

IN-GROUP/OUT-GROUP INTIMACY IN *HASRET*: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF BELONGING AND EXCLUSION

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Abstract

This study employs an interdisciplinary qualitative approach, integrating literary analysis with sociological and social psychological perspectives to examine in-group and out-group dynamics in Canan Tan's novel *Hasret* [Longing] (2013). The novel focuses on the Turkish–Greek Population Exchange (1922–1924), a pivotal event in modern Turkish history, and serves as a lens to analyze intergroup relations between the Muslim Turkish and Christian Greek communities. The study employs content analysis and the Bogardus Social Distance Scale to assess varying degrees of intimacy and social distance, thereby elucidating the manner in which prejudice influences both interpersonal interactions and collective relationships. Moreover, it demonstrates how Tan strategically weaves historical prejudice into narrative construction, showing its concrete impact on character development and plot progression. The findings underscore the unique capacity of literature to simultaneously reflect and critically engage with socio-political tensions through fictional representation. This underscores the value of popular fiction as a subject for serious academic study.

Keywords: Canan Tan, *Hasret*, Turkish-Greek population exchange, in-group/out-group dynamics, social distance, Bogardus Scale

Hasret'te İç Grup/Dış Grup Yakınlığı: Aidiyet ve Dışlanma Üzerine Sosyolojik Bir İnceleme

Öz

Bu çalışma Canan Tan'ın *Hasret* (2013) romanındaki iç grup ve dış grup dinamiklerini incelemek için edebi analizi sosyolojik ve sosyal psikolojik perspektiflerle bütünleştiren disiplinler arası nitel bir yaklaşım benimsemektedir. Modern Türk tarihinin dönüm noktalarından biri olan Türk-Yunan Nüfus Mübadelesi'ne (1922-1924) odaklanan roman, Müslüman Türk ve Hristiyan Rum toplumları arasındaki gruplar arası ilişkileri analiz etmek için bir mercek işlevi görmektedir. Çalışma, içerik analizi ve Bogardus Sosyal Mesafe Ölçeğini

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kullanarak farklı yakınlık ve sosyal mesafe derecelerini değerlendirmekte ve böylece önyargının hem kişilerarası etkileşimleri hem de kolektif ilişkileri nasıl şekillendirdiğini açığa çıkarmaktadır. Ayrıca, Tan'ın tarihsel önyargıyı anlatı yapısına nasıl stratejik bir şekilde dokuduğunu, bunun karakter gelişimi ve olay örgüsü üzerindeki somut etkilerini ortaya koymaktadır. Bulgular, edebiyatın toplumsal-politik gerilimleri kurgusal temsille yansıtmaya ve eleştirel olarak ele alma kapasitesinin altını çizerken popüler kurgunun akademik inceleme için değerini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Canan Tan, *Hasret*, Türk-Yunan Nüfus Mübadelesi, İç Grup-Dış Grup Dinamikleri, Sosyal Mesafe, Bogardus Sosyal Mesafe Ölçeği

Introduction

From Aristotle's foundational theories to contemporary critical discourse, literature has consistently served as both a reflection and an interrogation of society. In *Poetics*, Aristotle (2011) first articulated fiction's dual purpose—to represent human experience while cultivating social morality through poetic form (p. 17). This mimetic principle evolved over the centuries, finding new expression in the 19th-century novel's capacity not merely to mirror reality, but to actively reshape it through narrative craft. As Fry (2017) demonstrates, writers engage in careful selection and rearrangement of worldly elements, transforming raw experience into meaningful patterns (p. 95). This creative mediation aligns with Taine's (1873) insistence that literature must be understood through the interconnected triad of artist, society, and historical moment (Part I).

The relationship between literature and society is more than just reflection; it is a dynamic interplay of representation and transformation. Felski's (2019) conceptualization of the mutual imbrication of selfhood and society (p. 27) offers a framework for understanding how authors and readers are embedded in, and shaped by, their cultural contexts. This embeddedness is especially vital when considering Sartre's (2018) observation that literary representation has disruptive potential. Texts not only reflect social structures, but also actively interrogate them by revealing what power obscures (p. 81). Building on this tension between reflection and subversion, Sapiro (2014) argues that literature is not merely passive documentation or pure fiction but rather a form of active social engagement (p. 19). This conceptual trajectory culminates in Frye's (2022) assertion that art has the capacity to transform society. Literary works are both products of and catalysts for reimagining society, projecting idealized futures while remaining grounded in present realities (pp. 26–27).

Through this critical lens, we observe how literary texts serve as sites of negotiation between the author's lived experience and cultural background, the reader's interpretive framework,¹ and the narrative's internal logic. While fiction frequently diverges from strict realist conventions—particularly in genres such as fantasy—it remains fundamentally engaged with the social world. Through aesthetic mediation, it transforms individual and collective experiences into narrative art, simultaneously reflecting and interrogating the historical conditions of its production.

The sociology of literature, as a well-established subfield of sociology, provides multidimensional approaches to analyzing literary production. While scholars typically employ conventional sociological methods—examining the dynamic interplay between texts, authors, readers, and the publishing ecosystem within broader social contexts (Tüzer & Hüküm, 2019, pp. 3–7)—this framework continues to expand. Recent developments now encompass translation studies, investigations into the making of “world authors,” and diverse field research (Sapiro, 2024). Though such approaches prove valuable, our study demonstrates how applying core sociological phenomena and parameters directly to literary analysis can yield fresh insights into both social systems and textual representations.

This methodological orientation naturally led us to focus on social groups—a fundamental sociological construct—while simultaneously engaging with social psychology. The inevitable intersection occurs because comprehensive group studies inherently bridge these disciplines, as evidenced by Allport's (1954) foundational premise: understanding how “the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of others” (p. 5). Consequently, our analysis synthesizes literary, sociological, and psychological theories to examine the fictional portrayal of individual and collective psychologies within their narrative ecosystems.

This study examines intergroup dynamics in Canan Tan's historical novel *Hasret* [Longing] (2013) through inductive analysis.² The investigation focuses on character interactions shaped by in-group affiliations, particularly in situations involving competition, conflict, and tension with out-group members.

¹ While interpreting the work, the reader applies an interpretive approach stemming from their own culture and history—in short, a discourse external to the work. In other words, it is a form of interpretation that can be expressed socially (see Todorov, 2001, p. 26).

² The novel *Hasret* has been previously studied from two distinct perspectives: first, regarding its portrayal of the Turkish–Greek Population Exchange within the context of Turkish fiction (Doğan & Üstün, 2016), and second, analyzing Keskin's representation as a narrative space embodying cultural memory (Uğurdağ, 2017).

The analysis identifies patterns in social group formation and structure within the narrative, along with the value systems that distinguish these groups.

A key focus involves measuring how group-based prejudices affect interactions between characters who share the same geographical space but belong to different social groups. The novel offers a framework for observing these dynamics through its portrayal of character relationships and social interactions.

Subsequently, the study employs the Bogardus Scale to measure intergroup closeness, evaluating whether sociological assertions can be empirically substantiated within the novel's fictional context. Expanding this framework, the analysis then investigates how in-group and out-group dynamics are narratively encoded, assessing their structural and thematic significance.

Our investigation progressed in two targeted phases. First, we delineated the core sociological mechanisms driving group formation, anchoring our framework in established theory. Second, we interrogated how these social forces potentially shaped the author's compositional choices, particularly in character relations and plot development. By applying this dual analytical approach, we ultimately revealed how the text's fictional societies both mirror and refract real-world intergroup dynamics.

Methods

In our case study analysis, we applied three key theoretical constructs: (1) social groups (a sociological concept), (2) prejudice (a social psychological concept), and (3) the Bogardus Social Distance Scale (a quantitative measure of intergroup attitudes).

Social Groups and Prejudice

The concept of social groups inevitably leads us back to Aristotle's definition of humans as 'social animals'. Living in groups is an inherent requirement of human nature, with group formation standing as one of our fundamental characteristics. However, as Assmann (2015) argues, human groupings are not biologically determined but instead symbolically constructed, with varying foundations and necessities. Humans demonstrate a remarkable capacity to thrive in collective units ranging from small tribes of a few hundred to modern states of millions or even billions. Simultaneously, individuals may belong to diverse and often overlapping groups—from families and professional associations to religious communities and nations (p. 149).

Social groups constitute systems where “two or more individuals engage in face-to-face interaction, each aware of his or her membership in the group, each aware of the others who belong to the group, and each aware of their positive interdependence as they strive to achieve mutual goals” (Johnson & Johnson, 1987, p. 8). This interaction necessarily fosters group identity formation, wherein members develop a collective “we”-consciousness that inherently demarcates social boundaries between in-group (“us”) and out-group (“them”) (Johnson, 2003, p. 138).

These socially constructed boundaries create the necessary conditions for prejudice to emerge. As established by Frings (2019), prejudice manifests through interconnected cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions (p. 105). The cognitive dimension comprises stereotypical beliefs about the out-group, while the affective dimension generates emotional responses toward its members. These psychological components directly inform the behavioral dimension, which materializes as discriminatory actions.

Allport’s (1979) seminal work provides essential nuance to this understanding. While acknowledging prejudice can theoretically manifest either positive or negative attitudes independent of experience (p. 6), his research demonstrates how ethnic prejudice typically assumes hostile forms. His precise definition captures this negative orientation: “an aversive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group” (p. 7). This conceptual framework proves particularly relevant when examining prejudice’s various manifestations, which range from racism and sexism to religious discrimination, classism, and nationalism (Seager, 2014, p. 237). This aligns with Wark and Galliher’s (2007, p. 390) conceptualization of prejudice as an “*instinctive and spontaneous disposition to maintain social distance from other groups,*” highlighting its deep-rooted nature in intergroup relations.

The Bogardus Scale³

The Bogardus Social Distance Scale (Bogardus, 1925) measures acceptance between social groups by assessing willingness to engage in relationships across seven tiers of intimacy: marriage (1.0), close friendship (2.0),

³ Emory Bogardus’s Social Distance Scale (1925) remains a seminal instrument in the study of intergroup relations, offering a quantitative framework for assessing attitudes toward minority groups through degrees of social proximity. Widely applied across disciplines—including studies of race, religion, and disability—the scale continues to illuminate how sustained interpersonal contact can mitigate prejudice and foster inclusion (Kretchmar, 2023).

neighbor (3.0), colleague (4.0), citizenship (5.0), visitor status (6.0), and complete exclusion (7.0). Participants indicate their comfort levels through structured questions, where lower scores (1.0–3.0) reflect greater openness to integrating out-group members into personal life, while higher scores (5.0–7.0) reveal social distancing or prejudice. By quantifying these attitudes, the scale makes the “us versus them” dynamic measurable, exposing both individual biases and broader societal patterns of exclusion (Parrillo, 2016). Unlike abstract theories of prejudice, it provides concrete data about where people draw social boundaries—whether at the intimate level of marriage, the casual tolerance of citizenship, or outright rejection. When applied to fictional narratives such as *Hasret*, the Bogardus Social Distance Scale offers particularly valuable insights—not only by quantifying social distances but also by capturing qualitative subtleties that reflect how fictional relationships parallel broader societal dynamics.⁴

Generic Classification of *Hasret* as Popular Historical Romance

Canan Tan’s⁵ *Hasret* firmly occupies its position within Turkish popular fiction, as defined by Yavuzer’s (2018) scholarship emphasizing plot-driven narratives over stylistic complexity (p. 128) and Cebeci’s (2020) characterization of the genre’s preference for direct action rather than psychological depth (p. 282). The novel employs a third-person omniscient narrator who periodically breaks the fourth wall to address readers directly—a technique that strategically bridges Western popular traditions (exemplified by Dickens’s audience-oriented narration [Ong, 2007, pp. 174–175]) and indigenous storytelling practices (particularly the interactive performance of Ottoman *meddahs*). This narrative approach serves the novel’s broader commercial logic, which becomes particularly evident in its paratextual claim of being “based on a true story” (Tan, 2022, p. 7). Through this device, the traumatic history of the 1923 Population Exchange becomes instrumentalized as romantic plot material, demonstrating how popular fiction routinely appropriates historical events through generic conventions rather than historiographic engagement. The synthesis of Western

⁴ The narrative structure of *Hasret* lends itself particularly well to an application of the Bogardus Scale, as the author constructs conflict through interactions between characters situated within dominant and subordinate social positions. By foregrounding in-group/out-group distinctions—often along lines of ethnicity, religion, gender, and class—the novel provides a fertile ground for analyzing how social distance operates within fictional settings to reflect and critique real-world prejudice.

⁵ Canan Tan (b. 1951, Ankara) is a leading figure in modern Turkish popular fiction. A graduate of Ankara University’s Faculty of Pharmacy, she began her literary career with humor and children’s literature before moving to novels, short stories, and poetry. Her works often feature autobiographical elements and epistolary techniques, appealing to a broad readership. Despite being outside the traditional literary canon, she has received major awards, including “Book of the Year” for *Piraye* (2012) and İstanbul Kültür University’s “Most Popular Author” title (2017) (Çetindaş, 2020; Doğan Kitap, n.d.; Tan, 2019, 2022).

narrative techniques, Ottoman performative traditions, and market-driven historical revisionism ultimately positions *Hasret* as a paradigmatic example of what contemporary Turkish popular fiction accomplishes: the transformation of complex collective memory into emotionally accessible, commercially viable storytelling.

However, *Hasret*'s engagement with its historical material elevates it beyond conventional popular fiction. The novel's bifocal narrative structure—alternating between Keskin (Kırıkkale), Turkey, and Thessaloniki, Greece—enables a comparative analysis of the 1923 Turkish–Greek Population Exchange, highlighting its distinct yet interconnected consequences for both communities. As Tan notes in the epilogue (p. 349–350),⁶ the novel's rigorous multimodal methodology—integrating archival research, ethnographic fieldwork (including descendant interviews), and institutional site visits—adheres to professional oral history standards while maintaining historical authenticity.

Thematically, the novel makes significant interventions in understanding intergroup relations through its central romance between Tacettin (a Muslim Turkish man) and Patricia (a Greek Orthodox woman). Gordon Allport's (1979) contact hypothesis is operationalized through the novel's depiction of a society subdivided according to religious affiliations—a structure institutionalized by the Ottoman millet system—where the concept of prejudice is explored through the portrayal of strained relations between Muslim Turks and Orthodox Greeks, and shown to be mitigated, and in certain cases overcome, through both personal and collective forms of contact, while the narrative simultaneously problematizes this optimism through its tragic resolution. The work thus exists at the intersection of three discursive frameworks: popular romance, historical reconstruction, and sociological inquiry.

***Hasret*: Plot Summary and Context**

The narrative opens in Keskin during the 1910s, in the final years of the Ottoman Empire. Readers are immersed in a society structured by overlapping hierarchies of class, economic status, ethnicity, and religion. This setting vividly illustrates the empire's characteristic ethno-religious pluralism, particularly through the implementation of the *millet* system. According to Zürcher (2004), this institutional framework granted Christian and Jewish communities *dhimmi* status, which was a protected yet subordinate position that required the payment of the *jizya* tax and exempted them from forced conversion (p. 10). Under this system,

⁶ All subsequent references to Canan Tan's *Hasret* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2022) will be cited parenthetically by page number only.

non-Muslim groups maintained considerable autonomy in self-governance through their religious leaders, who served as crucial intermediaries between communities and the state. The text's detailed portrayal of this milieu highlights the complex socioeconomic stratification and interactional dynamics that emerged from the coexistence of distinct, unequal social groups. By delineating patterns of in-group solidarity and out-group differentiation, the narrative enables a critical analysis of the mechanisms governing social proximity and distance during this transitional historical period.

Character introductions are strategically tied to Keskin's material realities: its architectural geography mirrors social divisions, while disparities in economic conditions and income distribution further concretize systemic inequities. The text's early emphasis on majority–minority coexistence does not merely establish the setting but rather foreshadows the novel's central tension—the impending rupture of these carefully maintained social boundaries. Readers discern from the outset that the plot trajectory will interrogate and ultimately destabilize the fragile equilibrium of intergroup relations. *Hasret*'s narrative architecture develops through the critical junctures described below.

The author-narrator declares her intention to reconstruct a pre-Republican love story—one whose historical roots precede both the War of Independence and the eventual establishment of the secular Turkish Republic. This temporal framing immediately positions the narrative as a palimpsest of late Ottoman social orders soon to be transformed by Republican modernity.

The text meticulously reconstructs the male protagonist's aristocratic lineage, highlighting his family's entrenched privilege within Keskin's hierarchical structures. The Republican era would systematically dismantle this system. A strategically placed ethnographic passage maps Keskin's social ecology:

During the period depicted in our novel, Keskin flourished, exhibiting a strong sense of communal vitality. There were no visible fractures in relations between the Turkish population and minorities—primarily Greek Orthodox and some Armenians—in Keskin, Hamit, and the surrounding districts. A carefully maintained equilibrium upheld these neighborly bonds. (p. 12)⁷

Keskin continues to operate under a pre-industrial social order. The Hacı Ali Bey family represents the last remaining link in the lineage of the landowning aristocracy. They still possess extensive farmlands and estates that employ a significant number of workers. Their son Tacettin is the family's only unmarried

⁷ All excerpts from *Hasret* appearing in this text are the author's own English translations from the original Turkish source.

heir. He is the child of Hacı Ali Bey and his second wife, Fatış Hanım. Hacı Ali Bey has ten children in total—five from each of his two wives. The town's economic life is centered around its agricultural base and a vibrant market of small artisan shops. The bazaar showcases a seamless integration of Turkish, Greek, and Armenian artisans, reflecting the diversity of its craftsmen. In the various neighborhoods, locals live side by side, intermingling regardless of religious or ethnic background. Yet the grandest and most opulent mansion belongs to Hacı Ali Bey.

Tacettin—the male protagonist—maintains his closest friendships across community lines: Aris, a farmer from the local Greek community, and Artin, an Armenian artisan. After graduating from high school, he begins working as a tax collector in a government office. To celebrate his new job, he goes out with the friends mentioned above to a tavern owned by Omorfia, a woman of Greek descent, for a night of revelry. There, he unexpectedly sees Omorfia's daughter, Patricia. Tacettin falls in love with the young woman at first sight. Though initially indifferent to his advances, Patricia gradually grows fond of the young man, and they begin seeing each other. Since this relationship entails crossing boundaries between their communities, it draws both characters into a turbulent chain of events.

Tacettin's family—especially his mother, Fatış Hanım, the strong matriarch—firmly opposes the marriage. On the other side, Omorfia initially resists the union too, but when her daughter's heartbreak leads to illness, she gives in helplessly. As Tacettin tries to convince his family, Patricia becomes pregnant. They have a child out of wedlock—a son named Ali. Still, this does not soften Tacettin's mother's heart.

Tacettin's inability to marry against his mother's wishes, under threat of disownment, mirrors the broader societal fractures unfolding across Anatolia. The 1919 Greek occupation of Izmir, followed by the Turkish National Movement's campaign against Greek forces and Entente occupiers (France, Britain, and Italy), intensified intercommunal tensions (Zürcher, 2004, p. 136). In Keskin, as in other places, the polarization caused by the war eroded the fragile coexistence of Muslim and Christian communities. Once-shared spaces became territories of mutual suspicion as daily interactions dwindled into calculated avoidance.

The Turkish War of Independence, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, ultimately led to the establishment of the Republic and the 1923 Population Exchange Agreement with Greece. This agreement was formerly codified under Article 1 of the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and

Turkish Populations (Lausanne Convention, 1923). It represented a transformative demographic engineering project, which Brubaker (2004) would later term the “unmixing of peoples” (p. 153). The treaty, which was negotiated during the Lausanne Peace Conference (1922–1923), mandated the compulsory relocation of approximately 1.2 million Orthodox Christians from Anatolia to Greece and 400,000 Muslims from Greece to Turkey (Clark, 2006, p. xii). This move established religious identity as the definitive criterion for population transfer, superseding both linguistic and ethnic affiliations.

As a result, the Greek minority in Keskin was compelled to abandon their homeland in 1924, leaving everything behind. Since Tacettin has not yet married Patricia, she also departs with her mother, her son Ali, and her aunt Eleni, heading for Thessaloniki. Their journey is marked by hardship and suffering. In Greece, they face harsh treatment from the authorities before being placed in the home of a Turkish family awaiting deportation. They struggle to rebuild their lives and adapt to the local culture, yet their homeland remains forever in their hearts and minds.

Meanwhile, a group of Muslim refugees from Greece are resettled in Keskin. However, the local population views them with suspicion—they are very different culturally. The absence of the departed minorities is deeply felt. Tacettin suffers greatly from losing Patricia and Ali. Sadly, their love remains thwarted.

The novel's denouement, set in the 1950s, focuses on Ali's existential crisis of belonging, torn between his Christian upbringing as 'Adonis' and the sudden revelation of his Turkish paternity. This epistemological break destabilizes both his personal identity and the fixed notions of collective belonging in the aftermath of the Population Exchange. His journey to Turkey ends in a tense reunion with his biological father, yet the story intentionally avoids resolving issues for Ali's parents: Tacettin remains stuck in the impossibility of reconciliation with Patricia, while she bears the unhealed wounds of displacement in Greece. The novel's open ending reinforces this unresolved state, leaving their fractured love story—like the historical trauma it echoes—permanently unresolved.

Hasret acts as a rich platform for exploring intergroup dynamics through a sociological perspective, especially the dialectical relationships between in-groups and out-groups as shaped by character interactions. By analyzing key characters—Tacettin (Turkish Muslim man), Patricia (Greek Orthodox woman), Fatiş Hanım (local Turkish woman), and Omorfia (Greek immigrant)—we examine how prejudicial schemas confer structural influence.

Structural Constraints: Characters as Sites of Intergroup Conflict

Tacettin

From the opening pages of the novel, Tacettin is portrayed as a rule-breaker—a young man who defies social conventions and rejects traditional values. As the indulged youngest son of a prominent family, his willful nature is further amplified, granting him the freedom to act as he wishes. Through Tacettin, we observe the disintegration of the traditional extended family structure. His mother, Fatiş Hanım, insists that he uphold their class obligations, particularly the expectation of marrying within their close-knit community. However, Tacettin remains resolute, his affections directed toward Patricia, a woman from the Rum (Greek Orthodox) minority, a choice that challenges both familial and societal expectations. Thus, the character is presented as one that both exposes and critically questions the defining structures and mechanisms of the social group for the reader.

Tacettin actively advocates for the principle that people sharing the same geography should be free to develop intimate relationships—including marriage—without discrimination. By taking this position, he exposes how societal attitudes progress from casual prejudice to systemic racial exclusion. Yet he cannot fully escape his own social group's value system. His marriage to Patricia remains contingent on his mother's consent. Though the community stops short of formal ostracism, Tacettin's persistent efforts to bridge social divides meet with the majority's unmistakable disapproval—a constant pressure manifested in the collective weight of society's accusing stares. This unrelenting gaze becomes his punishment: not overt condemnation, but the silent withdrawal of acceptance for violating communal boundaries. The tension crystallizes when Aris, his closest friend, confronts him:

Have you ever seen a Muslim man in this town of Keskin married to a non-Muslim girl, or any non-Muslim woman? (...) And you're the son of a hadji, a man who completed the pilgrimage to Mecca! What's more, you're a nobleman's son! A lord's heir! Do you really think you can survive this disgrace, Tacettin? (pp. 47–48)

Tan uses Tacettin to convey her perspective. She addresses the Rum (Greek) Orthodox community expelled from Anatolia. Their treatment was unjust, she shows. Her point is clear: Muslims and Christians alike were all Türkiye citizens. Peaceful coexistence was possible:

No matter what twisted policies states pursued, Tacettin refused to believe Turks and Greeks could ever truly be enemies. To him, the recent tensions were always provoked by foreign powers. (...) He was certain: Neither Turks nor Rum would fall for this game. Until now, their lives had been intertwined; they had shared countless experiences. The sole distinction between them was the place of worship: a mosque or a church. (pp. 57–58)

Tacettin's inability to marry Patricia, despite rejecting societal norms, illustrates a rigidly disciplined social structure—one resembling a “pure type” system. As Mills (2022) suggests, individuals may remain trapped in roles they perceive as illegitimate because of structural constraints (pp. 55–56). His mother's threat to disown him acts as a form of systemic coercion, sanctioned by the political order. By enforcing conformity, she perpetuates the dominant value system and ensures his compliance with the group's norms.

Patricia

Following her father's sudden death from a heart attack, Patricia was raised by her mother Omorfia, and aunt Eleni. This upbringing positioned her as an example of female resilience within a patriarchal structure. After her father's death, Patricia assisted her mother in operating their family tavern.

Patricia's relationship with Tacettin crossed religious boundaries—she was willing to convert to his faith for marriage, though he declined this offer, emphasizing the necessity of genuine belief. When Patricia became pregnant outside of marriage, she faced social ostracization. While she maintained her relationship with Tacettin, she was aware of societal judgment. Therefore, to avoid the disapproving eyes of others, she confined herself at home during her pregnancy and after Ali's birth.

For Patricia, relocation to Thessaloniki meant living as a perpetual outsider. The words of the author-narrator echoed her own displacement: “They had been expelled from the lands where they were born and raised, the homeland they claimed as their own, and forcibly relocated to foreign territory” (p. 172). But her isolation ran deeper—not only as a refugee, but as a woman hiding an unspeakable truth. Her broken Greek marked her as foreign, while the secret of her child's Turkish father hung over her like a threat. In the bitter aftermath of war, Turks were no longer just outsiders; they were the enemy.

Over time, Patricia adapted to life in Thessaloniki but never achieved full integration. Clark's (2006) analysis of Aegean displacement reveals how this partial assimilation reflected a broader pattern: survivors of relocation trauma could only build new lives through the gradual erasure of homeland ties (p. 13).

True to this phenomenon, Patricia neither married nor returned home, dedicating herself solely to raising her son. Her experience embodies what Park (2017) identifies as the migrant's radical transition between social groups—a psychologically disruptive process comparable to religious conversion (p. 72). Such transformations generate profound destabilization, where lasting adaptation requires both the dissolution of former bonds and the formation of new affiliations.

Fatiş Hanım

Fatiş Hanım embodies the complex intersection of patriarchal privilege and gendered oppression. As a descendant of Osman Bey, the leader of the Cerit tribe who received lands and royal recognition from Sultan Mahmud II, she occupies a position of authority rooted in noble lineage, yet she is constrained by traditional gender norms. Tan portrays her as a paradoxical figure, a guardian of cultural traditions who transmits them to younger generations while enforcing the Muslim majority's confrontational stance toward minorities. Most strikingly, she replicates patriarchal structures by suppressing women's rights, opposing their participation in public life and professional spaces, even as she exercises traditionally masculine authority herself.

The contradiction culminates in Fatiş Hanım's vehement rejection of her son's relationship with Patricia, solely due to Omorfia's lineage. Her reaction stems from a visceral sense that the values she holds dear are under threat. For Ms. Fatiş, her son's marriage to an Orthodox Greek girl transcends personal conflict and becomes a public matter—one that risks destabilizing the family institution, a foundational pillar of society. Such behavior underscores how patriarchal systems recruit women to enforce gendered restrictions.

Felski's (2020) analysis of 19th-century Western modernity, in which hegemonic masculinity rendered the figure of the female flâneur inconceivable without moral suspicion (p. 32), finds a compelling parallel in Tan's Eastern setting. In both contexts, the public sphere is constructed as a masculine domain, while women are relegated to the private realm of domesticity and kinship. The woman who transgresses these spatial and social boundaries is met with moral scrutiny. Within this framework, Mrs. Fatiş condemns Omorfia not merely for her physical presence in public spaces, but for embodying a role—namely, that of a businesswoman—that disrupts the normative association between femininity and domesticity. Her disapproval is not passive; rather, she actively enforces patriarchal norms by accusing Omorfia of immorality, thereby reinforcing the gendered architecture of space and behavior. While Western women were often excluded from public life by structural constraints, Eastern women like Fatiş

Hanım internalized and perpetuated these exclusions, becoming agents of patriarchal continuity. This dynamic is sharply illuminated in her interactions with the more permissive Hacı Ali Bey, revealing not only the entrenched divisions between majority and minority communities but also the self-replicating mechanisms of gendered oppression within traditional power structures.

“Your son wants to marry Omorfia’s daughter. How do you plan to clean up this mess? Let’s see.”

“We’ll sit down and talk with him. We’ll find out what the issue is.”

“What issue is left to discuss, sir? I don’t know about you, but I won’t allow that whore’s daughter to cross this threshold as a bride!”

“Watch your words, Fatiş Hanım. This is shameful and a sin. Dimitris entrusted Omorfia to us. She’s like a sister to us. What harm has she ever done to you? The poor woman earns her bread with dignity and honor. Fine, you may not agree to take her daughter as a bride, but you have no right to insult her. Besides, there are years of goodwill between us. Have you ever had a complaint about any of our neighbors, whether they’re Armenian or Greek? Weren’t you the one who rushed to visit them and welcomed them into your home with respect?”

“That’s true. We considered them all our friends and siblings. But this is too much.” (p. 46)

Tan’s work exemplifies literature’s dialectical capacity to both reproduce and interrogate sociocultural norms through deliberate narrative construction. The novel enacts a calculated discursive antagonism: Fatiş Hanım serves as a vehicle for hegemonic patriarchal discourse, articulating reactionary positions that seek to confine women to domestic spheres and naturalize gendered subordination. In contrast, Hacı Ali Bey functions as a discursive counterpoint, advancing progressive critiques that challenge these exclusionary logics and advocate for egalitarian restructuring. This strategic opposition actualizes Irzık and Parla’s (2017) theoretical framework, which asserts that literature simultaneously reveals the operations of oppressive ideological apparatuses while creating spaces of resistance (pp. 9–10). In this regard, Tan’s choice—as a female author—to imply a woman’s right to exist in the public sphere, despite her relegation to a subordinate position within gendered structures, and to do so through the voice of Hacı Ali Bey, a male character, corresponds to a deliberate literary strategy.

Contextualized within Turkey’s well-documented crises of honor-based violence and institutionalized gender inequity (Taş-Çifçi, 2020), Tan’s narrative architecture assumes heightened critical valence. By inverting conventional

gendered speech patterns—embedding regressive ideology within a female protagonist’s voice while delegating emancipatory discourse to a male interlocutor—the text performs two simultaneous interventions: it mirrors the contradictions inherent in patriarchal social formations while performatively destabilizing their epistemic foundations.

The following passage illustrates how cultural and religious frameworks function as dual mechanisms of social organization—fostering group cohesion while enforcing exclusion. Fatiş Hanım’s ostensibly pious offer to raise the child within Islamic tradition serves as a rhetorical façade, sharply contrasting with her categorical rejection of Patricia on religious and class grounds. This juxtaposition reveals three key dimensions of boundary maintenance in traditional societies: notably, the insistence on intra-group marriage—defined by shared class, faith, and cultural norms—emerges as a prejudicial and exclusionary practice.

“Oh, is that so? Since it carries our blood [the unborn child], we can’t reject it, can we? Fine... But no marriage! I can’t take that infidel girl as my daughter-in-law! And if he dares to marry without our knowledge... I’ll never embrace Tacettin as my son again, won’t even look at his face. All right, let him bring the child to his father’s house after birth. We’ll care for it! It’ll grow up in our faith, raised by our traditions...” (p.70)

Consequently, it becomes clear that Fatiş Hanım has internalized the defining attributes of her in-group within the patriarchal social order. She upholds the belief that a virtuous woman must remain within the domestic sphere, fulfilling the socially sanctioned roles of motherhood and wifehood. To safeguard her social standing, she insists that her son marry within their group. Upon the violation of this norm, she demands custody of the grandchild, insisting on an upbringing aligned with their traditional values and way of life. Her persistent refusal to accept Patricia—a member of the Christian minority and the daughter of a so-called immoral woman who dares to occupy a place in the male-dominated public sphere—reflects the depth of her entrenched prejudices and the exclusionary logic they reinforce.

Omorfia

Omorfia is the daughter of a baker and falls in love with Dimitris, a musician. Her father disapproves of their relationship, arguing that Dimitris lacks a respectable profession and comes from a lower social class. Nevertheless, the young couple marries against her father’s wishes. Through Omorfia’s character, the author advocates for the idea that young women should marry for love.

After Dimitris's death, Omorfia defies societal expectations by refusing to sell their shared tavern, choosing instead to manage the business herself with hired helpers. Her decision to enter the workforce as a widow requires her to suppress her femininity—described as “burying it along with her husband's death” (p. 28)—and adopt a hardened, “man-like” demeanor (p. 28) to secure her livelihood and her daughter's future. Though this performance of masculinity allows her to thrive professionally and earn reluctant respect, it comes at the cost of internalized self-denial and society's lingering disapproval.

Omorfia's struggle epitomizes the paradox of first-wave feminism under the patriarchy: Tan uses her character to critique societies like those of Keskin and Thessaloniki, where womanhood is reduced to motherhood and domesticity. Kristeva (1989) frames this bind as the necessity to reject the maternal body to claim autonomy—a self-negating act that, as Direk (2018) notes, ultimately rejects womanhood itself (p. 66). While Omorfia's resilience challenges gendered norms, conservative figures like Fatış Hanım dismiss her as “shameless,” reinforcing the stigma against women who transgress prescribed roles. Thus, even as Omorfia succeeds economically, she remains trapped by the very structures she resists.

When she was forced to flee to Thessaloniki in her early forties with her daughter, grandson, and sister, Omorfia encountered bigotry once more. Upon arrival, the authorities detained them in converted military barracks in Kalamaria that were functioning as quarantine facilities. There, the guards herded them into communal showers, doused them with disinfectant, and treated them like vermin (p. 156).

For most Anatolian Greeks, whose primary language was Turkish, the guards' commands—and the cruelty behind them—remained linguistically inaccessible. But for those who understood Greek, like Omorfia, this linguistic barrier transformed into a more intimate violence: the explicit recognition of slurs like “Turkish seed” or the mocking question, “Have you ever been baptized?” (p. 157). These verbal assaults were not merely insults but deliberate acts of symbolic exclusion, reinforcing the refugees' status as polluted outsiders within the Greek national imaginary.

This dynamic exemplifies what Anderson (2015) describes as language's fundamental role in constructing “imagined communities” and demarcating the boundaries of “particular solidarity groups” (pp. 150–151). Assmann (2015) expands on this, arguing that language operates as the most potent instrument of group formation—one that often supersedes other identity markers, such as religion or ethnicity, in its ability to rigidly define belonging (p. 148). In the nascent

Greek Republic, Hellenic identity was meticulously curated through linguistic conformity, a criterion that rendered Anatolian Greeks perpetual outsiders, regardless of their ethnic or historical ties. Their inability to speak Greek was not just a practical barrier but a moral and cultural indictment, exposing the exclusionary logic at the heart of nationalist projects.

Maalouf (2016) echoes this tension, noting that while identity is composed of multiple facets—race, language, religion, class—we often cling most fiercely to the element under greatest attack (p. 27). Yet he, too, underscores language as the most defining marker of belonging (p. 108). For refugees like Omorfia, this presented an impossible paradox: acceptance demanded the surrender of their mother tongue, the very bedrock of their identity. To become Greek, they were asked to erase themselves.

After the quarantine period, Omorfia and her family settled into a house that had previously belonged to a Turkish family who was sent to Turkey during the Population Exchange. Yet, they face exclusion once again. Being an enterprising woman, Omorfia starts a bakery. She encounters difficulties because of her Anatolian heritage and for daring to enter the male-dominated business world. Despite everything, she succeeds and provides for her family. The author recounts the relevant episodes as follows:

“Their own kin had humiliated and excluded them. The local populace viewed these strangers from Anatolia—who were Turkish-speaking and had unfamiliar customs, manners, and physical features—with suspicion. In the early days, Omorfia was filled with dark thoughts due to the noticeable drop in customers at the bakery. The decline wasn’t just due to the change in ownership; the fact that a woman had taken over played a significant role. Even Hristo, the flour deliveryman, tried to end their business relationship, but after a long conversation with Omorfia, he agreed to continue, albeit with a hefty price increase per sack. Fortunately, over time, things began to fall into place.” (p. 209)

As illustrated above, Omorfia—marked as an outsider due to her refugee background from Anatolia—is subjected to exclusion within the small-scale trade sector, a space she attempts to enter not only as a newcomer but also as a woman. Her marginalization stems from entrenched prejudices targeting both her ethnic and gender identity. Nevertheless, as Allport (1979) emphasizes, “contacts that bring knowledge and acquaintance are likely to engender sounder beliefs concerning minority groups, and for this reason contribute to the reduction of prejudice” (p. 268). Within this framework, it is observed that over time, Omorfia manages to establish a degree of acceptance within the economic sphere,

indicating that sustained interaction can gradually erode social bias and foster inclusion.

Measuring Social Distance in *Hasret* via the Bogardus Scale

In the early narrative structure of *Hasret*, social life in Keskin is depicted as stratified along two axes of group differentiation. The primary variables determining this stratification are social status and religious affiliation (with ethnicity as a secondary factor).

The hierarchical social structure is organized as follows: At the apex stands Hacı Ali Bey's family, the feudal leaders of the Cerit tribe, embodying the vestiges of a traditional order. They hold significant economic capital and symbolic prestige. The intermediate strata comprise merchants, artisans, and landowners, while wage laborers occupy the lowest position.

A parallel classification emerges along religious lines, reflecting the Ottoman *millet* system where confessional identity—rather than ethnicity—serves as the primary marker of social differentiation. The author emphasizes this confessional segmentation within Keskin's community, which consists of a Muslim (Turkish) majority and Christian minorities (Greek Orthodox and Armenian).

Later in the narrative, alongside prestige, religion, and ethnicity, gender and mother tongue emerge as additional axes of social stratification. Through the lens of native/migrant identity, belonging further divides groups into binary categories: male/female and local/foreign.

The character Omorfia exemplifies this. Her entry into male-dominated workplaces as a female entrepreneur and business owner in Keskin and Thessaloniki is initially met with disdain, which she must persistently resist to overcome. Similarly, migrants in Thessaloniki are excluded because of their use of the Turkish language and their distinct cultural practices, which mark them as outsiders within the local milieu.

At the beginning of the work, Muslims and Christian minorities are depicted as citizens of the same country—working together in the marketplace, living as neighbors, and forming close friendships like Tacettin, Aris, and Artin. On the Bogardus Scale, this represents the second highest degree of social proximity (level 2 out of 7).

However, the desired marriage between Tacettin and Patricia violates the perceived boundaries of Muslim–Christian relations and is consequently prevented. Later, as war erupts between the Turkish and Greek armies in

Anatolia, the Muslim majority progressively reduces contact with Christian minorities (particularly Greeks). The Population Exchange ultimately signifies their forced expulsion, representing the lowest level of social proximity (level 7) on the Bogardus Scale.

The Anatolian Greek migrants in Thessaloniki faced initial stigmatization through the pejorative label “Turkish seed,” which cast doubt even on their Christian identity. This systemic marginalization by the local Greek population reflects the maximal social distance (Level 7) on the Bogardus Scale, denoting outright exclusion from the host society. However, the novel delineates their gradual acculturation to the host society over time, demonstrating a measurable reduction in social distance (Bogardus, 1925) through sustained intergroup contact (Allport, 1979).

Conclusion

This study has examined the relationship between literature and society through the lens of social group dynamics. A content analysis of *Hasret*, a novel by the prominent Turkish female author Canan Tan, was conducted using an interdisciplinary methodology incorporating sociology, social psychology, and literary theory. In this study, we employed a theoretical framework to examine the text’s engagement with fundamental components of in-group/out-group relations. These components encompass class, language, religion, ethnicity, and gender, as illustrated within the narrative. The present findings demonstrate the capacity of literature to both reflect and interrogate complex social divisions through its portrayal of intergroup dynamics.

Tan’s novel draws inspiration from actual events and is significantly influenced by the Turkish–Greek Population Exchange, which significantly impacts the lives of the novel’s protagonists. Mills’s (2022) conceptual framework, which integrates biography, history, and national context, elucidates the manner in which interconnected social conditions give rise to the defining elements of group identities. The narrative employs a variety of techniques to demonstrate these dynamics, including the portrayal of characters negotiating displacement. Moreover, the implementation of the Bogardus Social Distance Scale in the analysis of the text facilitates a systematic examination of relational proximity between in-groups and out-groups, thereby quantifying boundaries that might otherwise remain implicit.

This study demonstrates that prejudices against out-groups significantly determine the degrees of relational proximity between in-groups and out-groups. In the first section of the Keskin narrative, analysis using the Bogardus Social

Distance Scale reveals that proximity levels between the Turkish Muslim majority and Christian minorities range dramatically from the second-closest degree (2.0, indicating friendship) to the most distant degree (7.0, representing expulsion/exile). This deterioration in intergroup relations correlates directly with the Greek army's alliance with the Allied Powers against Turkish forces during the Anatolian campaign of the Turkish War of Independence.

The latter portion of the work documents a parallel dynamic among Anatolian migrants resettled in Thessaloniki. Initially facing complete exclusion (Bogardus Scale 7.0) by both local authorities and residents, these displaced communities gradually achieved improved social proximity through cultural adaptation, demonstrating a measurable positive trajectory in intergroup relations over time.

Moreover, our analysis reveals that the author deliberately underscores the struggles of women within patriarchal structures to attain parity with men in both professional and public domains. Crucially, the study demonstrates that the author systematically foregrounds how gender perceptions—alongside traditional determinants such as religion, language, ethnicity, and class—actively shape social group formation. This intentional narrative strategy not only exposes hierarchical power dynamics but also positions gender as a critical axis of social stratification within the text.

Our study suggests that literary texts, particularly when analyzed through an interdisciplinary lens that incorporates sociology, social psychology, and literary theory, offer profound insights into human nature. Notably, we find that Tan's novel, which is often dismissed as "popular fiction" and excluded from the "high literature" canon, actively challenges nationalist ideologies and the nation-state framework. Through her narrative, Tan advocates for more inclusive conceptions of citizenship that transcend traditional boundaries. She also delivers a compelling message of resilience. Her unflinching portrayal of women's struggles for equality under patriarchal systems serves as a deliberate call to action, particularly for female readers. These findings position Tan's work as a literary and socio-political intervention that urges readers to reconsider rigid social categorizations and champion gender equity.

Consequently, this research underscores the critical need for further sociological studies examining Tan's complete body of work and other pieces categorized as popular literature. A systematic investigation of the impact of these texts on readers is essential to understanding their role in shaping social perceptions and challenging dominant ideologies. The aforementioned scholarship would serve to substantiate the significance of popular fiction as a

conduit for social commentary and to elucidate its capacity to influence cultural transformation.

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