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Fethullah Gülen's understanding of women's rights in Islam: a critical reappraisal

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the gender views of Islamist preacher Fethullah Gülen, a citizen of Turkey who has not only risen to global prominence since the early-2000s, but also gained a reputation for having 'progressive' views on the status of women in Islam. Considering Gülen's writings on women's identity, the relationship between men and women, and the role of women in public life, the article establishes that Gülen is more accurately depicted as deeply conservative with respect to women's rights and gender equality. Furthermore, it identifies instances of tension between nature and nurture in Gülen's conception of men and women, and locates his insistence on women naturally being of a subordinate kind within his sociopolitical project of creating an Islamic society.

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Introduction

This article examines the gender views of an Islamist preacher who has not only risen to global prominence since the early-2000s, but also gained a reputation for having 'progressive' views on the status of women in Islam. Fethullah Gülen, born in the village of Korucuk near Erzurum in eastern Turkey in 1941, has been residing at the Golden Generation Worship and Retreat Center in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania, since 1999. He was raised in a deeply religious family, received little formal education but extensive religious training, was first appointed as a state-salaried preacher in Edirne in 1959 and worked as preacher and Quran teacher in various cities in western Turkey until taking a permanent leave of absence in 1981. By that time, Gülen had attracted quite a following in Turkey, and what is known today as the Gülen or *Hizmet* (religious service) movement was nurtured into being at the time when he worked at the Kestanepazarı Quranic School in Izmir (1966–71).

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Based on deep dissatisfaction with a ‘society gone astray’ due to Western influence, and inspired by Sunni Islamic thought¹ and Turko-Ottoman nationalism, Gülen initiated his project of fostering a ‘golden generation’ of ‘soldiers of God’ dedicated to ‘save the world’ in the name of Islam.² Towards this end, he established reading circles, summer camps and collective homes for young male students, whom he subsequently encouraged to become teachers in the dual sense of working in educational institutions and representing Islam through their own examples. His sermons were recorded and widely circulated, and in response to opportunities created by the military *coup d'état* in 1980 – namely, the military rulers’ embrace of both the ‘Turkish-Islamic synthesis’³ and neoliberal economic policies – he encouraged his followers and merchant supporters to channel resources into private education and media as means through which to increase the Islamic consciousness of individuals and society at large.

These activities were initially limited to Turkey, but the Gülen movement expanded into the Turkic parts of Central Asia and the Balkans after the end of the Cold War, and has now a worldwide presence through an extensive network of business corporations, educational institutions, charity organizations, dialogue or interfaith institutes, and media institutions. As of today, Gülen is considered to be not only ‘one of the most influential men in Turkey,’⁴ but also ‘a major figure in defining the contemporary global Islamic experience’ and ‘one of the most influential Muslim scholars in the world.’⁵ Furthermore, his community of followers is claimed by some to be ‘the world’s most influential Islamic movement.’⁶ The influence of Gülen followers has clearly been the greatest in Turkey, though the movement’s position is now very uncertain due to its fallout with the Islamic-conservative Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*), which has governed Turkey since 2002.⁷ Leaving aside a whole series of controversies related to Gülen and his movement, this article focuses specifically on women’s rights and gender equality.

While critics and sympathizers alike tend to agree that gender relations within the Gülen movement are fraught with patriarchy – this, with reference to the practice of strict gender segregation, the tendency for wives and daughters to be confined to the private sphere, and the absence of women in leadership positions⁸ – it is common among scholars to argue that Gülen himself has ‘progressive’ views on women and gender relations. With explicit reference to gender equality, Yavuz argues, ‘there is a gap between what Gülen teaches and how quickly the community adopts his leadership,’ and that Gülen ‘is more practical and progressive than his community.’⁹ Likewise, Kurtz talks about a ‘contradiction between [Gülen’s] rhetoric and the practices of some of the followers,’¹⁰ while Çelik invokes the notion of ‘passive resistance’ to account for the alleged gap between Gülen and his ‘progressive’ gender views on the one hand, and ‘the movement’s conservative participants’

on the other.¹¹ Aras and Caha argue more generally that Gülen has ‘progressive views ... [o]n the question of women rights,’¹² and Andrea goes further by declaring him a ‘feminist’ and ‘champion of women’s rights.’¹³

Such representations of Gülen’s gender views as seemingly equivalent to a liberal conception of men and women having equal rights and opportunities in society have thus far gone unchallenged, and the main purpose of this article is to establish that Gülen is more accurately conceived of as a champion of patriarchy understood simply as a social system characterized by male domination.¹⁴ While the first section outlines what is currently the most comprehensive positive assessment of Gülen’s gender views, the three following ones counter such accounts through discussions of his views on women’s identity, the relationship between men and women, and the role of women in public life. Together, these sections make it clear that Gülen is prescribing a traditional division of labor based on an understanding that women are essentially different from and inferior to men. The fifth section engages with instances of tension between nature and nurture in Gülen’s conception of men and women, and his insistence on women naturally being of a subordinate kind is subsequently positioned within his sociopolitical project of creating an Islamic society. Overall, the article concludes that Gülen is but a very conservative man of religion with respect to women’s rights and gender equality.

Gülen as a ‘champion of women’s rights’

Andrea’s engagement with Gülen’s gender views is part of a ‘dialogic analysis’ in which ‘[his] responses to questions about women and their rights from an Islamic perspective’ is considered in relation to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s ‘perception of Muslim women’s rights during her travels throughout the Ottoman Empire’ early in the eighteenth century.¹⁵ The dialogic component aside, this section focuses on Andrea’s assessment of ‘articles and interviews translated from Turkish to English drawn from archives on [Gülen’s] website and from published collections of his writings.’¹⁶ In this connection, she begins with a discussion of Gülen’s essay ‘Women,’¹⁷ first published in Turkish in 1988. Given its concern with ‘women’s traditional position as the first educators of their children and as those charged with ‘establish[ing] order, peace, and harmony in the home,’ Andrea argues, ‘Gülen’s stance regarding women’s roles outside the home remains ambiguous,’ and that the essay:

beg questions as to what degree does Gülen support [the] resurgent movement [of women claiming their ‘Islamic rights’ to be educated and to earn a living] and to what degree does he adhere to traditions that would confine women to the home.¹⁸

In time, the ambiguity in question is seen to have disappeared, and the following quote from an interview of 2005 is taken to ‘synthesize [Gülen’s] views on women’s rights articulated over a decade and a half in print:’¹⁹

Woman is equal to man in the rights of freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom to live a decent life, and freedom of finance. Equality before the law, just treatment, marriage and founding a family life, personal life, privacy and protection are all among the rights of women. Her possessions, life and dignity are assured like that of men.²⁰

Before reaching this point, Andrea highlights several things in Gülen’s post-1990 writings and interviews that she thinks clarify his position on the role of women in society. First, she draws attention to Gülen’s criticism of particular interpretations of Islam. This concerns women praying in mosques, where Gülen has reminded people that ‘women and men prayed together in mosques during the time of the Prophet,’ and argued that ‘if they would like to, they should not be banned if there is no justifiable reason for banning them.’²¹ It also concerns polygamy, where Gülen has stated that ‘there is no record in the Qur’an or the hadith that it’s *sunna* to marry more than one woman by means of a religious marriage,’ and argued that ‘marrying just one woman is encouraged to the degree of being mandatory.’²² Lastly, it concerns covering of women, where Gülen has asserted that the headscarf is ‘a matter of secondary importance’²³ and that ‘[i]t’s against the spirit of Islam to regard uncovered women as outside of religion.’²⁴

Another point Andrea emphasizes is Gülen’s view that ‘restrictions on women in Muslim communities ... must be seen in light of customary practices and political agendas that are not necessarily Islamic.’²⁵ Overall, there are two dimensions to Gülen’s engagement with the association of women’s oppression with Islam. First, he argues that Islam ‘saved women who were exploited, enslaved, and regarded as second class in the darkness of the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance from the position of poor creatures and elevated them to a new status as a blessed being.’²⁶ Second, Gülen argues, ‘pre-Islamic traditions in some societies and regions have been preserved, and Islam should not be held responsible for any faults inherent in them.’²⁷ More specifically, he contends that ‘the lands into which Islam spread are in the Arabian Peninsula; women are routinely oppressed in the Middle East and Arab countries. Feudal and patriarchal traditions are being kept alive by being practiced under the banner of Islam.’²⁸

Andrea also stresses that Gülen has ‘explicitly assert[ed] the fundamental equality of males and females’ when stating that ‘we must not forget that female lions are still lions.’²⁹ Furthermore, she writes, while ‘Gülen acknowledges potential differences between men and women,’ his position is that they ‘should not become grounds for hierarchy’ – constituting the basis for what she refers to as his ‘model of equality in complementarity.’³⁰ Finally,

Andrea emphasizes that Gülen ‘does not promote excluding women from specific roles.’³¹ In this connection, she makes specific reference to an interview on ‘Women’s rights in Islam,’ and quotes most of the following passage:

The contribution of women in certain fields of life is not banned in Islam ... Women have indeed contributed in every field of life (throughout history). For instance, they were allowed to participate in battles; their education was not only desired, but also actively sought and encouraged. ... Women can assume any role. ... the historical experience reveals that according to Abu Hanifa women can even be judges ... Women can be anything, a soldier or a doctor.³²

All of the above is seen to feed into the 2005 ‘synthesis’ of Gülen’s views on women’s rights, and constitutes the basis for Andrea concluding that just as it has been argued that Muhammad was a feminist due to his ‘immense respect for women and unwavering commitment to their rights,’ Gülen is a ‘feminist’ and ‘champion of women’s rights by scrupulously following the path of the Prophet.’³³ Although Andrea’s narrative of Gülen’s gender views having moved progressively from ambiguity to clarity might convince uninformed readers, it simply does not stand up to a closer scrutiny of his writings.

A woman’s ‘real identity’

With regards to the identity of women, Gülen has always been clear about it being that of home-maker and social breeder. In the essay ‘Women,’ he begins by stating that ‘[w]omen train and educate children, and establish order, peace, and harmony in the home. They are the first teachers in the school of humanity,’ he writes, concluding that ‘[a] woman whose heart is illuminated with the light of faith and whose mind is enlightened with knowledge and social breeding builds her home anew each day by adding new dimensions of beauty to it.’³⁴ The basis for these views is his foundational conception of there being not ‘potential’ (as Andrea has it) but very real and significant differences between men and women:

Men are physically stronger and more capable than women, and plainly constituted to strive and compete without needing to withdraw from the struggle. It is different with women, because of their menstrual period [and] their necessary confinement before and after childbirth.³⁵

While Gülen’s focus is often on physical differences, he states elsewhere that there are also ‘psychological differences’ – with women considered to ‘have deeper emotions; they are more compassionate, more delicate, more self-sacrificing’³⁶ – as well as ‘spiritual’ differences.³⁷ Dimensions of difference aside, Gülen’s key point is that a ‘woman is a woman and a man is a man,’³⁸ and ‘[w]hile looking for a place for each gender in

society, we should consider ... innate differences.³⁹ This biological deterministic reasoning is elaborated elsewhere as follows:

Both sexes are equipped according to the necessities of their duties; this is true justice. Therefore, instead of studying men and women as if they were on equal terms, we should evaluate women and men separately and according to their own particular natures. Women have certain rights and duties based on the nature of their creation.⁴⁰

Being 'created a magnificent example of affection with respect to her inner faculties,'⁴¹ Gülen conceives of a woman as a 'heroine of compassion'⁴² who 'always stands up straight in the heart of her home and nourishes our feelings with affection, mercy, and love,'⁴³ and 'conforms to her fate – be it bitter or sweet – at peace with both joys and sorrows, without any expectations in return.'⁴⁴ 'It is a great kindness and wisdom of God,' Gülen writes elsewhere:

that women have been equipped with such compassion when we consider that they are in charge of bringing up children. ... They are educators, teachers, and the source of the family's endurance and the peace of the home. Men are reassured by them.⁴⁵

In consequence, so-called innate differences are seen to produce a natural-divine division of labor in which '[w]omen are responsible for domestic work, whereas men are responsible for non-domestic work.'⁴⁶ According to Gülen, women's position within this division of labor is very honorable, and the homes that they make are portrayed as being of a different world:

A house that contains an honourable, well-mannered woman loyal to her home is a corner from Heaven. ... Thanks to the good successors she raised and left behind, the home of a spiritually mature woman constantly exudes a scent of joy like an incense burner. The 'heavenly' home where this aroma 'blows' is a garden of Paradise beyond description.⁴⁷

Not only is home represented in the image of paradise, but Gülen's ideal woman is herself constituted as otherworldly. As stated in another essay: 'A woman who has found her match with respect to depth of soul and who has quenched her thirst with her children is no different than the women of Paradise.'⁴⁸ In this essay, Gülen makes several references to the otherworldly nature of a home made by the 'perfect woman,' whom he describes as 'a faultless projection of the beauties of paradise in homes.'⁴⁹ Yet elsewhere, he states that:

[m]others are beings that are oriented on the Hereafter in this world. ... Their faces are as otherworldly as the houris in Paradise, their looks are as profound as those of the angels, and their feelings are as pure as that of any spiritual being.⁵⁰

Otherworldly models aside, Gülen is very disturbed by women not conforming to his conception of them as home-makers, and argues not merely that '[a]pproaches and ways outside of the framework of their creation make [women] ugly and rough,'⁵¹ but that women adopting a 'modern lifestyle' represent violence against nature:

Today, the issue of gender has reached the point where some people refuse to recognize the very real differences between men and women and claim that they are alike and equal in all respects. Implementing these views has resulted in the 'modern' lifestyle of women working outside the home, trying to 'become men,' and thus losing their own identity. Family life has eroded, for children are sent to daycare centers or boarding schools as parents are too busy, as 'individuals,' to take proper care of them. This violence against nature and culture has destroyed the home as a place of balance between authority and love, as a focus of security and peace.⁵²

Against this background, Gülen stresses the importance of a woman remaining true to 'her nature and disposition,'⁵³ and his essay 'Women' includes warnings in the form of a running contrast between the ideal woman who 'gives importance to her decency, honor and virtue' and creates 'a healthy home [and] a sound generation' on the one hand, and 'disreputable,' 'undignified' and 'dissolute' women who 'destroy existing homes' and 'pollute every place [they] visit' on the other.⁵⁴ Undoubtedly, it is women not preserving their decency whom Gülen dislikes the most,⁵⁵ and this connects with a theme running through much of his work – namely, that of women as temptresses and 'webs of the devil.'⁵⁶ Although Gülen argues that both men and women can be sources of mischief in relation to each other,⁵⁷ men are considered to be 'at greater risk than women and more liable to fall [because] they often are attracted to women and follow their desire.'⁵⁸ Accordingly, women are depicted as posing an ever-present danger to both men and society: '[p]ast nations and communities perished because of *fitne*' or chaos caused by women's inherently seductive nature;⁵⁹ men are under constant threat by the presence of women in streets and marketplaces; and women are waiting next to the bridge leading to paradise in a final attempt to trap men.⁶⁰ While Andrea might be correct in arguing that, Gülen rejects 'the patriarchal logic that men's desire is women's fault,'⁶¹ he subscribes to the patriarchal logic that it is more common and seemingly natural for men to be attracted to women, that men are less capable of controlling their sexual desires, and that modesty is more important for women due to them representing a devil's test to men.⁶²

In concluding this section, it can be noted that the devil appears also elsewhere in relevant parts of Gülen's writings. In parallel to his conception of homosexuality, he argues that 'feminized men' and 'masculinized women' are the devil's work.⁶³ The reasoning informing this view is straightforward: Men becoming like women and vice versa are contrary to nature; being contrary

to the laws of nature, they are contrary to God's creation; and any 'attempt to change creation and nature ... must be rejected (*mardud*) as satanic.'⁶⁴ According to Gülen, the feminization of men and masculinization of women is worse than repositioning organs on the human body – exemplified with 'placing ears on kneecaps, nose on the belly, or eyes under the feet'⁶⁵ – and men and women taking on the characteristics of the other sex are cursed.⁶⁶

The superiority of men 'cannot be denied'

Given how human beings are seen as created in pairs, Gülen considers marriage to be not merely 'natural,' but 'a necessary condition of being a human.'⁶⁷ To avoid men and women becoming 'outrageous' and 'miserable' respectively,⁶⁸ as well as seduced into illicit sexual relations, it is Gülen's view that boys and girls must get married, and he ascribes significant responsibility to parents in arranging this.⁶⁹ While recognizing that things created in pairs can stand in an opposite or complementary relationship to each other,⁷⁰ he emphasizes that men and women have complementary characteristics, and '[w]hen they come together, such characteristics allow them to establish a harmonious family unit.'⁷¹ By necessity, this unit includes children as part of the 'family trio,'⁷² because 'marriage made for reasons other than bringing up new generations is no more than temporary entertainment and adventure.'⁷³

While Gülen states both that 'the difference in the creation of women should not lead men to feel superior,' and that women and men are 'the protector and guardian for one another,'⁷⁴ he is absolutely clear about a family needing a leader, and the husband being the leader. 'In all circumstances,' he argues, 'members of the family should gather around a leader [and] take this leader as the one to be consulted on all matters concerning the family.'⁷⁵ According to Gülen, '[s]uch an approach will support the idea of obedience taking root in the family, as well as the foundation of unity and order.'⁷⁶ In a similar fashion, he has more recently stated that there has to be one person making the final decision in order to have 'stability and order' and 'peace and happiness in the family.'⁷⁷

Regarding the husband being the leader of the family, Gülen explicitly states that 'the superiority of men compared to women cannot be denied,' and that 'man [is] the leader at home.'⁷⁸ For Gülen, this follows from the principle of 'reward in proportion to hardship,'⁷⁹ and:

man is considered superior, as the one who can always be active in every field of [social] life; who can supply finances for his family; who can face and counter even the toughest of conditions; and who can provide food and clothing for his children.⁸⁰

He stresses that the husband 'has been assigned as the one to make the final decision after consultations,'⁸¹ and next to the importance ascribed to

motherhood, this granting of consultative-cum-secondary status to wives is treated as a sign of the value ascribed to women in Islam.⁸² Gülen bases this on the example of Muhammad consulting his wives: ‘In doing this, he taught Muslim men an important social lesson: There is nothing wrong with exchanging ideas with women on important matters, or on any matters at all.’⁸³

With regard to the hierarchical family order, Gülen quotes the hadith, ‘[e]ach of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for your flock,’ and further specifying a ‘husband is a shepherd responsible for his family’ and a ‘woman is a shepherd responsible for her husband’s house.’⁸⁴ According to Gülen, ‘[a]ssigning qualified people to jobs or posts is a social trust,’⁸⁵ and a woman being responsible for ‘the administration of housework and protecting the husband’s belongings, honor, and chastity’ is the centerpiece of her loyalty to the husband.⁸⁶ He stresses the significance of this on several occasions, and makes the point as follows in the Turkish version of the essay ‘Women:’ ‘The ornaments of a virtuous woman are her honor and decency, while her social breeding and loyalty to her husband is that which should be appreciated and complimented the most.’⁸⁷

Concerning power relations within the family, Gülen ascribes to the husband also the authority to guide and discipline the wife. The basis for this is the view that women are born with certain weaknesses or deficiencies. Being crooked like the rib bone from which Eve was created – a Biblical point endorsing women’s ‘essential secondariness’⁸⁸ – Gülen argues that a woman must be corrected by the husband.⁸⁹ Furthermore, in a commentary on verse 34 of the Sura of Women, he writes that ‘[w]omen are at your disposal. They do your work and sustain your lineage and you, as mentor, advise them and work to help them rise to the high level of humanity.’⁹⁰ While Gülen considers guidance to be the preferred method of correcting ‘rebellious, arrogant and disobedient’ women, he argues that when this does not help, the husband should be strong-willed and prevent the wife from using her weapon of sexuality and, if necessary, employ ‘gentle beating.’⁹¹ Despite Gülen’s recent criticism of domestic violence,⁹² he clearly thinks it meaningful to distinguish between a legitimate form of beating aimed at ‘educating’ the wife, and an illegitimate form based on feelings of revenge, torture, suffering and cruelty. Overall, Gülen’s conception of the relationship between men and women rests to a large extent on a conservative-patriarchal reading of verse 34 of the Sura of Women, and this embeds him in a long tradition of Muslim men who have (ab)used it to justify women’s subordination to men.⁹³

‘Women can assume any [public] role’ – but, but, but ...

With respect to gender, the ambiguity in Gülen’s writings concerns the role of women outside the domestic sphere. On the one hand, reminiscent of Nursi’s

claim that ‘women left their homes and led mankind astray,’⁹⁴ Gülen has argued that women leaving their homes is a source of social disorder.⁹⁵ On the other hand, he has stated that overlove of home is dangerous for men and women alike, and that nobody should stay at home only.⁹⁶ While Andrea takes some of Gülen’s recent statements to imply a *carte blanche* for women to actually ‘assume any role’ or ‘be anything,’⁹⁷ the following quote constitutes a good point of departure for a more detailed discussion:

According to Islam, women’s role in this world is not only restricted to doing the housework and raising children. In fact, as long as it does not conflict with her primordial nature or with observing religious requirements, she is responsible for carrying out the duties that befall her in every area of society and making up for shortcomings where men fall short in social life.⁹⁸

It follows that a woman’s role is first and foremost limited to home-making and social breeding. While one could imagine women avoiding this primary restriction on participation in social life by not getting married, not having children or leaving children to the care of others, there is no space for this in Gülen’s thinking. As mentioned earlier, he considers marriage a necessity for being a human, and its purpose is to establish a family. Furthermore, he has long since criticized ‘Western hypocrisy’ as it concerns family planning, arguing that Muslims should have many children, and approving of contraception only in cases related to a woman’s health and ability to provide Islamic training.⁹⁹ Finally, Gülen disapproves of the ‘Western’ practice of children being placed in day-care centers and nurseries, because only a mother can ‘provide the compassion that a child needs the most.’¹⁰⁰

Public activities on the part of women are further restricted with reference to their primordial nature and observance of religious requirements. Regarding the latter, Gülen argues that when considering what women can do in social life, ‘[t]he most important thing is to make sure that they can fulfill their faith,’ adding that ‘[t]here may be some women who can fulfill their faith while employed in the public service, while others at home may fail in observing the faith fully.’¹⁰¹ In consequence, there is a clear warning that the likelihood of women successfully fulfilling their faith is significantly smaller when active in the public sphere. With regard to restrictions related to women’s ‘primordial nature,’ the greatest clarity in Gülen’s writings concerns differences related to biological reproduction and physical strength. In connection with the former, Gülen argues that ‘[b]ecause of their menstrual period [and] their necessary confinement before and after childbirth ... women [cannot] be available continually for public duties.’¹⁰² Rhetorically, he asks ‘[h]ow could a mother with a baby in her lap lead and administer armies, make life-and-death decisions, and sustain and prosecute a difficult strategy against an enemy?’¹⁰³ Irrespective of Gülen elsewhere stating that ‘[t]here is no reason to why a woman can’t be an administrator,’¹⁰⁴ it

follows from this reasoning and the more general language used in the Turkish version that women are considered unsuitable for leadership positions.¹⁰⁵

Regarding physical strength, Gülen argues that ‘men are stronger than women,’ and it is therefore ‘very difficult for a woman to do some of the work that a man does.’¹⁰⁶ In fact, whenever Gülen opens up space for women being integrated in public life, he quickly closes it with reference to ‘physical conditions.’ For instance, when arguing that ‘[t]he contribution of women in certain fields of life is not banned in Islam,’ he immediately qualifies this by adding ‘provided that physical conditions have been taken into consideration and their working conditions are suitable.’¹⁰⁷ Later in the same interview, Gülen asks ‘should they be employed in heavy labor like coal mines? Should it be compulsory for them to perform military service like men? Should they be trained with heavy weapons?’¹⁰⁸ While his immediate response is that nobody would disagree if it was ‘necessary and feasible,’ it is clear that Gülen considers cases of necessity to be few and far between, and that such activities are infeasible for women.

For Gülen, restricting what women can do is ‘an expression of Islam’s kind approach towards women,’¹⁰⁹ and he argues both that ‘offering a woman a job that she cannot handle, or employing her in a job that it is not in her nature to accomplish’ is ‘little more than the forceful seizure of the majority of her rights,’¹¹⁰ and that ‘[i]f women are told to stop in certain situations [then] this should not be understood as depriving a woman of her rights, but rather of protecting her.’¹¹¹ Such restrictions of women’s freedom to make their own choices and decisions regarding what to do and not to do are in accordance with a version of what Young refers to as the ‘logic of masculinist protection’ – namely, one whereby women are subordinated as a result of men seeking not to dominate women for the sake of their own pleasure or enhancement, but to protect them from dangers.¹¹² In Gülen’s writings, this patriarchal logic extends further to include the need for women to be protected against men with a dominative masculinity and/or their own weaknesses. As noted in the Turkish version of the essay ‘Women:’

We say ‘watch that your skirts don’t get dusty.’ I do not know if you can understand the extent of the necessity for women, who are the most precious things, to be protected and watched over very carefully. ... A woman is not a dirty dish or worthless stone, and her place is not where dirty dishes or stones are. She is a unique diamond and must always be protected in a diamond box inlaid with mother of pearl.¹¹³

As the focus on various restrictions placed by Gülen on women’s role in society has reproduced a full-fledged division of labor, with women ‘protected’ in homes conceived in paradisiacal terms, it makes sense to return to the earlier quote and consider the statement that women are ‘responsible for

carrying out the duties that befall her in every area of society and making up for male shortcomings in social life.¹¹⁴ In this connection, while Gülen's position on women's domestic duties is absolutely clear, he hardly ever ascribes public duties to women. The exception is the following specification of religious activities:

It is for sure that a woman should praise her home and take care of her children. However, she also has certain responsibilities for social life besides not neglecting her family. She has to attend social gatherings where conversations about God takes place, she has to take part in discussions on religious and scholarly issues, she has to do lessons with her friends and, meanwhile, she has to reflect on solutions for common problems of social life, she has to think about these issues as debated in related meetings and should use every opportunity to serve the religion.¹¹⁵

What, then, about women being positively responsible for making up for men's shortcomings in social life? If these shortcomings are understood quantitatively, then the issue is simply that a shortage of men makes it necessary for women to do public things that otherwise are men's duty. In this connection, it was mentioned above that Gülen is open to women being employed in heavy labor, performing military service, and being trained with heavy weapons *if necessary*, and he has elsewhere stated, 'a woman – when it is out of necessity – is ready to undertake any kind of mission and even go to the frontline to combat.'¹¹⁶ Overall, Gülen refers here to exceptional conditions of crisis and emergency, and generally considers women working and earning money outside of home as signs of rebellion.¹¹⁷

If men's shortcomings are understood qualitatively, then several lines of reasoning are possible. First, given their duty to take care of a family financially, men can potentially be considered ill-suited for unpaid voluntary work. Second, men can potentially be considered ill-suited for particular social activities due to their 'nature of creation.' However, in contrast to his reasoning along this line with regard to women, Gülen never applies it to men. Third, men can potentially be regarded as unfit for social activities that imply mixing with unrelated women. Given the importance ascribed to gender segregation by his followers, it is surprising that Gülen has little to say about this when reflecting on women's role in social life. While he is open to men and women praying together in mosques, this is the case only as long as women pray behind men, and his justification is that 'if a man notices a beautiful woman ... he cannot say that he did not feel anything. If such a man says he did not, then I would tell him "Please, God sees, God hears, please let's not lie here".'¹¹⁸ His reasoning here and many other places implies an extreme sexualization of women – this, in that their visible presence, even when dressed for prayer and inside of a mosque, is sufficient for them to be treated as objects of male sexual desire – and this cannot but influence his view on gender integration-versus-segregation in social life.

In consequence, gender segregation must be assumed built into Gülen's concern with working conditions being suitable for women, and given how the public sphere is constituted as being a male preserve, this implies yet another restriction on women's participation in public life. That said, a concern with gender segregation can also open up pockets of female participation by creating a need for women to interact with other women in public life. In this connection, when Gülen refers to 'Hanafi jurisprudence [saying] that a woman can be a judge,' he continues '[m]aybe some women could explain certain matters more comfortably to a judge of their own gender.'¹¹⁹ In parallel, Gülen has celebrated the Directorate of Religious Affairs in Turkey for its 'marvelous policy of recruiting female officers in various departments so that women can comfortably ask for information.'¹²⁰ Overall, women guiding other women accords with Gülen's frequent references to the role played by Muhammad's wives in this respect.

Backtracking on a slippery slope from nature to nurture

While Gülen's conception of women's role in society is derived from claims regarding innate differences between men and women, he provides some clues as to the characteristics ascribed to men and women, respectively, being more sociocultural and prescriptive than otherwise claimed.¹²¹ One case in point concerns how Gülen portrays women in Turkey in terms otherwise reserved for men when arguing that 'because of old Turkish traditions, women are strong, competitive, and function alongside men in social life.'¹²² The context for this statement is Gülen's distinction between 'different Muslim cultures and lifestyles,'¹²³ and his argument that:

it was the Turks who understood [the Prophet] best. The value placed on women in Anatolian Islam, the equal place of women in the Turkish tradition, the motif of women who fight alongside men and share the throne with men, these are elements of Turkish Islam.¹²⁴

This links up with how Gülen elsewhere argues that women are indeed capable of doing everything that men commonly do. In one essay, for instance, Gülen initially stresses both that 'a man is a glory with his faith, bravery, resistance and readiness for battle' and that 'a woman ... is very different: faithful, delicate and fragile ... a different kind of hero as a supporter bolstering a man's morale and a teacher for her children,' before arguing that 'a man can always support his wife in household-related tasks and a woman – when it is out of necessity – is ready to undertake any kind of mission and even go to the frontline to combat.'¹²⁵ Although he quickly adds 'in such a case, what is one's essential duty is secondary to the other,'¹²⁶ the important thing to note is that if women are capable of doing what men commonly do in

cases of necessity, then they are overall much more capable than what Gülen otherwise claims with reference to their primordial nature.

Another case in point concerns Gülen's portrayal of the 'golden generation' that will 'solve [humanity's] accumulated problems' through a 'second revival' of Islam.¹²⁷ In a discussion on compassion, for instance, Gülen renders both men and women meaningful in the image of 'the mother':

Compassion ... is a manifestation of the godly virtues, heavenly breath, and a further name for the warmth of all mothers. ... A person whose heart beats with the pulse of mercy is so full of compassion for others that he or she approaches very gently all people and events. She or he embraces those in misery like a compassionate mother taking her little ones into her bosom. He or she constantly circles around those in dire need and protection like a mother bird beating her wings to return to the nest to feed and protect her chicks.¹²⁸

What is noteworthy about this is that men are described in terms that Gülen otherwise reserves for women. While this can seem to amount to a feminization of men, it should rather be considered in relation to Gülen's conception of the ideal man possessing opposite attributes. When asked how it could be that Muhammad 'possessed contrasting merits like courage and compassion,' Gülen responded that 'so many different attributes in one person is a sign of balance and perfection.'¹²⁹ However, he quickly added that 'these are only apparent in God's Messenger,' and gave two examples of most human beings having 'the ultimate degree of their characteristics, but only for certain qualities.'¹³⁰ Importantly, the examples are Muhammad's uncle Hamza and the poet Hassan ibn Thabit, implying that men are considered capable of having the ultimate degree not only of 'bravery and courage,' but also 'mercy, affection and compassion.'¹³¹ However, just as Gülen has long since been engaged in what seems to be a project of self-formation informed by the example of Muhammad, he is in effect encouraging men to approximate a similar balance and perfection in their lives.¹³²

In contrast, Gülen nowhere encourages women to do the same. The above-mentioned image of women in Turkey is used for the specific purpose of distinguishing 'Turkish Islam' from other versions of Islam, and his singular encouragement of women to be courageous is very specific: rather than seeking divorce, mothers should consider learning martial arts and physically challenge husbands if subjected to domestic violence.¹³³ Beyond this, Gülen's ideal woman possesses the ultimate degree of 'mercy, affection and compassion' only, and he stresses that women of this kind should be actively nurtured into being. For instance, he argues, 'it is fundamental that girls be brought up to be delicate like flowers and mild and affectionate educators of children.'¹³⁴ Elsewhere, Gülen emphasizes the importance of boys and girls being educated in anticipation of their future responsibilities, and argues that girls should be nurtured differently than boys with regard to

manners, behavior and dressing.¹³⁵ For the sake of women and men obtaining feminine and masculine characteristics, respectively, girls should be brought up in the warm and closed environment of their mothers, while boys should be socialized with their fathers.

One possible reason for Gülen not encouraging also women to approximate balance and perfection in their lives can be that, just as he has made it absolutely clear that they cannot be prophets due to their primordial nature – arguing that ‘[a] Prophet must lead humanity in every aspect of its social and religious life *without a break*,’ and that ‘[i]f men could have children, they could not be Prophets either’¹³⁶ – he thinks them incapable of even approximating their perfection. A more practical reason can be that Gülen’s conception of the ideal Islamic society is founded on particular conceptions of the family and the home, which in turn, are founded on a purified version of the compassionate, self-sacrificing and subordinate woman.

Women confined and constrained in the name of social order

Irrespective of his claim of not being concerned with politics, Gülen’s efforts to revive Islam is aimed at establishing a society in which everybody and everything (the state included) is oriented towards getting the approval of God. In the Islamic society that Gülen has in mind, all individuals are (re)connected with religion and traditional values, focus on spiritual development and the hereafter, and ‘observe all their religious duties, including the secondary topics.’¹³⁷ With regard to social organization, Gülen is very concerned with order, and his ideal society implies a division of labor within a hierarchical structure characterized by trust in and loyalty to authority. In this connection, he argues:

[a]ssigning qualified people to jobs or posts is a social trust and plays a significant role in public administration and social order. Its abuse causes social disorder. There should be order at all social levels, for some are to be given responsibilities by others.¹³⁸

Furthermore, Gülen is very concerned with the need for strong organic ties between social institutions. When stating that ‘people who want to guarantee their future cannot be indifferent to how their children are being educated,’ he goes on to argue that ‘[t]he family, school, environment, and mass media should all cooperate to ensure the desired result. Opposing tendencies among these vital institutions will subject young people to contradictory influences that will distract them and dissipate their energy.’¹³⁹ In a rather totalitarian fashion, Gülen emphasizes the need for social institutions to propagate a single and unified influence, and for a particular belief or worldview to be ‘inculcated’ in young people.¹⁴⁰ To further avoid people being ‘distracted,’ Gülen argues that a whole series of preventive measures are needed. When

interpreting an episode in which Muhammad turned his cousin's face to prevent his gaze being caught by passing women, he states:

[t]he meaning of this event is to cut off evil at its root. ... That is, to set barriers before vice and evil so as to prevent many individuals from being led astray and families broken; to eliminate all the ways and means leading to rape, adultery, murder, all sorts of immorality, perversions and corruptions; and to deter all sins by prevention. ... [to] close the gates to the forbidden, to prevent it in advance, before it can happen.¹⁴¹

State authorities are ascribed a key role in preventing people from being 'led astray' by prohibiting not only such specific things as prostitution, alcohol, gambling, profiteering and adultery,¹⁴² but whatever can lead to 'all sorts of immorality, perversions and corruptions.' However, discipline should also be embedded in the social fabric through the principle of 'commanding right and forbidding wrong.' According to Gülen, this divinely imposed duty implies each Muslim constantly being on high alert to all possible kinds of misdeeds and corruptions in society. Based on a general conception of 'units of a social structure [as] similar to organs of a body,' he argues that 'we ... should not give any opportunity for even the smallest kind of things forbidden by religion to take root and grow up in the interior,'¹⁴³ because:

[w]hen there is a defect in one of the organs or, in other words, when individuals begin to retrograde, when families are exposed to degeneration, when women leave their homes, when streets get polluted, or when some defect appears in the social structure, then pain and discomfort is felt in other organs of the body connected to the initial problem.¹⁴⁴

While Gülen seems to leave it to state authorities to forbid wrong with 'the hand,' individual Muslims are obliged to forbid it with 'the tongue' and 'the heart.' In other words, they are responsible for both 'telling others that adultery, robbery, profiteering and loan-sharking etc. are misdeeds,' and 'preventing such misdeeds from penetrating into society ... through [their] attitudes and warnings.'¹⁴⁵ Overall, Gülen argues that the declaration of 'war against any kind of illegitimate thing whether small-scale or large-scale' is central to making Islamic society distinct, and goes on to state that 'we can see the same pattern in almost all of the units of the Islamic structure' in the sense that 'the individual is tied to the family, and the family is tied to society.'¹⁴⁶

With regard to women's position in Gülen's ideal society, earlier sections made it clear that they for the main part should be confined to the domestic sphere, where they are responsible for home-making and social breeding, and subordinated to the authority of their husbands. Against the background of the above discussion, it should also be clear why they must possess the ultimate degree of 'mercy, affection and compassion.' If women develop other characteristics, then they might both challenge the husband's authority and

destroy the patriarchal family, and seek equal public participation and destroy the patriarchal social order. As noted by Gülen, if the balance between men and women with their different natures and characteristics is upset, then 'both the harmony of the family and the social order [will be] upset too.'¹⁴⁷ It was exactly to avoid 'complications' in society that Gülen justified cursing effeminate men and masculine women.¹⁴⁸

Gülen's approach to the Islamization of society has thus far been bottom-up and centered on the transformation of individuals through education and media. Although he certainly wishes to see a government in place that practices politics understood as 'the art of managing a nation's affairs in ways that please God and people,'¹⁴⁹ he has opposed Islam being overtly politicized on the ground that it 'will harm religion before it harms a government's life,'¹⁵⁰ and argued that '[i]f people want a good government, first they should improve themselves intellectually, morally, and spiritually.'¹⁵¹ When promoting a greater role for Islam in society, he has repeatedly argued that there is no coercion in Islam,¹⁵² and employed a liberal discourse constituting people as free to be, do and think what they want. In connection with the headscarf issue, for instance, he argued, 'let everyone do as they like, and no limitations.'¹⁵³

However, contrary to such rhetoric and claims about Gülen promoting a 'liberal' or 'individualist' approach to Islam, the individual is clearly subordinated to the family, community and state in his thinking,¹⁵⁴ and his communalism incorporates a logic that can easily transgress teaching combined with tolerance. With regard to teaching, Gülen has made it clear that 'generations lacking an ideal and tending towards almost all kinds of thoughts' are in need of 'reconstruction ... through indoctrination of faith, virtue, patience, love of work, affection of their past, and aspiration of preparing for the future.'¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, although Gülen certainly preaches the importance of tolerance, he emphasizes two significant intra-communal limits. First, reflecting his view that '[u]nity of feeling, thought, and culture are essential to a nation's strength; any disintegration of religious or moral unity weakens it,' he argues that 'no one has the right to tolerate those views that separate people into camps and destroy society.'¹⁵⁶ Second, Gülen argues that '[a] society that shows tolerance to misdeeds will sooner or later have to pay a price,' and warns that '[t]he history of nations demonstrates hundreds of examples of ruined societies which initially sank into sins, then got stuck in ill-gotten deeds, and finally perished.'¹⁵⁷

Having a long-term approach to social change, Gülen has proved very pragmatic in the shorter term. In this connection, Agai stresses how he brings 'social reality' into the picture – a reality, that is, 'which has to be changed and requires compromises which are therefore Islamically justifiable.'¹⁵⁸ However, what if social reality changes and compromises are no longer required? In that case, what if neither 'perfect representation,

appropriate communication, excellent warnings and guidance' nor practices of social isolation work,¹⁵⁹ and some members of society keep wishing to 'do as they like, and no limitations' – including women leaving their homes, moving freely about in streets and marketplaces, dressing however they want, mixing with unrelated men in public, and seeking paid work for whatever reason? Given Gülen's conception of society as a family writ large,¹⁶⁰ the following question can also be raised: If physical violence is accepted as a method of 'educating' a disobedient wife in the case that other methods do not work, then what will be the fate of women choosing a lifestyle that does not conform to the regulatory norms built into Gülen's patriarchal conception of Islamic society?

Conclusion: Gülen as a champion of patriarchy

Contrary to claims about Gülen not being 'another Muslim man of religion telling women how they should dress and behave, and what is their "proper" role in society,'¹⁶¹ his writings contain a very clear and conservative message regarding what a woman *should* do: get married, give birth to and educate many children, be loyal to the husband, live a chaste life, make the home anew every day, cover up when/if venturing outside home, and be subordinate to men within the family and in society at large. All of this follows from Gülen's foundational conception of women being essentially different from and inferior to men, and his tributes to women and talk about complementarity become but rhetorical veils for the gender inequality he prescribes.

Against the background of Gülen's explicit championing of male domination, one cannot but be somewhat puzzled by several commentators having concluded that he has 'progressive' views on women and gender relations. In this connection, it can be initially pointed out that there is next to nothing connecting Gülen's views to the emphasis placed on 'gender justice' by so-called progressive Muslims.¹⁶² Despite Gülen having proved himself capable of contextualizing and opposing a practice such as polygamy, overall he adopts a literal and conservative approach to Quranic verses and hadiths concerning women and gender relations. Furthermore, contrary to Andrea's connecting Gülen positively to Islamic feminism,¹⁶³ he does not qualify for inclusion even in its most conservative strand.¹⁶⁴ Not only are his interpretations of the Islamic sources much too patriarchal, but women's rights as such have never been a central concern for Gülen, who has engaged with it rather defensively either when denouncing feminism, or responding to questions about women's rights in Islam. Indeed, his responses to such questions provide some clues as to why he has been portrayed as having progressive gender views not merely by sympathizers promoting him vis-à-vis a Western audience, but also by some non-Turkish scholars. While having easy access to Gülen's interviews and select

translations of his publications, such scholars are not necessarily in a position to detect the ‘doublespeak’ that appears when these are considered next to Gülen’s writings in Turkish.

The claim that Gülen has progressive gender views can be considered also in relation to actual practices among Muslims. In this connection, while his views can appear progressive in comparison with how Islam is practiced in parts of the Muslim world, the most meaningful reference point is his native country, Turkey. It is primarily in this context that some commentators have pointed to a discrepancy between Gülen’s gender views and the conservative practices of his followers. However, this discrepancy is more imaginary than real, and follows from both the misrepresentation of Gülen’s gender views, and the misconception of his position on issues such as the headscarf as being something more than strategic pragmatism aimed at avoiding confrontation with the then-secular establishment in Turkey.¹⁶⁵ Despite Gülen’s claim that ‘Turkish Islam’ is non-patriarchal, Turkey has always been a very patriarchal society,¹⁶⁶ conservative interpretations of Islam have constituted one source of this,¹⁶⁷ and Gülen and his followers have been and remain a complicit force of religion in this respect.

Beyond explicitly promoting women’s subordination, Gülen has aggressively sought to undermine feminism by not merely depicting it as a ‘reactionary movement’ that was ‘doomed to imbalance’ and ‘ended up in extremism’ by ‘being full of hatred towards men’ and ‘trying to establish [women’s] dominance,’ but also constituting it as an evil force that ‘God curses’ due to how it challenges his essentialist conception of what it means to be man and woman respectively and, by extension, his patriarchal conception of a natural-divine division of labor between them.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, Gülen’s strategic pragmatism can be argued to have contributed to undermine the struggle for women’s rights on the part of the Muslim women’s movement in the 1990s – this, not least, with regard to its fight against the headscarf ban in higher education.¹⁶⁹ In the more recent context of Turkey having made notable progress with regard to women’s rights and gender equality – this, especially through post-2000 legislative reforms aimed at integration with the European Union¹⁷⁰ – the Gülen movement has been actively involved in ‘the propagation of patriarchal religious values sanctioning secondary roles for women through the state bureaucracy, as well as through the educational system and civil society organisations.’¹⁷¹ All in all, Gülen and his community of followers are but a deeply conservative force with respect to women’s rights and gender equality in Turkey.

Notes

1. Sunni orthodoxy in the Hanafi legal tradition and the Nakşibendi sufi order were central to Gülen’s religious training, but he became increasingly influenced by Said Nursi’s Quranic exegesis *Risale-i Nur* in the 1960s.

2. Gülen, *Towards the Lost Paradise*, 18–19.
3. Çetinsaya, “Rethinking Nationalism and Islam.”
4. Knowlton, “Turk Who Leads.”
5. Yucel, “Fethullah Gülen,” 1.
6. Hansen, “Global Imam.”
7. While the exact source(s) of the fallout in question remain unclear, the conflict between the government and the Gülen movement intensified significantly with the launching of a fraud and corruption investigation with links to four ministers in December 2013. The National Security Council designated the Gülen movement as a “terrorist organization” in May 2016, and Gülen and his followers are accused of being behind the failed coup d’état of 15 July 2016.
8. Turam, *Between Islam and the State*, 114ff.
9. Yavuz, “Gülen Movement,” 29.
10. Kurtz, “Gülen’s Paradox,” 380.
11. Çelik, “Gülen Movement,” 51.
12. Aras and Caha, “Fethullah Gülen,” 33.
13. Andrea, “Women and Their Rights,” 150, 157.
14. Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, 19ff.
15. Andrea, “Women and Their Rights,” 146. Andrea is Celia Jacobs Endowed Professor in British Literature at the University of Texas, San Antonio. Her fields of specialization include “women’s studies”, “interactions between Islam and the West in the early modern period”, and “contemporary women’s writings from the Islamic world” (<http://colfa.utsa.edu/english/andrea.html>; accessed August 5, 2016).
16. *Ibid.*, 148. Beyond Gülen’s webpage, Andrea draws on a promotion book published by the Gülen movement (Ünal and Williams, *Advocate of Dialogue*).
17. Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 62–4.
18. Andrea, “Women and Their Rights,” 148–9.
19. *Ibid.*, 156.
20. Gülen, “Interview with Fethullah Gülen,” 464.
21. Sevindi, “Minutes with Fethullah Gülen.”
22. *Ibid.*
23. Ünal and Williams, *Advocate of Dialogue*, 63.
24. Sevindi, “Minutes with Fethullah Gülen.”
25. Andrea, “Women and Their Rights,” 154.
26. Gülen, “Women Confined and Mistreated.”
27. Gülen, “Women’s Rights in Islam.”
28. Sevindi, *Contemporary Islamic Conversations*, 66.
29. Andrea, “Women and Their Rights,” 150.
30. *Ibid.*, 152.
31. *Ibid.*, 154.
32. Gülen, “Women’s Rights in Islam.”
33. Andrea, “Women and Their Rights,” 150, 157.
34. Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 62, 64.
35. Gülen, *Questions and Answers*, 1: 123.
36. Gülen, “What Are Your Ideas.”
37. Gülen, “What Would You Say”; Gülen, “Women Confined and Mistreated.”
38. Gülen, “Women’s Rights in Islam.”
39. Gülen, “What Are Your Ideas.”
40. Gülen, “What Would You Say.”

41. Gülen, *Speech and Power*, 47.
42. Gülen, *Ölümsüzlük iksiri*, 57.
43. Gülen, *Speech and Power*, 48.
44. Gülen, "Tribute to Mothers."
45. Gülen, "What Would You Say."
46. Gülen, *Asrın getirdiği tereddütler* 3, 136.
47. Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 62, 64.
48. Gülen, *Speech and Power*, 47.
49. *Ibid.*, 47–9.
50. Gülen, "Tribute to Mothers."
51. Gülen, *Speech and Power*, 50.
52. Gülen, *Questions and Answers*, 1: 87–8.
53. Gülen, *Ölçü veya yoldaki ışıklar*, 75.
54. *Ibid.*, 171; Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 62, 64.
55. Gülen, *Enginliğiyle bizim dünyamız*, 171.
56. Gülen, *Varlığın metafizik boyutu*, 347.
57. Gülen, *Ölümsüzlük iksiri*, 49.
58. Gülen, *Messenger of God*, 407.
59. Gülen, *Enginliğiyle bizim dünyamız*, 171.
60. Gülen, *Asrın getirdiği tereddütler* 3, 96–7.
61. Andrea, "Women and Their Rigihts," 149.
62. Gülen, *Cemre beklentisi*, 117.
63. Gülen, *Varlığın metafizik boyutu*, 353.
64. Gülen, *Questions and Answers*, 2: 116.
65. Gülen, *Asrın getirdiği tereddütler* 3, 136–7.
66. *Ibid.*; see Gülen, "Kız çocuklariyla alâkalı."
67. Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 41; Gülen, *Questions and Answers*, 2: 114.
68. Gülen, *Ölçü veya yoldaki ışıklar*, 155; Gülen, *Çekirdekten çınara*, 193.
69. Gülen, "Cinsiyet mevzuu."
70. Gülen, *Essentials of Islamic Faith*, 242.
71. Gülen, *Questions and Answers*, 1: 87.
72. Gülen, *Questions and Answers*, 2: 114.
73. Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 41.
74. Gülen, "What Would You Say."
75. Gülen, "Aile ve önemi."
76. *Ibid.*
77. Gülen, *Ölümsüzlük iksiri*, 52.
78. Gülen, *Asrın getirdiği tereddütler* 3, 135–6.
79. *Ibid.*, 136.
80. Gülen, *Ölümsüzlük iksiri*, 52.
81. *Ibid.*
82. Gülen, *Enginliğiyle bizim dünyamız*, 149–51.
83. Gülen, *Messenger of God*, 162.
84. *Ibid.*, 74.
85. *Ibid.*
86. Gülen, "Peygamberimiz ve söz."
87. Gülen, *Ölçü veya yoldaki ışıklar*, 73.
88. Ahmed, *Women and Gender*, 34.
89. Gülen, *Asrın getirdiği tereddütler* 2, 165ff.
90. Gülen, *Asrın getirdiği tereddütler* 3, 130.

91. Ibid., 130–2.
92. Kurucan, “Intra-Family Violence.”
93. Eissa, “Constructing the Notion.”
94. Nursi, *Words*, 761.
95. Gülen, *Enginliğiyle bizim dünyamız*, 51.
96. Gülen, *Vuslat muştusu*, 135.
97. Gülen, “Women’s Rights in Islam.”
98. Gülen, “Women Confined and Mistreated.”
99. Gülen, *Fasıldan fasıla 1*, 109.
100. Gülen, *Çekirdekten çmara*, 53–4.
101. Gülen, “Women’s Rights in Islam.”
102. Gülen, *Questions and Answers*, 1: 123.
103. Ibid.
104. Gülen, “What Are Your Ideas.”
105. Gülen, *Asrın getirdiği tereddütler 2*, 47.
106. Gülen, “What Would You Say.”
107. Gülen, “Women’s Rights in Islam.”
108. Ibid.
109. Gülen, “Women Confined and Mistreated.”
110. Gülen, “What Would You Say.”
111. Gülen, “Women’s Rights in Islam.”
112. Young, “Logic of Masculinist Protection.”
113. Gülen, *Ölçü veya yoldaki ışıklar*, 72, 74.
114. Gülen, “Women Confined and Mistreated.”
115. Gülen, *Vuslat muştusu*, 135.
116. Gülen, “Kız çocuklariyla alâkalı.”
117. Gülen, *Ölümsüzlük iksiri*, 53.
118. Gülen, “Women’s Rights in Islam.”
119. Gülen, “What Are Your Ideas.”
120. Gülen, “Women’s Rights in Islam.”
121. This links up with the scientific debate on human traits and behaviour being influenced by biological and/or environmental factors, which regarding gender concerns “the relative importance of genetics, anatomy, and physiology (nature) as compared with physical environment, socialization, and social structure (nurture) in producing gender difference (or the appearance of gender difference).” Cohan, “Nature/Nurture Debate”, 601. However, the point here is not to engage this debate as such, but rather to use the nature-nurture distinction to tease out tensions within Gülen’s gender thoughts.
122. Sevindi, *Contemporary Islamic Conversations*, 65.
123. Ibid.
124. Ibid., 72. While Gülen is a key proponent of Islam in Turkey being different from and superior to Islam elsewhere, the idea of a distinct “Turkish Islam” that is liberal, pluralist and modern goes beyond this and is claimed to be rooted historically in the influence of Hanafi jurisprudence, Maturidi theology and Sufi mysticism, as well as in the relationship that developed between the state and Islam in the late-Ottoman Empire. Uğur, “Intellectual Roots of “Turkish Islam””; Mardin, “Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism”.
125. Gülen, “Kız çocuklariyla alâkalı.”
126. Ibid.
127. Gülen, *Messenger of God*, xxiii–iv.

128. Gülen, "Compassion."
129. Gülen, "Questions and Answers."
130. Ibid.
131. Ibid.
132. In this connection, it has been argued that "Gülen men demonstrate alternative masculinities ... than is 'the norm' in Turkey". Pandya, "Creating Peace on Earth", 110. In contrast to the macho "Gazi warrior archetype [of] the powerful, heroic male warrior, who fought to spread Islam", Gülen's masculinity has been seen to evoke "Sufi sainthood" and include "concepts that have typically been stereotyped as feminine, such as 'love, submission, and subservience'", and Gülen is treated by his male followers as an "ideal man" to be imitated. Pandya, "Gazi Warrior Vs. Sufi Mystic", 46, 53, 56; Karatop, "New Muslim Male Subjectivities", 45. For a general discussion on Islamic and Muslim masculinities, see Aslam, *Gender-Based Explosions*, 90–143.
133. Kurucan, "Intra-Family Violence."
134. Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 40.
135. Gülen, "Kız çocuklariyla alâkalı."
136. Gülen, *Questions and Answers*, 1: 123 (my italics). For Gülen, the prophet-related problem of "having children" refers not merely to the ability to give birth as such, but to the menstrual period (which in the Turkish version is said to last and make women "deficient" for 15 days each month), the "necessary confinement before and after childbirths", and the child-rearing responsibilities ascribed to women. Ibid.; Gülen, *Asrın getirdiği tereddütler 2*, 47–8.
137. Gülen, "Women's Rights in Islam."
138. Gülen, *Messenger of God*, 74.
139. Gülen, *Towards a Global Civilization*, 206.
140. Gülen, *Essentials of Islamic Faith*, 132.
141. Gülen, *Questions and Answers*, 2: 67–8.
142. Gülen, *Enginliğiyle bizim dünyamız*, 70.
143. Ibid., 68, 63.
144. Ibid., 51.
145. Ibid., 72.
146. Ibid., 63–4.
147. Gülen, *Speech and Power*, 50.
148. Gülen, "Kız çocuklariyla alâkalı."
149. Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 87.
150. Ünal and Williams, *Advocate of Dialogue*, 36.
151. Ibid., 169.
152. Ibid., 63ff.
153. Gülen, "Women's Rights in Islam."
154. Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity*, 201.
155. Gülen, *Enginliğiyle bizim dünyamız*, 59.
156. Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 88–9.
157. Gülen, *Enginliğiyle bizim dünyamız*, 64.
158. Agai, "Islam and Education," 162.
159. Gülen, *Enginliğiyle bizim dünyamız*, 72.
160. Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 92.
161. Ünal and Williams, *Advocate of Dialogue*, v.
162. Safi, *Progressive Muslims*.
163. Andrea, "Women and Their Rights," 149.

164. Salah, "From *Ijtihad* to Gender *Jihad*," 32–5.
165. Contrary to claims quoted in the introduction, some studies on women and gender relations within the Gülen movement indicate that certain segments (especially outside of Turkey) might actually have more progressive gender views than Gülen. Curtis, "Among the Heavenly Branches"; Pandya, "Creating Peace on Earth."
166. Arat, *Patriarchal Paradox*, 22–46.
167. Müftüler-Bac, "Turkish Women's Predicament."
168. Gülen, "Women Confined and Mistreated"; Gülen, *Ölumsuzlük İksiri*, 46–7; Gülen, *Asrın getirdiği tereddütler* 3, 136–7; Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla* 2, 231.
169. Turam, *Islam and the State*, 126–30.
170. Fougner and Kurtoğlu, "Gender Policy."
171. Arat, "Religion, Politics and Gender," 869–70.

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