

# THE GENDERED GRAMMAR OF OCCIDENTALISM: MODES OF ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN TURKEY

SPEAKER

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ABOUT THE SPEAKER

**Meltem Ahıska** is the author of *The Magical Door of Radio: Occidentalism and Political Subjectivity* (**Radyonun Sihirli Kapısı: Garbiyatçılık ve Politik Öznellik**) and the co-author of 'The Indivisible Unity of the Nation': Fragmenting Nationalism(s) in the Democratization Process (**'Milletin Bölünmez Bütünlüğü': Demokratikleşme Sürecinde Parçalayan Milliyetçilik(ler)**). She has contributed to *Waiting for the Barbarians: A Tribute to Edward Said* with a chapter entitled 'Orientalism/Occidentalism: The Impasse of Modernity.' Her articles and essays on Occidentalism, social memory, gender and related issues have appeared in various publications including **Değer, Toplum ve Bilim, New Perspectives on Turkey, and The South Atlantic Quarterly**. She has published a book of poems, and co-curated exhibitions, the most recent being 'The Person You Have Called Cannot Be Reached at the Moment: Representations of Lifestyles in Turkey, 1980–2005.' Her book, **Occidentalism in Turkey: Questions of Modernity and National Identity in Turkish Radio Broadcasting** by I.B.Tauris of London is forthcoming.

ABSTRACT

Incidents of violence against women, mostly in the form of killings of women by family members, together with ongoing forms of domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, have become more visible in Turkey in the recent years. The issue of violence against women surfaces as a grave problem in media, and a wide range of actors including politicians, journalists, civil society organizations and academics address the question in various ways. The most widespread and dominant way of explaining this disturbing social question have been by reference to "tradition" and creates a "tradition effect" in Dicle Koğacioğlu's terms in a very important article on the issue. Interestingly what is rendered as tradition and regarded as "backward" is also connected to ethnicity and a certain conception of the "East". In other words, the question is usually posed as belonging to Kurdish people who are labelled as Eastern and regarded as an obstacle to Westernization as a synonym of modernity. In discussing this question, which is also politically charged due to the severe conflicts with the Kurdish, I employ the framework of Occidentalism that I developed before. I take Occidentalism as a historical and dialogical construction of modernity in Turkey in relation to the so-called "East" and "West". I argue that Occidentalism has established a performative grammar of power, which can be put into service for explaining away, and legitimizing gender discrimination and violence by using the terms of a projected Westernism.

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