first time she lost her job, she worked on translating Marxist and feminist literature into Turkish, such as Kautsky's *Class Struggle*, Adoratsky's *Dialectical Materialism* and *The 1936 Soviet Constitution*, Lenin's *War and Socialism* and August Bebel's *Woman and Socialism*. She was interested not in the money she could generate from these translations, which clearly had a market in 1930s Turkey, but in "disseminating the ideas" that were developed by these authors and in these texts. Bebel's work was especially important to her, as she wrote in 1935 that it had "captured my mind, like a ball, and thrown it into a new and unknown stage of consciousness" that made her reconceptualize her feminist stance in relation to the socialist understandings of oppression and the exploitation of women's labour (quoted in Libal 2012; see also Akanyıldız-Gölbaşı 2016 for an analysis of Sertel as a translator).

Changing the media of communication was one strategy that allowed women to persist in their truthful public communication but producing work under different names was another strategy for women to continue to tell the truth in public while maintaining their incomes and jobs under gendered conditions of precarity. Suat Derviş's personal story is highly illustrative in this respect. In one of the biographical studies on Derviş, Fatmagül Berktay (2006) highlights how Derviş was excluded from intellectual circles in general (including the male dominated communist/socialist intellectual circles) and literature in particular during her lifetime and from the history of journalism and literature after her death. This exclusion began in the 1930s, within the context where the fascist and racist ideas came to be predominant in Turkish speaking journalistic field, when her writings were rejected by literary publishers and mainstream newspapers as too dangerous for the country's foreign policy as well as domestic politics. The Sertels' outlets, including *Tan*, had been crucial for getting her work published as journalism and for the publication of her literary works in series form in the daily. At this time, she also began to publish under pseudonyms to enable her to publish work more frequently and in the wider avenues of the print mediascape. Following her arrest in 1944, Derviş was unofficially blacklisted by journalistic and literary publishers for the next 20 years. Nonetheless, she wrote for almost all of these journals and newspapers under pseudonyms until the early 1960s (Paker and Toksa 1997; Derviş 2018).

Like Sabiha Sertel, the parrhesiastes women on the radio turned to their individual writing when they could find no way to tell the truth without any constraints at times of tightened broadcasting regulation, repression and censorship. Many broadcasters wrote novels, short stories, poetry, plays, newspaper commentaries and academic articles to expand their spaces for expression. Filiz Ercan, the co-producer of *Kadın Dünyası*, started writing a column entitled *Kadın* (Women) under the pseudonym of Işık Baraklı in *Cumhuriyet*, a left-leaning mainstream newspaper of the time, under the same political constraints that were reflected in the broadcasting environment of the second half of the 1970s. In her column, she discussed women's issues such as sex education, kin marriage,

the fear of marriage and namus (honour) as regulatory tools on women's sexuality. The column lasted for a little more than a year before she stopped writing it due to the editorial censorship of one of her columns. Inspired by the stories of a girl she met during a home visit for a programme on the impact of migration to Germany, Nursel Duruel wrote a novel, *Geyikler, Annem ve Almanya, or Deers, My Mother and Germany*.

While all women were subjected to forms of repression due to their courageous stance in public communication, Sertel's story might have the most tragic ending. In 1945, the Sertels' printing house and offices were physically attacked by a mob of fascist students, following a lynching campaign by right wing newspapers and the government. During this period, Sabiha Sertel's writings had been directed against the rise of racism and fascism in Turkey, and a foreign policy that was moving towards strategic alignment with the USA against socialist ideology. Sabiha Sertel, her writings and her public persona were the central target of this vicious campaign, which passed into history as the first lynching incident in Turkey's journalistic history and resulted in the Sertels being exiled from both their country and journalism.

Conclusion

At a time when journalism as truth- and justice-seeking activity has become increasingly rare within and beyond Turkey, the past struggles of courageous women to produce knowledge on truth and justice on behalf of marginalized and oppressed communities by appropriating journalistic space, tools and power can be inspirational, informative and educative. Their struggles can also inform our search for different journalistic epistemologies and practices where truth was spoken to power not in conditions of liberal democracy, a free press and journalistic independence, and not by white men, but by women of the Global South under the conditions of non-liberal and non-western modernities.

Our research, which made use of published autobiographies, biographies and journalistic works by key women journalists as well as oral history interviews, shows that women parrhesiastes did consider their job as that of a justice- and truth-seeker beyond the realms of the profession. They approached the work as an emancipatory practice for others and themselves. By focusing on the forms of oppression and coercion that come from patriarchy, the state, the bureaucracy and political and economic hegemons, and siding with the oppressed and silenced populations, they used their communicative power to facilitate transformation. Rather than merely using their communicative space to speak on behalf of the oppressed and marginalized communities, they reorganized their communicative space to build a coalition with those individuals and communities to voice their own grievances and problems, and critiques and arguments. They therefore made room in the media outlets where they worked for public forums, readers' letters and street interviews to reorganize the journalistic space as more participatory and more inclusive of the audience/readers. The women of parrhesia did not necessarily come from the economically, culturally and socially marginalized communities of their society —they were urban and educated, and had middle or upper-middle class family backgrounds. Nonetheless, they were eager to move beyond their privileges and they did so relentlessly, risking their privileged status in social relations, their jobs and incomes, and even their lives and freedom by speaking truth to power.

Regardless of the oppression, censorship and limitations, women developed intervention strategies to raise their voice and maintain their oppositional positions at the expense of losing their jobs, being marked as lawless, punished or imprisoned. Moving across genres from factual to fiction, from op-eds to reporting and translation, and between media platforms from radio to newspapers to magazines and books, they searched for new ways and vehicles to publicly speak their truth to intersecting forms of domination.

Our study is limited to Turkish-speaking women parrhesiastes from the 1920s to 1980, so it reveals little about the fearless and truthful public communication conducted by women journalists of non-Turkish speaking communities in Turkey or before 1920s and since 1980. A study on Greek and Armenian women's journalistic practices during the transition period from the 19th to the twentieth century Ottoman Empire might find crucial insights about how women formed their own journalistic practices, epistemologies and values from the framework of parrhesia and emancipatory journalism (see Ekmekcioğlu and Bilal 2006; Kanner 2016). Similarly, the "free press" tradition of Kurdish communities in the Middle East, including Turkey, that was launched, managed and practiced especially by Kurdish women journalists (see Karagöz 2020), but also by men, could inform decolonizing journalism studies and decolonial communication studies in novel ways.

Historical perspectives on women's journalism in the broader historicity of the region could thus provide novel perspectives for the reconceptualization of journalism as a gendered practice, and as an area of gendered struggles. The lack of archives and the silenced media histories of women are significant concerns—especially when it comes to women's media histories. As oral histories and memories constitute significant methodologies for recent history, we should continue to find other creative ways of revealing the silences in these media histories to open up new perspectives on women's pasts and expand the scope of gendered media histories.

Notes

1. The term Third World was used to define what is now known as Global South for much of the second half of the 20th century. On the historical contextualization of these two term, see Dados and Connell (2012)
2. Our study has been supported and funded by two organizations/research projects: Burçe Çelik and Kampüssüzler, "Women's Memory and Media in Turkey" funded by the European Endowment for Democracy; Nazan Haydari and Ozden Cankaya, "Women Radio Broadcasters in the 1970s" funded by Istanbul Bilgi University. The oral history interviews with TRT radio broadcasters were conducted within the scope of the latter. We would like to thank Tan Morgül and Nur Deriş for helping our research by sharing their knowledge and comments on Sertel and Derviş's careers and lives.

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