

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Gendered Representations of Urban Life in Late Ottoman and Early Republican Turkish Novels

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## Abstract

*The transformation of gender-based relations is one of the issues that late Ottoman and early Republican novels focus on in the context of Turkish modernization. The difference and contribution of this study is that it discusses gender relations with an intersectional approach by including the transformation of urban spatiality that progresses parallel to the history of modernization. By synthesizing literary and sociological perspectives, it explores how gender roles and identities were shaped by modernization in terms of sharing urban spaces. Using qualitative thematic analysis, this study focuses on four novels written between 1874 and 1931—Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat, Araba Sevdası, Çalikuşu, and Fatih-Harbiye—where the sense of urban space is a central theme. Findings indicate that in the Republican period, women developed a stronger sense of identity and belonging in urban spaces, reflecting broader social transformations. Key aspects include shifts in traditional gender roles, a small opportunity to experience the city, walking safely on the street, and lastly the feeling of belonging in the city. This study highlights that women's engagement with the city extends beyond a simple male-female dichotomy, requiring an intersectional discussion of social backgrounds. By combining gender studies, literary analysis, and urban sociology, this research offers a nuanced understanding of gender, spatiality, and modernization in Turkish literature and history.*

**Keywords:** Urban sociology, Urban identity, Turkish modernization, Turkish novels, Gender-based spatialities

## Öz

*Cinsiyet temelli ilişkilerin dönüşümü Osmanlı son dönem ve Cumhuriyet ilk dönem romanlarının Türk modernleşmesi ekseninde odaklandığı konulardan biridir. Bu çalışmanın farkı ve katkısı ise modernleşme tarihiyle paralel ilerleyen kentsel mekanın dönüşümünü de araştırmaya dahil ederek toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerini kesişimsel bir yaklaşımla tartışmasıdır. Bir başka deyişle bu çalışma edebi ve sosyolojik perspektifleri sentezleyerek toplumsal cinsiyet kimliklerinin kentsel mekânların paylaşımı açısından modernleşme tarafından nasıl şekillendirildiğini araştırır. Çalışmanın yöntemi niteliksel tematik analiz olup, kapsamı ise 1874-1931 yılları arasında yazılan, kentsel mekan duygusunun merkezi bir tema olduğu Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat, Araba Sevdası, Çalikuşu, Fatih-Harbiye romanlarıdır. Bulgular, Cumhuriyet döneminde kadınların, modernleşme projeleriyle yönlendirilen daha geniş toplumsal değişimleri yansıtan, kentsel mekanlara bağlı daha güçlü bir kimlik ve aidiyet duygusu geliştirmeye başladığını ortaya koymaktadır. Geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini, şehri deneyimlemek için küçük bir fırsatı, sokakta güvenli bir şekilde yürümeyi ve son olarak şehirde aidiyet duygusunu vurgulayan temel bulgular, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son döneminden Cumhuriyet'in ilk dönemine kadar kentsel mekanlarda kadınların temsili açısından kademeli dönüşümleri göstermektedir. Bu geçiş süreci kentle geliştirilen ilişkinin basit bir kadın-erkek ayrımından daha fazlasını içerdiğini ve kesişimsel bir yaklaşımla kadınların toplumsal arkaplanlarının tartışmaya dahil edilmesi gerektiğini bize göstermektedir. Bu çalışma kadın çalışmalarını, edebi analizi ve kentsel yaşama ilişkin sosyolojik perspektifleri birleştirerek, toplumsal cinsiyet, mekansallık ve modernleşme konusunda nüanslı bir anlayış sunmaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kent sosyolojisi, Kentsel kimlik, Türk modernleşmesi, Türk romanı, Cinsiyet temelli mekansallıklar

## Introduction

Modernization period novels and gender analyses have often been subjected to sociological analysis in Turkish literature. The difference and contribution of this study is to develop the historical, sociological, and literary analysis of urban space and identity by looking at modernization and gender issues with an interdisciplinary approach. Urban identity is blended with different identity processes of individuals. It is a unique, dynamic, and open-to-change-and-transformative identity. In the literature, urban identity is defined as “place identity,” “locality,” “character of a place,” “image of a place,” “sense of place,” and “spirituality of place,” all of which belong to urban identity as the concept of “distinctiveness.”. All these justified definitions express places as distinguishable from each other (Crang & Thrift, 2000; Crysler, 2003; Lynch, 1960 as cited in Cheshmehzangi, 2015, p.395). However, the formation of this urban identity is possible with the interaction of different identities. The combination of different identities of individuals or communities, such as age, gender, class, family, and education, forms the basis of their communication with the city and the identity they produce about the city. For this reason, in this study, we find it more meaningful to use the concept of *sense of space* when talking about urban identity. This understanding, which requires an intersectional approach, accepts that individuals' different backgrounds will bring different understandings about the city, while at the same time it accepts that structural relations such as patriarchy transform these identities. For this reason, it questions urban identity and the relationship with the city by including both the structure and the agent.

Both the structural transformations such as urbanization and modernization experienced in the historical process and the identity changes related to them have changed the perceptions and relationships of women and men towards the city. Although this change was not rapid, it was visibly effective. The best places to analyse this change are Turkish novels because the history of modernization is very parallel to the history of the novel. For this reason, four different novels (*Taaşşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat*, *Araba Sevdası*, *Çalığışu*, *Fatih-Harbiye*)

from the late Ottoman period and the early Republican period, when the modernization process began to be effective, will be analysed.

These four novels—*Taaşşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat*, *Araba Sevdası*, *Çalığışu*, and *Fatih-Harbiye*—offer significant insights into modernization, the transformation in the sense of urban space, and gender relations in late Ottoman and early Republican Turkish literature. Each novel presents a different perspective on how modernization transforms societal structures, particularly regarding gender roles and urban experiences. *Taaşşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat* (1874) is one of the first Ottoman novels, reflecting early modernization debates. It highlights traditional gender norms and restrictions on women's mobility, particularly within domestic spaces. The novel critiques arranged marriages and the limited agency of women in a transitioning society. *Araba Sevdası* (1898) portrays the superficial adoption of Westernization in Istanbul's urban elite. The protagonist, Bihruz Bey, embodies a failed modernization attempt, while women in the novel navigate both traditional and emerging social roles, reflecting the gendered impacts of modernization. *Çalığışu* (1922) explores the contrast between urban and rural modernization through Feride's journey. Her experiences in Istanbul and Anatolia reveal how women's roles shift with education and work, emphasizing urban spaces as sites of both freedom and restriction. Moreover, *Çalığışu* discusses the relation between public and private spaces. *Fatih-Harbiye* (1931) directly contrasts traditional and modern urban lifestyles, using two Istanbul districts as metaphors for societal transformation. The protagonist, Neriman, struggles between conservative and modern gender expectations, illustrating the impact of urban spaces on women's identity and agency.

Together, these novels depict the intersection of modernization, urban spatiality, and gender, showing how cities serve as both catalysts and barriers for social change. As a result of the thematic analysis, which is a qualitative method, four different findings were discussed, and their effects were combined with a sociological perspective. These findings—stressing traditional gender roles, a small opportunity to experience the city, walking

safely on the street, and lastly the feeling of belonging in the city—showed that there was a transformation with the transition from the Ottoman period to the Republic of Turkey, but this transformation cannot be understood only with a simple distinction between women and men in the study. The different backgrounds of women's identities produce the main distinction, and also it is seen that as the heterogeneity in the city increases, a distinction is made in the sense of the city.

### **Literature Review: Urban Spaces During Turkish Modernization Process**

The modernization process, which began in Europe in the 17th century and spread throughout the world in the twentieth century, first with the "Enlightenment" and subsequently with the "Industrial Revolution," resulted in social, political, and economic reorganization of society (Jones, 2016). As the modernization practices and innovative policies attempted to be implemented in the last period of the Ottoman Empire were reflected in society, the urban population living within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, in particular, underwent social and cultural change (Samourkasidou & Kalergis, 2021). Although women did not undergo revolutionary transformations, they were also granted limited freedoms and began to engage in social activities. Sancar (1994) explains the importance of this urban population, which is at the centre of our subject, by saying that the aristocratic-orientated elite, upper class, and women, most of whom came from the families of palace or state administrators, made significant contributions to this process with the associations they founded and the journals they published in the 19th century. The common idea of the various ideologies that produced solutions to save the country from this period until the declaration of the Republic was that the society would take shape in the hands of educated, enlightened, modern mothers. The approach of modernising or being modernised of the mothers of the new society became an issue adopted by women writers. This attitude determined the modern woman type in the wide period from 1877, when the first women's novel was pub-

lished, to 1923 (Coşkun, 2010, p. 932). Coşkun mentions in her study (2010) that there are 4 different types of women by considering the measure of modernization. She states that the first women's novels generally bring about common types because they are structured around women's issues. These types are traditional, western, western snob, and foreign women.

The difference and importance of our study is not to categorise women or gender roles during the modernization process but to analyse the relationship between women and men and urban identity by taking these categories into account. Each gender structure directly affects the interaction with space, and gender, which is an important part of our identity, plays a decisive role in the production of urban space and the relationships with the space (Karameşe, 2023a). It is also a reality that the use of the city by women and men has changed over time from the late Ottoman Empire to the early Turkish Republic with the effect of increasing policies based on modernization projects. In the early Republican period, women's issues became the new regime's top priority, and the identity of modern Turkish women was presented as a "cultural indicator" that demonstrated Turkish national and modern identity to the world, rather than an equal citizenship status (Dönmez, 2018).

The basis for choosing novels to conduct these analyses is that novels are sociological, historical, and literary phenomena. For this reason, it is possible to understand the historical and social dynamics of the period in which they were written by analysing the content of the novels. According to Şeker (2017), the plot and characters of the novel are naturally affected by the change in social conditions. Just as the Western novel made its real big leap with industrial capitalism, the Turkish novel, although it has a history, was also influenced by the West and was able to gain an identity with the Tanzimat process. Because the Tanzimat implemented important social regulations regarding the social structure. In this process of social change, the subjects of the novels changed, and the female novel characters also received their share of this. According to Mardin (1991), Ottoman literature is a rarely used source when examining Turkish modernization. However, it is possible to find very

valuable observations and information about Istanbul and the Ottoman Empire in the novels. These novels also provide the opportunity to observe the difficulties caused by the social transformation experienced with the Tanzimat in the 19th century. These novels generally focus on two subjects: the place of women in society and the Westernization of upper-class men. For instance, the novel *Araba Sevdası*, which is one of the fundamental novels discussed in our study, was examined by Mardin. It was discussed how neighborhoods like Beyoğlu (Pera) produced a different sense of space during the modernization process of upper-class men.

In the meantime, no concessions were made to carry the representations of women within the gender hierarchy constructed by the society into the novel. After the War of Independence, the reflections of the establishment of the Republic and the social reforms created by the Kemalist cadres on the individual and society were transferred to the pages of the novel, while the social structure was processed with the theses of “nationalization” in a different way from the Tanzimat period. For the Ottoman Empire, the 19th century was a period when urbanization became especially important. When we look at the population structure of the period, we see that there were striking increases in the demographic structure of the country. With the opening of the country to foreign markets and the development of transportation technology in the 19th century, the rate of urbanization also increased (Tekeli, 1985). In this period, due to the rapid population growth, the diversity within the city has also increased. With factors such as transportation and trade centres, bourgeois and immigrant neighbourhoods, and military barracks, city life has not only grown but also entered a process of change (Aktüre, 1978, p. 220). However, the urbanization of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century differed significantly from Western urbanization in several ways. First, Ottoman cities experienced a rapid influx of rural populations, which led to a transformation in urban demographics and social structures, whereas Western cities generally evolved over a longer period of time through industrialization and migration from rural areas (Ar-

naud, 2008). This divergence shows that the Turkish urbanization process differs from the Western typology. In particular, we see the phenomenon of intense industrialization and urbanization after 1950 in the Turkish context (Erman, 2004). For this reason, this discussion does not see the history of modernization and urbanization as identical, but examines how the modernization process transformed the usage of urban space, especially in terms of gender.

In the process of modernization, Istanbul takes the lead in the formation of urban identity with its heterogeneous structure. However, due to this heterogeneous structure of Istanbul, it is not right to talk about a single urban identity. Beyoğlu, which is frequently mentioned in Turkish novels, attracts attention as an urban space in Istanbul. Beyoğlu's space identity has evolved significantly over time, characterized by its fluid and often ambiguous boundaries, particularly in relation to its historical counterpart, Pera. Historically, Beyoğlu has served as a melting pot of cultures and communities, with its name reflecting the influence of various groups. The region's development was propelled by its role as a commercial hub, attracting foreign merchants and diplomats, which facilitated a blend of Western and Ottoman lifestyles. The 19th century marked a period of modernization and urbanization in Beyoğlu, as reforms and increased foreign presence transformed it into a vibrant center of social and economic activity. Today, Beyoğlu continues to embody a unique space identity that juxtaposes its historical roots with contemporary urban life, reflecting a rich tapestry of cultural influences and ongoing development (Demircan, 2023, pp. 14-17).

Nevertheless, when looking at gender-based urban spaces, which is the main focus of this study, it is understood that the literature is more limited. As in each traditional construction, private places like houses were meeting places for women, and public spaces were designed for men (Kamla, 2014); however, in the age of the late Ottoman Empire, with the effect of modernization, paces for men and women can be found. The public's interest in recreational areas began in the Tulip Era (1718-1730). These areas were socialization areas. People went to these recreational areas for various



reasons, such as getting fresh air, walking, resting, and having fun. However, conservative writers of the period criticised the fact that recreational areas deviated from their original purpose and became meeting places for men and women (Bayram, 2017). While there was a transformation in urban areas in terms of man and woman relationships, the significant change has been seen with the foundation of the of the Turkish Republic, as it is clarified before.

The Republican period is a period in which social and political change took place in a more radical and widespread manner, and in parallel, changed society. In this period, writers undertook a mission to announce and have the activities of the new regime adopted by the masses (Oguzhan, 2007, p. 120). In this sense, novels, which are products of westernization, serve as an important tool. Although in the novels still women have been represented as passive victims to some extent, it has been seen that as mothers they were expected to grow new generations parallel to modernization values (Oguzhan, 2007, p. 121). In this regard, in the Turkish Republic era, women seem to have gained more opportunity to experience the city more.

As a result, modern novels that entered Turkish literature in the 19th century were selected for analysis in order to understand the transformation in gender representations in urban areas. They convey daily city life, which we rarely see in previous literary texts. Nevertheless, the most important aspect of these novels is that they are set in Istanbul and feature female characters who come from a variety of backgrounds and identities. In other words, in this research, the novels will be examined chronologically to show how the use of the city spaces by men and women differed in the two periods. However, the reason for choosing the novels that are the subject of this theme analysis is that they focus on women and do not portray them as a single group. A classification method was chosen that would allow for the understanding of class, education and family differences among women. For this reason, these novels aim to develop a nuanced understanding based on the use of urban space and modernization process by women and men. Since all the texts are romance novels, male

and female roles provide more opportunities to analyse their representations in urban areas.

### Method: Thematic Analysis

The main research question in this research is that how the representation of man and woman urban identities has transformed from the late Ottoman Empire to the early Turkish Republican Period with the effect of the modernization process in Turkish novels.

To answer this research question, four novels have been analysed in the light of men's and women's city experiences and their use of the city. *Taaşşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat* and *Araba Sevdası* belong to the late Ottoman Empire era, and *Çalılıkusu* and *Fatih-Harbiye* belong to the early Turkish Republic Era. All these novels were found to be very influential in their ages, and also, they were chosen as cases for this study to analyse clearly the changes of urban in terms of men and women by comparing late Ottoman and early Turkish Republican. These four novels reflect the social and historical dynamics of their respective periods, addressing themes such as urban life, female representation, and modernization projects. *Taaşşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat* (1872), recognised as the first Turkish novel, reflects the cultural transformations of the Tanzimat Era. While it does not directly focus on urban life, it explores early modernization's impact on relationships and social values. *Fitnat* represents the tension between traditional gender roles and emerging modern influences, offering insights into women's constrained roles within a changing society. Similarly, *Araba Sevdası* (1896), written towards the end of the Tanzimat period, provides a critical portrayal of Istanbul's affluent neighbourhoods and satirises the superficial aspects of modernization and Westernization. The novel indirectly highlights women's societal roles through its critique of materialism and appearances.

In *Çalılıkusu* (1922), the novel portrays Istanbul as both a space of opportunity and restriction for women. Feride, an educated woman, navigates urban spaces while struggling with societal expectations. Her experiences reflect how modernization shaped gender roles and how women's mobility in the city was regulated by social norms. The novel

also contrasts urban and rural life. Feride's departure from Istanbul to Anatolia highlights the differences in modernization across regions. While Istanbul represents changing gender dynamics, rural areas reinforce traditional roles, revealing how urbanization influences gender relations. This contrast helps examine how space and geography shape women's experiences. Additionally, *Çalığışu* explores the division between public and private spaces. Feride's movements between homes, schools, and streets illustrate the limitations on women's access to the city. However, her role as a teacher in an urban setting demonstrates a shifting sense of agency. The novel ultimately offers a rich perspective on how women's roles, identities, and urban experiences evolved during the late Ottoman and early Republican periods, making it highly relevant for an urban and gender-based analysis. Finally, *Fatih-Harbiye* (1931) juxtaposes Istanbul's traditional Fatih neighbourhood with the modern Harbiye district, symbolising the tension between tradition and modernity. Neriman, caught between these two worlds, represents the challenges faced by women during the early Republican period as they negotiated their identities in an evolving urban landscape.

As a result, together, these novels illustrate the evolution of urban identity and gender roles in Turkey, particularly the increasing representation of women in urban spaces as agents of change. They offer a rich interdisciplinary perspective by connecting literature, sociology, and the history of modernization, making them invaluable resources for understanding the complex interplay of gender, urban life, and societal transformation.

We chose thematic analysis as a method because it would be easier to extract and analyse common themes about the gender, urban and transitions because these novels were written in similar periods and were part of the modernization process. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that involves exploring a data set for, analysing, and reporting recurring patterns. This method can be used as an analytic method on its own or as the foundation for additional qualitative research methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme is a more abstract entity that involves integrating

and integrating data, unlike categories that provide description and organization. Researchers can identify themes irrespective of the frequency of a particular idea or item related to that theme. The importance of a theme is not necessarily reflective of its frequency. Researchers have flexibility in identifying themes but should aim to identify those that provide important insights that address the research question (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

The most important advantages of thematic analysis are providing researchers with flexibility in addressing research questions, examining data types, analysing volume, choosing a theoretical framework, and analysing data using either an inductive or deductive approach (Clarke & Braun, 2013). By regarding all these advantages of this method, we have used Clark and Braun's thematic analysis steps that are becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and finally writing up the process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After determining the novels according to the historical process and suitability of the subject, they were read in more than one way to answer the research question, and initial codes were determined, and then themes were defined. Research enquiries regarding the process of creating urban identity, urban space, gender dynamics, and power relations between men and women formed the basis of the thematic framework.

## Findings

In this section, we have analysed four novels that we selected while considering historical transformations. The main findings involve the move from traditional gender relations to the public space, in which women are increasingly represented, and the increasing sense of space that women develop towards the city.

### Taaşuk-ı Talât ve Fitnat: Stressing Traditional Gender Roles

Taaşuk-ı Talât ve Fitnat, written by Şemseddin Sami, began to be serialised in the Hadika newspaper in 1872 and was first published in book form in 1874. Fitnat and Talat's love story takes place in a

lower middle class neighborhood in Istanbul (Gawrych, 2010). Talat, a young and well-educated man, falls in love with Fitnat, a beautiful and virtuous young woman he often sees from his window. Due to the societal norms and gender segregation of the time, Talat cannot openly approach Fitnat, so he disguises himself as a woman to gain access to her home. Fitnat is raised by her stepfather, who plans to marry her off to a much older and wealthy man, Ali Bey, against her will. She harbours feelings for Talat but is unaware of his true identity when he visits her disguised as a woman. Then, Fitnat is forced to marry Ali Bey by her stepfather and the people around her. In the end, she overcomes despair upon learning the truth and is unable to reunite with Talat; Fitnat takes her own life. Talat, devastated by her death, also dies shortly afterward. Ali Bey becomes insane and is found dead in his house.

Fitnat, as a young woman, has no city experience since she was not allowed to go out after she graduated primary school when she was 8. She stays home all day and tambours alone or with an old lady, Şerife Kadın, who mainly accompanies her and teaches her how to tambour. On the other hand, Talat, who completed his education and goes to his job every day, has more chances to interact with the city. While commuting to work, he had the opportunity to experience Istanbul, which was only known as Suriçi at the time. He leaves his home in Aksaray in the mornings for his work in Şehzadebaşı, and when he returns after work, he interacts with people on the way.

"Everyday life can become understood as the mediator of rights underpinning the usage of urban space to its fullest extent" (Beebeejaun, 2017, p. 327). Being outside at the start and end of work hours can be counted as a part of everyday life. It is understood that only men benefitted from this right at that time; however, since women did not have the opportunity to get a regular job during this period, they were deprived of this experience. In this case, Fitnat's situation should be understood in this way. The reason why Fitnat stays at home is that domestic relationships are designed for women (Kamla, 2014), and therefore she is excluded from daily city life. As a result, it is understood clearly that she does not have city experience

as much as Talat because she does not have an opportunity to go out as much as Talat. There are still a number of gender inequalities and injustices in urban areas today that restrict their participation in the labour market and educational opportunities and hinder the development of talents among young women. These include urban mobility, personal safety and security, and representation in the city. It is clear from the novel that these inequalities were more acute, accepted, and unquestioned at the time (Chant, 2013). It is understood from the novel that reasons such as girls' limited education and lack of job opportunities make them more invisible in the city, and their opportunities to be a part of daily life decrease.

Additionally, the situation of Talat and Fitnat reinforced patriarchal systems by limiting women's access to education, economic opportunities, and public participation, perpetuating gender inequality. This is directly related to the separation between public and private spaces that were discussed before. "Men were associated with public, productive spheres, including paid work outside the home, while women were associated with private, reproductive spheres." (Maksudyan, 2014, p. 1). There is a strict line between Talat and Fitnat. Talat is linked with public spaces, as he is well-educated, has work to do every day, and gained economic independence thanks to his job. In this way, he can quickly get the opportunity to experience the city and attain daily life in the city. Yet, Fitnat is linked with private spaces, as she is uneducated and utterly dependent on her stepfather. She does not even know where she lives in the city since she cannot go out after she finishes primary school.

The book contains the following statements about the stepfather's attitude towards Fitnat:

"He never lets his daughter out of his house. Is it because of bigotry? Is it because of jealousy or fear, I don't know" (Şemseddin Sami, [1874] 2021, p. 54).

The writer uses bigotry here as the opposite of the theme of modern and brings the understanding that bigotry is parallel to the exclusion of women from urban life. Moreover, it is seen that establishing gender roles in this way makes patriarchy stronger, which eventually shapes the city. The visibility of men and the invisibility of women in the

city are related to patriarchal powers. In this urban landscape, the city transforms into a stage for social interaction (Mumford, ([1937] 2011)., yet it is an arena predominantly reserved for men.

Talat's criticism of this situation is remarkable:

"Oh, how poor women suffer!... We prevent them from walking freely and comfortably on the streets.... We depress their spirits to amuse ourselves. We prevent them from walking freely, watching and having fun" (Şemseddin Sami, [1874] 2021, p. 73).

With this quotation we discuss the relationships of the main themes, which are urban space and gender dynamics. It is seen how the rigid boundary separating private and public realms effectively marginalises women, reducing their presence and participation in the city's vibrant social life compared to their male counterparts. This division reinforces traditional gender roles, limiting women's opportunities to engage fully in the collective experiences that the city offers. In this regard, the principles of patriarchy and exclusion of women from daily urban life should be understood together because they foster each other in urban-based discussions. Patriarchal relations and women's exclusion from the public sphere are also related to consumption and entertainment relations. Koyuncu & Tiltay (2017, pp. 13–14), who use the concepts of modernization and Westernization interchangeably, talk about the difference between traditional and Western consumption patterns. While telling and listening to fairy tales, embroidery appears in the works as traditional entertainment and relaxation activities; going to the opera or spending time in a European café are among the common consumption elements discussed in the works. However, what is striking here in terms of our study is that while traditional consumption is identified with women and housework relationships, men are depicted with consumption patterns identified with the public sphere. The authors also expand our discussion by emphasizing that these consumption patterns are class-based. While the situation of Fitnat, who belongs to the lower-middle class, is confined to domestic family relations, Western-modern values are combined with the male-centred perception of urban space use.

As a result, modernization efforts have led to the growing significance of urban space and men-women relations. In his novel, where he describes Istanbul with rich descriptions, Şemseddin Sami critiques traditional perspectives by taking into account the gains of modernization. By criticizing gender relations in the context of Istanbul, he talks about the consequences of keeping women locked up in homes (private places) as subjects of ignorance (Solmaz, 2015). As Kaplan (2004, p. 79) also argues, the novel *Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat* expresses a protest against the oppression of old customs and traditions and the dominance of the family over the youth. In short, urban spaces, which are the main areas of this conflict between the traditional and the modern, are also depicted as areas of power relations between men and women. In other words, the novel portrays a period in which power relations and traditional roles were overemphasised, and women were unable to exist in urban spaces under these roles. Here, the weak position of women (uneducated) in power relations results in their inability to show themselves in urban spaces. Although the historical conditions of this novel, which fall very close to the beginning of modernity attempts, lead to this result, we can still see it as a critique of traditional roles.

### ***Araba Sevdası: A Small Opportunity to Experience the City***

The novel, written by Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem, was serialised in the *Servet-i Fünun* magazine in 1896 and published in 1898. The story follows Bihruz Bey, a young man from an affluent Ottoman family. Obsessed with European fashion and lifestyle, Bihruz strives to project an image of sophistication and wealth despite his lack of genuine substance or understanding of Western culture. His life revolves around showy appearances, such as dressing in fine clothes, frequenting high-society events, and flaunting his elegant phaeton (a type of carriage), which symbolises his vanity and superficiality. According to Mardin (1991), the Westernization attempt has been symbolised in social life by the gap between the Pera (Beyoğlu) area of Istanbul, which allows for all kinds of sins and



is packed with foreigners, and the Muslim neighbourhoods. Although we see a parallelism between upper-class men's Westernization efforts (Mardin, 1991) and a sense developed in response to the new urban space, we also see that Pera, the public area where socialization occurs, still exists with a dominant male representation and that women are not visibly represented in the public area.

However, Bihruz becomes infatuated with Periveş, a woman he encounters in a public park, Çamlıca Park. Mistaking her modest charm for high-class European sophistication, he begins a romantic pursuit, idealising her without knowing much about her accurate background or character. His love is more about the image he has created of her than genuine affection. As the story unfolds, Bihruz learns that Periveş is not the noble lady he imagined but a middle-class woman with no interest in him. His illusions are shattered, exposing the emptiness of his aspirations and his failure to understand the culture he idolises.

In the book, Çamlıca Park, as a public space, is a range and an encounter place for men and women in the city. As mentioned, public spaces were linked with men, and private places were related to women in the city. Çamlıca Park may be an exception to this separation. Here, men and women can enjoy and spend time outside the restricted gender roles since women can walk around outside private places such as their homes. According to Bayram (2017), in the Tulip Era, people were going to these recreational areas for various reasons such as getting fresh air, walking, resting, and having fun.

"Many men and women walked in groups of three or five around the garden, while others sat on couches listening to musicians perform pieces from the fashionable opera "Bel Elen" in Istanbul" (Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem, [1898] 2021, p. 23).

So, "majority" consists of men and women, and women have a chance to use the city in this way.

"When the ladies left home, their decision was to walk down to Samatya, then take the railway to Bakırköy and then to Sakızağacı recreational area" (Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem, [1898] 2021, pp. 58-59)

However, from this quote, we see that the public urban space where women started to leave

home was an alternative, but it was shaped around a boundary and rule. Women drew a safe route for themselves and the point they arrived at was usually a recreational area. What women do in the park (mostly walking) is crucial since it provides an alternate, more fluid sense of urban space (Beebeejaun, 2017, p. 327). Women often navigate the city cautiously, unable to fully immerse themselves in its vibrancy and energy. Rather than enjoying the streets and surroundings, their experience is tinted by a sense of restraint. While they may be unable to access all public spaces or explore every part of the city, Çamlıca Park gives them a sense of urban life to some degree. On the other hand, men have more chances to walk in the city and Çamlıca Park since they are a part of daily city life. In the book, Bihruz only sees Periveş at Çamlıca Park, which becomes their meeting place. In Istanbul, Bihruz graces every public space, bringing a vibrant presence to parks, squares, and bustling streets. In contrast, Perives dwells in more intimate settings, often in homes and the serene surroundings of Çamlıca Park. In this sense, Bihruz has a more urban feel than Periveş since walking, as an everyday activity, demands a fuller interpretation of women's spatial and temporal experiences of the city (Beebeejaun, 2017, p. 327).

Periveş's suggestion to her friend next to her, "They really praise Çamlıca Park. I wonder what it would be like if we went there?" (2021, p. 59) shows that women have a tendency to explore urban spaces, but the effort they later put in to get there also opens the door to a class discussion. In other words, even though Çamlıca Park is a public space where people get together, this togetherness belongs to certain economic classes. Çamlıca Park is far away from the city centre, so insufficient public transportation prevents people from going to Çamlıca Park. People need a ride to go there. To go to Çamlıca Park, you need a phaeton, a charioteer, which you can provide only if you are in the high or middle class. Additionally, an entry fee is charged. Therefore, Çamlıca Park gives women less opportunity to experience the city, as they do not use the whole city, just a part of it; women from the lower class even lack this Çamlıca Park experience. Economic opportunities are essential for women's engagement with the city. Middle-class

women, like Periveş, can stroll in Çamlıca Park, which is just a part of the overall city experience. This can be explained as semi-public space that refers to space between private and public space (Ergun & Kulkul, 2019). Although these spaces are public spaces, they are enclosed areas that produce social segregation for upper middle-class women and produce social segregation still. In that sense, *Araba Sevdası* depicts a small opportunity for women to experience the city twenty years later from the novel *Taaşuk-ı Talât ve Fitnat*. The difference of *Araba Sevdası* from it is giving more space to women in urban space, even if it is under semi-public space conditions and specific to upper- and middle-class women.

### **Walking safely on the street in *Çalığışu***

*Çalığışu*, written by Reşat Nuri Güntekin, was first serialised in *Vatan* newspaper in 1922 and later published as a book in 1923. It belongs to the early Turkish Republic era, which reflects modern Republic State values. The transition from the previous two novels to *Çalığışu* has two main motivations. *Çalığışu* is the most effective of the early Republican novels, featuring a female protagonist from a different background who is educated and in the public arena. This novel will provide a more complicated framework for modernity, urban location, and gender roles by shifting from a monotonous concept of women to a female protagonist with multiple identities.

It tells the story of Feride, a spirited orphan who becomes a teacher in Anatolia after discovering her fiancé Kamran's infidelity. Through her journey, the novel explores independence, societal challenges, and the importance of education. Written in the form of Feride's diary, the book provides an intimate glimpse into her struggles and growth as she faces hardships, prejudices, and personal sacrifices.

Feride is a well-educated woman and a teacher. She has to wander the streets at night with fear and anxiety when she leaves her home after her fiancé's betrayal. As she leaves her home at night, she is alone in the city.

"I would stop in shock if I saw a shadow in the dark or heard a footstep. Who wouldn't be suspicious of a woman wandering alone on a deserted country road at night?" (Güntekin, [1922] 1962, p.100).

Feride thinks it is "suspicious" to be out in the city at night. This demonstrates the lack of trust in the city, which requires trust to sustain social order among its members and foster new growth (Wu, 2015, p. 107). If a man accompanied her, would she still think that way? Trust is something that the city should produce (Wu, 2015, p. 107). The establishment of trust within a city should be rooted not only in the relationships among its residents but also in the thoughtful design of the urban environment itself. A well-designed city can foster connections, enhance safety, and promote a sense of belonging, ultimately creating a stronger foundation for community trust. Deserted roads in the city, as Feride encounters, are unsuitable for this production, as they instill fear and anxiety in a woman walking alone at night. "Female fear," like sexual assault, arises from actual and perceived risk, restricting women's equal and full access to public urban spaces at night (Day, 1999). This is still a valid discussion in the usage of urban spaces, so at the beginning of the modernization project and the Turkish Republic, questioning of women's concerns at night is very remarkable and understandable. In addition to the women's freedom and acquisitions, asking questions about the limits of women's freedom in urban life is a continuing debate currently.

However, when we compare Feride's situation with *Fitnat* and *Periveş*, it can be said that Feride has more opportunities to experience the city. Except for the problem mentioned, she walks around the city, goes to the Ministry of Education, and awaits an appointment to start her job. After her appointment, she taught independently in different regions of Anatolia. As an economically independent woman, she has lived in other cities and experienced them besides Istanbul.

"The old man scratched his neck and said:

A place as big as the palm of your hand. Where would you find Istanbul, whose stones and soil I am devoted to? If it were there, no one would care. There is a lot of gossip here... My advice to you: Be

perfect, be well-behaved. Don't just walk around the market (streets) with your face uncovered." (Güntekin, [1922] 1962, p.122)

Although the above-mentioned distinction is made between Istanbul and other Anatolian cities in the novel in terms of the usage of urban spaces and the effects of modernization process, we see that Feride, as an educated woman, can stay away from traditional patriarchal relationship and this kind of space-based constructions. Fitnat and Periveş had a very different city perspective than Feride. The reasons for this lie behind their backgrounds. Feride is a teacher from a wealthy and intellectual family who lived in the middle of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the young Turkish Republic. On the other hand, Fitnat cannot go out after she finishes primary school, so she does not have a profession and entirely depends on her stepfather in every aspect. Feride knows the city; she knows where to go after she leaves her home and how to get out of the town to do her job, while Fitnat does not have the opportunity to realise she lives in which part of the city.

Periveş is a middle-class and uneducated woman who does not come from an intellectual family and goes to Çamlıca Park in a fancy phaeton. Çamlıca Park can be seen as a part of the city, and it can be said that Perives had the chance to experience the city. Yet, this is a minimal experience when compared to Feride. Feride can walk in the city independently, but Periveş has to rent a car with a friend and go to Çamlıca Park. In all three books, women experience the city differently according to their education, class, and family. So education, class, work life, and family backgrounds of women are very influential and matter in urban life. However, men are not exposed to the same situation as women. Men often traverse the city with a sense of autonomy and confidence, moving freely between its bustling streets and vibrant neighbourhoods. In contrast, women frequently experience a heightened sense of apprehension and fear, which can reflect broader societal issues related to safety. It could be argued that the position of women is more sensitive to the social positionalities in the urban sphere. This discrepancy in experiences highlights the need for a deeper un-

derstanding of urban dynamics and the importance of fostering a welcoming atmosphere where all individuals can navigate their surroundings without anxiety.

### **Fatih-Harbiye: The Feeling of Belonging in the City**

Fatih-Harbiye is a notable novel by Peyami Safa, a prominent Turkish author known for exploring psychological and sociological themes in early 20th-century Turkish literature. The book, published in 1931, delves into Turkey's cultural and social transformations during the Republican era, focusing on the tension between tradition and modernity. Fatih-Harbiye is an allegory of Turkey's transformation during the early Republican period, reflecting the societal conflict between preserving traditional values and embracing Western influences through Neriman's journey. Fatih represents traditional, conservative values, while Harbiye symbolises Westernization, modernity, and progress. Neriman is engaged to Şinasi, a man who embodies the traditional values of Fatih. However, she becomes fascinated by Macit, a cosmopolitan and modern man from Harbiye. Torn between these two men and the values they represent, Neriman's journey reflects her internal struggle to reconcile her roots with her desire for a different life. Neriman's experience and perspective of the city become crucial to Fatih, Harbiye, and eventually Şinasi and Macit.

The book begins with these sentences:

"Neriman and Şinasi left Daru'l-Elhan together and walked together to Vezneciler. Neriman, who was late for a friend's invitation in Beyazıt, was running, leaving Şinasi a little behind." (Safa, [1931] 2000, p.7)

Neriman's city experience is almost equal to Şinasi's. Both live in Fatih, study in Daru'l-Elhan [Music house, conservatory; general name of Istanbul Municipal Conservatory], and mostly hang out in different parts of Fatih, such as Vezneciler, Süleymaniye, and Beyazıt, the conservative side of İstanbul. At the beginning of the book, Neriman's city experience in Fatih is not pleasant for her. She can stroll through the lively streets of Fatih, immersing herself in the vibrant atmosphere of the

neighbourhood. As she wanders, she can discover the city's rich history and culture, surrounded by the bustling crowd that breathes life into the area. However, she is not entirely comfortable in the city while walking around, and she complains about men sitting in coffeehouses in the square, watching people passing by, and being unable to walk comfortably on the street. Although she has a better chance than Fitnat, Perives, and Feride to experience the city due to its modernization, she cannot entirely take advantage of it. On the other hand, she feels more comfortable on the other side of the city, Taksim, Tünel, and Galatasaray, which is related to modernization theme in the book.

"The neighborhood I live in, the house I live in, the people I talk to really get on my nerves. When I pass by Fatih Square, there are so many unemployed people sitting in the square's cafes... A person can't even walk on the road comfortably... Yesterday I looked at the shops from Tünel to Galatasaray. Even the shopkeepers have taste. Then the people are completely different. They don't look back. They know how to walk and dress." (Safa, [1931] 2000, p.26).

This situation relates to restricting women's rights in public and private spaces, which limits their feelings of belonging. (Babeejoon, 2017, p. 327) Neriman's positive feelings and thoughts towards Harbiye are linked to her feeling of belonging. She moves gracefully through the streets, her demeanour radiating a sense of ease as she navigates the vibrant atmosphere of Harbiye. Unlike the more traditional and crowded neighbourhood of Fatih, here she feels a kind of freedom, shielded from the intrusive stares of passers-by. The lively energy of Harbiye envelops her, reinforcing her sense of belonging in this modern and diverse locale. At this point, it is understood that in the later periods of the Republic, the city began to be adopted by different groups, and an urban identity began to form according to the districts as diversity increased. Instead of a single and holistic urban identity under the identity of Istanbul, this analysis leads us to a discussion of the integrative identity of spaces. Karamiş (2023b) argued that while the identity of Fatih refers to more conservative relations, spaces like Taksim are seen as more integrated places in Istanbul. Moreover, Amin (2006)

adds that if the places of a city provide more relationships and connections, we can talk about a good city. At this point, we now see the representation of women in urban life, and in addition to this, we see that women specifically choose certain places in the city and tend to go to places where they feel more comfortable.

This perspective opens the door to the concept of women's right to the city in the future and seeks an answer to one of the biggest debates of modernization: who has the right to the city? (Purcell, 2014). Unfortunately, the right to city literature pays little attention to women specifically (Franck & Paxson, 1989). At the same time, it is understood that women's right to the city is more complicated than it seems and includes many social positions. For this reason, it is impossible to analyse the urbanization and modernization process in terms of gender without discussions of education, class, and family background and also without understanding the spatial identity differences produced within the city. As a result, of these four novels, where the themes of modernization, urban space and gender are examined, we can talk about a more egalitarian city sharing in Fatih Harbiye the most. This last novel, where modernization efforts begin to bear fruit and women begin to use urban spaces much more, gives us more information in terms of gender equality. The fact that women are also selective and begin to construct a sense of space according to their own different identities further expands the discussion. This is one of the biggest motivations for choosing the Fatih Harbiye Novel.

## Conclusion

Gender-based differences in terms of the usage of urban spaces are widely discussed in the literature. However, this research expands the discussion by referring to modernization period novels from the late Ottoman Empire to the early Republican period. Men and women experience the city differently, but this is not the only dimension. Gender differences in the use of urban spaces have been widely discussed in the literature. However, this research expands the discussion by referring to



modernization period novels from the late Ottoman Empire to the early Republican period. The reason behind choosing these four novels discussed above is that they depict differences and transitions in the themes of modernity, urban space and gender. However, more importantly, these novels are centred in Istanbul and feature female protagonists with different backgrounds and identities. Our findings show that in addition to differences between men and women, the sense of space was under the effect of different social positionalities and space-based identities. The main findings show that there is a gradual transformation from stressing the patriarchal relations that design domestic spaces for women and public spaces for men to the feeling of being an integrated part of the urban environment. Instead of discussing issue diversity between men and women, we also found that women's education, class, and family backgrounds are effective with the construction and relation to the city. Furthermore, the cosmopolitan character of Istanbul that provides opportunities for heterogeneity makes it possible to understand diversities in the same city. Instead of understanding the issue with the holistic identity of Istanbul city, novels open space for micro geographies and different senses of urban spaces within the same city.

In this regard, our study questioned the right to the city from a gender-based perspective, which is a less discussed issue in the literature. From this perspective, this research may open new windows for further researchers to understand right-to-city discussions from literature and sociological perspectives and also intersectional approaches. Different positionalities give the opportunity to make deep analyses by regarding differences in the society. Additionally, this interdisciplinary perspective integrated into this paper will be effective in understanding transitions in society within historical continuity in different researches.

This study has certain limitations because it only looks at four different novels from the modernization period. Although it contributes to a better understanding in urban space during that time period, more comprehensive research is required,

and gaps in the literature must be addressed. In addition, our research was limited to Istanbul. Istanbul has a heterogeneous structure due to its distinctive form, yet there is still a gap in the study of how Turkish modernization was perceived in other cities during that time. This was highlighted in order to make room for future and comparative studies.

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