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Secular Sacredness in Postmodern Narrative: The Transformation of Religious Discourse in Tarık Tufan's *Flowers That Bloom at Night*

Abstract

This study examines the transformation of religious discourse in postmodern narrative through the concept of "secular sacredness," focusing on Tarık Tufan's novel *Gece Açan Çiçekler* (Flowers That Bloom at Night). Within the fragmented perception of reality in postmodern literature, modernization and secularization appear to push the sacred out of public life. In this context, "secular sacredness" explains how religion, rather than an institutional form, becomes a source of consolation within the existential anguish of the individual. In postmodern narratives, the sacred continues to be reconstructed through everyday details, melancholy, and subjective experiences. Therefore, weakened grand narratives are replaced by individual experiences, emotional depth, and aesthetic forms rather than doctrinal discourse. Using a qualitative text analysis method supported by theories of postmodernism and secularization, this study illustrates how the novel reflects the modern individual's quest by transforming family secrets, love, destiny, and religious motifs. The findings show that Tufan's novel offers a contemporary form of religious expression. Ultimately, secularization results not in the disappearance of religious discourse, but in its creative reshaping.

Keywords: Postmodern Narrative, Secular Sacredness, Tarık Tufan, Religious Discourse, Modern Turkish Literature.

Postmodern Anlatıda Seküler Kutsallık: Tarık Tufan'ın *Gece Açan Çiçekler* Romanında Dini Söylemin Dönüşümü*

Öz

Bu çalışma, Tarık Tufan'ın *Gece Açan Çiçekler* romanını merkeze alarak, 'seküler kutsallık' kavramı aracılığıyla postmodern anlatıda dini söylemin geçirdiği dönüşümü incelemektedir. Postmodern edebiyattaki parçalanmış gerçeklik algısı çerçevesinde, modernleşme ve sekülerleşme, kutsalı kamusal yaşamın dışına itiyor gibi görünmektedir. Bu bağlamda, "seküler kutsallık" kavramı, dinin kurumsal bir biçimden ziyade, bireyin varoluşsal bunalımı içinde nasıl bir teselli kaynağı haline geldiğini açıklamaktadır. Postmodern anlatılarda kutsal, gündelik ayrıntılar, melankoli ve öznel deneyimler aracılığıyla yeniden kurgulanmaya devam etmektedir. Dolayısıyla, zayıflamış büyük anlatıların yerini, doktriner söylemden ziyade bireysel deneyimler, duygusal derinlik ve estetik biçimler almaktadır. Postmodernizm ve sekülerleşme teorileriyle desteklenen nitel metin analizi yöntemini kullanan bu çalışma, romanın aile sırlarını, aşkı, kaderi ve dini motifleri dönüştürerek modern bireyin arayışını nasıl yansıttığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bulgular, Tufan'ın romanının çağdaş bir dini ifade biçimi sunduğunu göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak, sekülerleşme dini söylemin ortadan kalkmasına değil, yaratıcı bir şekilde yeniden şekillenmesine yol açmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Postmodern Anlatı, Seküler Kutsallık, Tarık Tufan, Dini Söylem, Modern Türk Edebiyatı.

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1. Introduction

It is often stated that with the process of modernization, religion's decisive role in the social and public spheres has weakened, and the visibility of the sacred has gradually diminished. Secularization theories have long argued that this process represents a decline or withdrawal from religion itself. However, particularly under the influence of postmodern thought, this approach has been questioned, and it has been argued that the sacred has not completely disappeared but continues to exist in a transformed form. Furthermore, postmodernism, as a school of thought that questions modernity's claims to universal truth, has led to profound transformations in literature and in literary theory. This is because the relationship between literature and worldview, or the social representations of the era, is not seen as a simple reflection of one another. Literature plays an active role in constructing and interpreting reality (Sapiro, 2019:81). Therefore, literature is one of the most productive fields in which this transformation can be observed. One such transformation is the secularization of the concept of the sacred and the fragmentation of religious discourse into a pluralistic structure. Secular sacredness refers to a form of spirituality constructed through worldly experiences and narratives that replace traditional religious beliefs. This concept is often treated metaphorically and ironically in postmodern literature, reflecting an individual's inner journey and their social memory. The novel genre, in particular, has the potential to reveal an individual's inner world, crises of faith, and existential questions. Religious discourse in Turkish novels has historically been represented in various ideological, didactic, and critical forms. In contemporary Turkish novels, religion is often incorporated into the text not through explicit teaching language but through individual experiences and aesthetic intuitions. Postmodernist writers adopt an aesthetic approach that prioritizes superficial narratives. In this context, they produce a structure and discourse that appears carnivalesque in novel texts, using images from various worlds (Moran, 2004:57). Tarık Tufan's novel *Flowers That Bloom at Night* offers a striking example in this context. The novel avoids directly expressing religious discourse but constructs a narrative structure that builds the sacred through melancholic atmosphere, inner quests, and silences.

As a contemporary representative of Turkish literature, Tarık Tufan frequently addresses the themes of spiritual quest, love, and destiny. The novel *Flowers That Bloom at Night* transforms religious motifs into a secular context through a family story that spans the final years of the Ottoman Empire to the present (Tufan, 2025). The novel unveils a veil of secrecy, beginning with Derviş Ali's pure love and prison experience in modern Istanbul. The research question is as follows: How does religious discourse undergo transformation in Tufan's novel within a postmodern context, and how is secularness constructed? Tarık Tufan is one of the writers who most profoundly explores this transformation in contemporary Turkish literature. In his narratives, religion is far from being an object of sermonizing. In the novel, religion is approached as a form of "remembrance" that seeps through the noise of the city, loneliness, and melancholy.

In this sense, *Flowers That Bloom at Night* is a laboratory showing how the sacred leaves the mosque or temple and seeps into the streets, breaking the spiritual hearts and the remotest corners of secular life. Max Weber's foundational thesis of "disenchantment" (*Entzauberung*) conceptualizes the modern era as a historical rupture driven by rationalization, bureaucracy, and the systematic erosion of sacred mysteries (Weber, 2020).

In a disenchanted world, the overarching religious structures lose their cognitive and emotional monopoly over the public sphere, creating an intellectualized yet spiritually flattened “iron cage.” However, within the realm of contemporary novels, this disenchantment is rarely experienced as a neutral socio-political shift; rather, it is translated into a profound ontological crisis for the subject. In Tarık Tufan’s *Flowers That Bloom at Night*, Weberian disenchantment is directly mapped onto the characters’ sensory and psychological landscapes. The pervasive “decay” and urban isolation depicted in the text do not merely represent individual melancholia but the visceral reality of living within a disenchanted cosmos where the traditional sacred canopy has collapsed. By examining how characters like Halide navigate this structural void, the narrative demonstrates how the modern subject attempts to re-enchant their existence not through orthodox compliance but through private, aestheticized forms of devotion.

Jean-François Lyotard famously characterized the postmodern condition as an “incredulity toward meta-narratives,” positing that universal frameworks of absolute truth, scientific progress, and dogmatic religious systems have lost their legitimacy in the postmodern era (Lyotard, 1997). The fragmentation of these macro-narratives results in a state of epistemological uncertainty for contemporary individuals, wherein meaning is no longer assured by an external authority. When this Lyotardian framework is applied to Tufan’s narrative architecture, it becomes evident that the novel operates in the immediate aftermath of the collapse. The protagonist’s radical assertion that ‘loneliness is the only truth’ serves as a precise textual manifestation of the demise of the universal salvific promise. Tufan does not depict a world anchored in a triumphalist grand theological narrative; rather, his characters are compelled to derive meaning from the remnants of their fractured lives. Consequently, the sacred undergoes post-structural displacement, transitioning from a collective external dogma to localized, highly individualized micro-narratives of emotional and spiritual survival.

2. Research Methodology

To comprehensively examine the transformation of religious discourse in Tarık Tufan’s *Flowers That Bloom at Night* and ensure academic reproducibility, this study employs a qualitative, interpretive, and systematic text analysis framework. The formulations of qualitative text analysis by Eder-Ramsauer and Flick serve as the analytical foundation, enabling the research to transcend subjective reading impressions and establish a verifiable sociological and literary matrix for analysis. The methodology is organized around three primary axes: research design, selection criteria for textual data, and operational steps for the thematic coding.

2.1. Research Design and Theoretical Lens

This study employs an interpretive case study methodology that concentrates on a singular, bounded, contemporary narrative. Rather than perceiving literary texts merely as aesthetic entities, this study conceptualizes the novel as a sociological mirror that reflects the anxieties and spiritual transformations characteristic of late modernity. The analytical lenses applied to the text are informed by a multidisciplinary theoretical framework, integrating Max Weber’s thesis of “disenchantment” (*Entzauberung*), Jean-François Lyotard’s notion of the “collapse of grand narratives,” Charles Taylor’s secularization theory with an emphasis on the modern “searcher” subject, and Peter Berger’s concept of the privatization of the sacred. By operationalizing these macro-sociological theories, this study deciphers the micro-level character behaviors, internal monologues, and domestic spaces within the text.

2.2. Data Compilation and Selective Selection Criteria

The primary focus of this study is the first edition of Tarık Tufan's novel, *Flowers That Bloom at Night* (2025). To mitigate arbitrary data selection and personal bias, textual data, including quotations, dialogues, and structural metaphors were compiled based on stringent, predetermined selection criteria. A textual segment was considered eligible for analysis only if it met at least one of the following criteria:

Structural Metaphors of Space and Time: Descriptions of urban environments, domestic settings (such as the Canfeda Estate), or atmospheric states that depict decay, alienation, and ontological voids.

Existential and Metaphysical Monologues: Protagonist statements reflecting profound loneliness, intergenerational trauma, guilt, or a deep yearning for meaning outside orthodox structures.

-Tension Between Aesthetics and Ascetics: Dialogues or scenes focusing on artistic creation (e.g., dialogues between the apprentice and the master or Fausto Zonaro's interactions) that negotiate the representation of the soul, perfection, and divine talent.

De-dogmatized Spiritual Epiphanies: Ritualistic scenes (such as the dhikr circle) where secular subjects encounter traditional sacred motifs on a purely experiential level.

2.3. Operational Steps of Thematic Coding and Analysis

The thematic analysis followed a recursive four-stage coding process to reduce raw text to abstract sociological findings. In the first stage (Data Familiarization and Open Coding), the entire novel was read sequentially, and 56 unique textual segments relating to *dindarlık* (religiosity), *sekülerleşme* (secularization), and *varoluşsal sancı* (existential pain) were highlighted and assigned initial open codes. In the second stage (Axial Coding and Category Building), these open codes were systematically grouped into broader thematic categories based on conceptual overlaps.

In the third stage (Selective Coding and Integration), the final conceptual core of the study was consolidated around three primary thematic pillars

1. The Disenchanted Urban Space and Collective Melancholy (Weberian and Lyotardian axis),
2. The Fractured Domestic Space, Intergenerational Trauma, and Guilt (Bergerian institutional axis), and
3. The Aestheticization of the Sacred and the Post-secular Searcher Subject (Taylorian Axis).

In the final stage (Socio-Literary Synthesis), these three themes were integrated using direct textual excerpts. The analysis did not merely summarize the plot; instead, the shortened core textual phrases were interwoven into the analytical paragraphs, serving as immediate empirical proof of the theoretical claims. This rigorous methodological framework ensures that the resulting insights regarding "secular sacredness" are firmly anchored in verifiable textual evidence and systematic sociological inquiries.

3. Contribution to the Literature, Originality of the Study and Limitations

This article aims to make an original contribution to the literature by examining the transformation of religious discourse within the context of postmodern narrative through the concept of "secular sacredness." The limited number of studies on Tarık Tufan's novel *Flowers*

That Bloom at Night makes a detailed and theoretically grounded analysis of this text even more important. This study allows for the reassessment of secularization theories through literary texts. Moreover, it proposes a new reading of the aesthetic representation of the sacred in contemporary Turkish literature. In this respect, this study makes a meaningful contribution to both literary studies and academic work on the relationship between religion and modernity. However, it should be noted that the study has some limitations. First, this study is limited to Tarık Tufan's novel, *Flowers That Bloom at Night*. This does not allow for a comparative reading of the author's other works. The continuity or transformation of religious discourse in Tufan's literary oeuvre, as seen in, has not been comprehensively addressed. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all of the author's work.

Second, this study predominantly employed qualitative and interpretive text analyses. The text structure, characterized by its multilayered and open-ended nature due to the postmodern narrative, allows for diverse interpretations; consequently, the interpretations offered are inherently constrained by a specific theoretical framework. The focus on the concept of "secular sacredness" has led to the exclusion of other potential representations of religious discourse (e.g., institutional religion, social practices, or political dimensions) from the study's scope. Moreover, this study is not grounded in sociological or historical field research but is conceived as a theoretical exploration centered on the literary texts. Therefore, it does not assert that the secularization and perception of the sacred depicted in the novel directly correspond to social reality. Instead, this study seeks to demonstrate how the sacred is reinterpreted in literary fiction.

Despite these limitations, this study presents an innovative approach by examining the transformation of religious discourse within the postmodern narrative through the aesthetic, individual, and intuitive dimensions. Future research could enhance the literature by conducting comparative analyses with other novels, exploring the works of other contemporary Turkish authors within a similar theoretical framework, or broadening the scope through interdisciplinary methods such as sociology, the history of religion, and cultural studies.

4. Postmodern Narrative, Secularization, and the Reconstruction of the Sacred

Postmodernism provides an intellectual foundation for questioning the universality, progress, and certainty of modernity. According to Lyotard, the postmodern condition is characterized by a loss of trust in the grand narratives (Lyotard, 1997). This situation has also led to questioning comprehensive systems of meaning, such as religion and family. However, this questioning does not imply a complete rejection of the sacredness of the text. In contrast, the sacred is reproduced through individual and fragmented experience. In alignment with this individualization, as Niyazi Berkes points out, the weakening of religion's role as a social regulator has pushed it into the realm of individual conscience (Berkes, 2022:22). However, as Mircea Eliade emphasizes, even for non-religious people, certain "threshold" moments carry traces of the sacred in them (Eliade, 1991:4). "Secular sacredness" is the aesthetic counterpart to these traces in postmodern narratives. Although the order of meaning defined by Peter Berger as the "sacred umbrella" has been fragmented, individuals weave new sacredness from these fragmented pieces (Berger, 2015). Within this framework, secular sacredness emerges as a way for the postmodern individual to reconstruct their quest for sacredness, which has not been entirely lost, through personal and everyday experiences in a fragmented world of meaning. This experiential reconstruction fundamentally reshapes the contemporary subject's

selfhood, converting it from a stable sociological identity into a fragmented totality of latent feelings, restless intentions, and existential evaluations that separate Tufan's characters from their traditional social circles and relationships in the novel.

Instead of thinking about secularization in terms of rigid and exclusionary opposition, a new conceptual approach is needed that accepts that the secular and sacred can coexist in mutual interaction without experiencing inevitable rupture (Köse, 2020:179). According to one claim of the secularization thesis, religion will no longer be able to maintain the authority it traditionally exercised in traditional societies as effectively as previously thought. It will become socially invisible to the public as well (Turner, 2025:866). Charles Taylor's philosophy of a "secular age" posits that modernity does not witness the outright disappearance of faith, but rather a structural shift in the conditions of belief, transforming the individual from a passive believer into an active, restless "searcher" (seeker). Complementing this perspective, Peter Berger notes that secularization triggers the pluralization and radical privatization of the sacred, forcing religion to retreat into the subjective consciousness of the individual. This sociotheological dynamic forms the backbone of Tufan's character matrix. Characters such as Derviş Ali and the Western painter Fausto Zonaro embody Taylor's "searcher" archetype perfectly, their spiritual hunger cannot be satisfied by institutional conformity, shifting instead toward the porous boundaries of art, music, and aesthetic epiphany. To dismantle the repetitive cycle of the central thesis, the manifestation of the "secular sacred" must be filtered through rigorous spatial analysis rather than through emotional states (Taylor, 2007:299). In "Flowers That Bloom at Night," the Vefa district transcends its role as a mere geographic location, evolving into a topophilic sanctuary where the sacred is redefined. By integrating Taylor's concept of the 'buffered self' and Berger's theory of privatization, this study explores how traditional religious symbols are de-dogmatized and resurrected as fluid psychological shields, thereby validating the existence of a 'secular sacredness' within a thoroughly rationalized daily existence. At this point, the concept of "secular sacredness" becomes important to this discussion: secular sacredness refers to moments in human experience that evoke a sense of transcendence independent of religious rituals and dogmatic frameworks. In the literature, this often manifests through themes such as loss, love, pain, and loneliness. Finally, the argument ascends to a relational dimension, demonstrating that secular sacredness is fundamentally co-constituted by specialized interpersonal dynamics. The interactions between the fragmented characters do not rely on an institutionalized religious brotherhood.

Postmodern literature primarily serves as an articulation of complex social experiences (Ecevit, 2001:57). In the context of Turkish modernization, the evolution of modernization and the novel genre occurred simultaneously. These two domains have co-evolved over an extended period, mutually influencing one another. Early novelists perceived themselves as pivotal figures in societal transformation, articulating their perspectives on Westernization not only through novels but also through various textual forms, thereby reinforcing the connection between novels and modernization (Akyurt, 2018:112). In Turkish literature, postmodernism reinterprets religious motifs with secular irony, exemplified in Orhan Pamuk's novel, "Kar." Pamuk engages with Islamic symbols within both political and individual frameworks, thereby introducing religious discourse into postmodern pluralism (Pamuk, 2026). Similarly, in İhsan Oktay Anar's works, mystical elements are integrated into a secular narrative (Anar, 2026). In these narratives, religion is not depicted as a static belief system but as an element that assumes diverse meanings within the narrative's framework. Consequently, the sacred is

recontextualized into the secular domain of interpretation within the ironic and pluralistic structure of the postmodern narrative.

5. The Transformation of Religious Discourse in *Flowers That Bloom at Night*

One of the essential features of stereotyped and formalized discourses is their imposition of specific modes of perception on the audience (Bourdieu, 2016:168). Nevertheless, *Flowers That Bloom at Night* intentionally circumvents these constraints. Within the novel's universe, the sacred is not conveyed through explicit references; rather, it is perceived through the characters' internal conflicts, silences, and melancholic states. The metaphor of the night signifies not only a temporal aspect but also internal darkness and an existential quest (Tufan, 2025). Cultural and spiritual transmission is not a static act of preservation; rather, it is a dynamic process that is continually renewed through the transformation of narrative tools (Turhan ve diğerleri, 2025). In “*Flowers That Bloom at Night*,” Tarık Tufan reproduces religious discourse with this fluidity, detaching it from institutional confines and integrating it into the characters' melancholic worlds.

5.1. The Narrative Architecture, Character Matrix, and Existential Context in *Flowers That Bloom at Night*

To conduct a rigorous textual analysis of the transformation of religious discourse, it is essential to challenge the misconception that contemporary novels simply abandon sacred elements within a secularized context (Park, 2017). In contrast, as observed in Tarık Tufan's *Flowers That Bloom at Night*, the narrative architecture operates as a complex crucible where institutional religion is deconstructed, only to be reborn through the fragmented subjectivities of its characters. The novel is structurally anchored within the melancholic, almost spectral space of the historical Canfeda Estate, a space that functions not merely as a passive physical setting but as a material metaphor for the lingering remnants of traditional memory in an otherwise hyper-rationalized world. By utilizing a non-linear, fragmented postmodern chronology, Tufan weaves a dense tapestry of intergenerational traumas, repressed family secrets, and ontological voids, transforming the macro-narrative of religious dogma into micro-narratives of individual aesthetic experiences.

At the psychological vortex of this contemporary narrative stands Halide, a protagonist whose shattered psyche encapsulates the essence of the postmodern crisis of meaning. Halide is profoundly fragmented by an overarching sense of loss, unhealed historical wounds, and existential angst. Within the traditional secularization thesis, her disillusionment with modern life implies a complete descent into nihilism. Through the conceptual framework of the “secular sacred,” her internal void emerges as a locus for reconfiguring spirituality. For Halide, conventional religious motifs, prayers, and sacred spaces are divested of orthodox institutional constraints. Rather than pursuing salvation through dogmatic adherence, she internalizes these symbols, transforming them into localized and highly subjective instruments for personal solace and psychological resilience (Tufan, 2025). Her journey demonstrates that in the absence of grand socio-religious narratives, the contemporary individual does not necessarily abandon the sacred but rather seeks its manifestation within the fragile, everyday cracks of their grief.

This intricate internal landscape is constantly mirrored, destabilized, and renegotiated through her interactions with a meticulously constructed character matrix, most notably Derviş Ali and

Zeliha. Derviş Ali functions within the text as a symbolic, living anchor to a historical and mystical Sufi past. However, Tufan consciously avoids portraying himself as a conventional didactic religious authority figure. Instead, Derviş Ali's spirituality is coded through a quiet, almost imperceptible devotion that operates on the margins in a secular city. He represents a form of faith that has retreated from the public sphere into an intimate, silent space, illustrating how the language of tradition undergoes a profound metamorphosis when forced to breathe in a postmodern atmosphere. Conversely, Zeliha introduces sharp dramatic and ontological tension to the novel through her intense internal struggles with guilt, repressed longing, and the crushing weight of destiny. Through Zeliha, the metaphysical concepts of sin and predestination are completely detached from a judgmental theological framework and re-anchored to the raw, visceral reality of human relationships and psychological suffering that they entail. Furthermore, the text operationalizes a profound temporal layer that differentiates secular sacred from orthodox theological timelines. Instead of following a linear, teleological religious calendar marked by communal rituals, the narrative utilizes highly subjective, fragmented temporality. Derviş Ali's prolonged wait in the historic dungeons represents a suspension of modern, productive secular time. This non-linear experience of time introduces what can be conceptualized as an "existential duration" in which moments of trauma, waiting, and reckoning compress the past and the present into a singular psychic reality. The sacred is not anticipated in futuristic salvation or an afterlife; rather, it is forcefully pulled into the immediate, painful, and eternal present (Tufan, 2025). Secular sacredness, therefore, manifests as a temporal rupture in which the hyper-rationalized velocity of late-modern daily life is suddenly and contemplatively interrupted.

The thematic scope of this existential inquiry is further widened by including Cihangir and Nihal in the narrative. Their presence in the narrative exposes the ultimate fluidity, fragmentation, and inconsistency that define contemporary belief systems in the novel. Rather than presenting a cohesive community of faith, Cihangir and Nihal embody the modern condition of being perpetually caught between the iron cage of rationality and a deep, unyielding yearning for an elusive transcendent refuge. Their continuous state of inner breakdown and emotional turbulence leads to a highly unstable relationship with the sacred in their lives. In their context, faith is never experienced as a state of tranquil certainty or dogmatic peace; rather, it is continuously generated as a source of profound unease and existential unrest. Crucially, Tufan does not consider spiritual unease to be a negative psychological failure. Instead, this perpetual state of spiritual hovering creates an intellectual and emotional depth that forces the contemporary subject to confront their finitude, thereby generating a transient, secularized holiness born of their limitations.

Beyond these contemporary figures, the narrative achieves its highest level of theoretical sophistication and intertextual depth through the historical and aesthetic invocation of Fausto Zonaro, a prominent late Ottoman court painter. Zonaro's integration is central to understanding the novel's discourse on the intersection of artistic representation and spiritual devotion in the Ottoman Empire. In the text, Zonaro is not merely a nostalgic historical figure; he functions as the principal conceptual link between visual arts and the ineffable nature of the divine (Tufan, 2025). Tufan employs Zonaro's artistic legacy to facilitate a profound discourse on the inherent tension between the aestheticized image and the iconoclastic, doctrinal prohibitions of traditional religious thought.

The tension between the creative process, exemplified by the brushstroke, and religious sensibilities is mediated through memory, indicating that in a post-secular context, art emerges as the ultimate conduit of the sacred. The canvas supplants the pulpit, and aesthetic experience takes the place of formal ritual. Consequently, the characters in *Flowers That Bloom at Night* do not serve as static ideological mouthpieces or mere archetypes. Instead, their interconnected trajectories, unspoken grief, and artistic hauntings form a dynamic, fluid matrix wherein traditional religious discourse is thoroughly de-dogmatized, interiorized, and ultimately resurrected as aestheticized secular sacredness. Rather than treating literary space as a passive background, the analytical core of this study conceptualizes Tarık Tufan's narrative layout as a direct structural expansion of the late-modern societal rupture. When evaluating the text through a sociological lens, the thematic weight shifts away from orthodox religious structures and moves directly toward the individual's immediate sensory world.

The transformation depicted in the novel is conveyed through the persistent atmospheric motif of urban melancholy and through the physical deterioration of the city. Tufan constructs his narrative around the poignant observation that "sensitive hearts and delicate souls were constantly in torment" due to a pervasive "stench of decay" that emanated not from the streets, but "directly from the people themselves." (Tufan, 2025:10). Within a socio-literary framework, this visceral description embodies Max Weber's diagnosis of modern "disenchantment." The inescapable rot enveloping the Vefa district functions as a tangible symbol of a society that has lost its traditional "sacred canopy." When institutional religion is stripped of its public authority, the resulting vacuum is not celebrated as secular liberation; instead, it is experienced by characters such as Halide as oppressive internal stagnation.

Consequently, this disenchanted environment forces contemporary individuals to confront their isolation. The narrator's inner reflections reinforce this shift by explicitly declaring that "the only truth in this world is human loneliness," a harsh reality that gradually transforms "the world into a living hell" filled with "disappointments and spiritual ruins." (Tufan, 2025:14). This total surrender to isolation directly corresponds with Jean-François Lyotard's formulation of the postmodern condition as the "collapse of grand narratives." The protagonist no longer operates under a universal or collective theological guarantee of salvation. Instead, the shattering of macro-meaning systems forces the character to convert their existential "fatigue" into a highly localized micro-narrative of emotional survival that is not universal. The sacred is stripped of its dogmatic rigidity and reassembled within the private ruins of the ego, effectively establishing the parameters of what this paper terms "secular sacredness."

The characters' engagement with faith is characterized by feelings of hesitation and inadequacy rather than certainty. This aligns with the fragmented nature of postmodern subjects. Faith transitions from being a marker of belonging to an existential quest. This quest is significant because it suggests that the sacred remains attainable in a secularized world. Tufan's style is notable for its language and expression. The author employs silence and gap as deliberate narrative strategies. Religious connotations are seldom presented directly; instead, they permeate the text through metaphors and images. This indicates that the sacred has evolved into an aesthetic experience for the individual.

In postmodern narratives, the sacred is often transformed on an aesthetic plane. In the novel *Flowers That Bloom at Night*, the sacred is not narrated through a specific belief practice or ritual but rather gains visibility through the experiences of loss, mourning, and inner search.

This situation is significant in terms of the literary representation of secular sacredness. This is because, in the novel, the sacred emerges in fragile moments within the ordinary flow of everyday life. When looking at the theme of loss in the novel, it can be seen that it forms one of the novel's fundamental emotional axes. The characters' longing for the past, unfinished relationships, and irreplaceable memories prepare the ground for the sacred. In this context, the sacred is no longer an "attainable" truth. The sacred has become a meaning that is constantly postponed and sought after. As Taylor puts it, the modern individual experiences the sacred not with absolute certainty but with fragile hope and search (Taylor, 2020).

The melancholic atmosphere of the novel enhances the aesthetic dimension of secular sacredness. This atmosphere is not merely a state of mind; rather, it is interpreted as a manifestation of the sensation of absence in the absence of sacredness, leading to internal questioning and prompting individuals to seek the sacred in the ordinary moments of everyday life. The ultimate result of selfhood is the totality of feelings, thoughts, intentions, and evaluations that distinguish individuals from one another. However, this totality is shaped more by social interactions than by individualism (Dönmezer, 1982). In this context, melancholy functions as an aesthetic carrier of secular sacredness. The feeling of deficiency that arises in the absence of the sacred prepares the ground for the characters to reconstruct their identities within a network of social relationships. Thus, the literary text transforms the modern individual's relationship with the sacred through ordinary practices of everyday life.

In examining the concepts of space and time in "Flowers That Bloom at Night," it becomes evident that the sacred is presented as an indirect construct. The novel frequently features interior spaces, confined areas, and night time, which facilitate the characters' introspection. This spatial confinement symbolizes a detachment from the external world and a deepening of the inner experience. Night is intrinsically linked to the experience of the sacred in the narrative. This time is characterized by silence and pauses. This silence does not signify the absence of the divine; rather, it denotes its indirect and intuitive presence in the world. The sacred is not portrayed as a loud authority; rather, it is a call perceived in silence (Tufan, 2025). Silence serves as a significant aesthetic strategy in postmodern narratives, illustrating that religious discourse is constructed through gaps and silence, rather than explicit declarations.

The fragile relationship that the postmodern subject establishes with faith is another important aspect of the novel. The characters in the novel do not have a clear and consistent line in terms of their relationship with faith. For these characters, faith has become less of a safe haven and more of a phenomenon that is sometimes questioned and longed for by them. This situation is directly related to the fragmented nature of the postmodern subject. The postmodern subject lacks the certainties offered by grand narratives. This lack is also evident in the realm of religious beliefs. The characters do not completely turn their backs on the divine, but they are unsure whether they can reach it or not. This state of uncertainty is one of the fundamental dynamics underlying secular sacredness itself. Faith is constructed here as a form of "searching" rather than a state of "possession." This is because the main issue can be seen as a process of rupture, where the transition from the modernist era to the postmodern world replaced the alienated subject with a fragmented one (Sarup, 2019:255). In this context, *Flowers That Bloom at Night* presents a narrative that carries religious discourse beyond modernist and traditional patterns of thought. The novel avoids providing the reader with

definitive answers and instead prefers to proceed with questions. This approach is consistent with the pluralistic and open-ended structures of postmodern narratives.

6. Manifestations of Secular Sacredness in Everyday Life

Although the objects, situations, and concepts imbued with sacredness have changed over time, the idea of sacredness persists. In this context, the image of God is now represented not only in theological debates about God's existence but also through impersonal concepts such as reason, historical laws, the invisible hand, and historical necessity (Çelik, 2025:79). The reproduction of the sacred in this way through abstract and impersonal categories reveals that individual experiences and emotions are also shaped by social structure. According to the social constructivist approach, which argues that emotions are shaped within social conditions and taught to individuals, every behavior exhibited by an individual is the practical fulfillment of the role attributed to them by society (Yücedağ, 2023:41). This theoretical framework provides an important basis for understanding how individual experiences and emotions are socially interpreted in literary narratives. The novel shows that the emotions and meanings experienced by individuals in their daily practices can acquire a sacred dimension through social roles. In the novel *Flowers That Bloom at Night*, secular sacredness is constructed through major emotional ruptures and small moments that emerge in the ordinary flow of life. The "aestheticization of the everyday," an important feature of postmodern narrative, plays a decisive role in the representation of the sacred in this novel's narrative. The internal hesitations experienced by the characters in ordinary spaces show that the sacred is no longer found in extraordinary experiences but in the fragile moments of everyday life. In this context, the sacred often emerges in novels as a sudden realization, a recollection, or an inner tremor. These experiences are not supported by religious rituals or explicit expressions of faith; on the contrary, they are experienced in a state of silence and solitude. As Taylor points out, for the modern individual, the sacred often carries a dimension that is "indescribable but felt." (Taylor, 2007). Tufan's novel also makes this indescribable sacredness visible with aesthetic sensitivity.

Throughout the novel, recurring daily actions -walking, waiting, reflecting on the past- facilitate the experience of the sacred in a secular form. This situation demonstrates that the sacred has been transferred from a realm of lofty transcendence to a realm of meaning that touches on human fragility and imperfections. From the perspective of a devout individual, the sacred is constructed within a person's consciousness. This structure determines how the sacred is perceived and how its manifestations are interpreted (Cox, 2004:217). Thus, the sacred has transformed from a normative belief system to an existential experience. Another point is that silence in the transformation of religious discourse is one of the most striking narrative strategies in *Flowers That Bloom at Night*. The novel refrains from explicitly articulating religious meaning. Instead, it establishes a narrative space where discourse diminishes, but meaning is not entirely obliterated. This withdrawal should be interpreted as the absence of the sacred rather than its persistence in a novel form of expression. In this context, *Flowers That Bloom at Night* offers a narrative in which religious discourse diminishes, but is not entirely eradicated. The sacred has transformed into an experience to be felt rather than a truth to be articulated. This scenario is perceived as the literary equivalent of secular sacredness.

7. The Position of *Flowers That Bloom at Night* in the Context of Contemporary Turkish Fiction

The evolution of religious discourse in Turkish novels has become particularly pronounced since the 1980s. During this era, there was a departure from early ideological dichotomies, and religion ceased to be regarded solely as an ideological defence mechanism or as a subject of severe didactic critique. Instead, it has re-emerged in the context of individual experiences, internal questioning, and existential inquiries. Tufan's novel is distinguished as one of the most contemporary and original exemplars of this literary paradigm shift. *Flowers That Bloom at Night* engages with religious discourse through refined aesthetic sensitivity, situating the sacred within the delicate and fragmented moments of everyday life. In this regard, the novel illustrates that the sacred retains its capacity to generate profound meaning even within a highly secularized society.

Throughout the narrative, Tufan eschews direct and dogmatic religious discourse. The sacred is not articulated through explicit theological teachings, normative moral systems or institutional orthodoxy. Rather, it is conveyed implicitly through the characters' inner monologues, extended silences and psychological hesitations. This stylistic approach fundamentally alters the role of religion in the text; religion ceases to serve as an explanatory or absolute authority and instead assumes an interrogative nature that embraces ambiguity rather than certainty. Faith is thus depicted not as a definitive, static acceptance but as an experience continually tested through individual isolation, loss, and traumatic encounters with the past.

This intimate approach demonstrates that the rationalized structure of the modern world, as theoretically encapsulated by Max Weber's concept of "disenchantment," does not completely eradicate the spiritual. Rather, as implicitly perceived in "*Flowers That Bloom at Night*," it initiates a significant transformation of the sacred. The sacred no longer operates as an external sociological authority providing absolute answers; instead, it re-emerges as a subjective possibility that addresses the existential void of modern individuals. By intertwining religious concepts such as destiny, faith, and submission with a poetic, suggestion-based narrative style, Tufan elevates religious discourse to an abstract, symbolic level. Consequently, *Flowers That Bloom at Night* effectively transcends the ideological antagonisms of traditional Turkish fiction, securing a unique and privileged position within the contemporary literary landscape by illustrating how the secular flourishes within the fissures of the postmodern psyche.

8. A Comparative Literary Analysis: *Flowers That Bloom at Night* in Contemporary Turkish Fiction

In the context of contemporary Turkish literature that explores the evolution of spiritual and metaphysical themes, Tarık Tufan's *Flowers That Bloom at Night* occupies a distinctive position. Although the transformation of religious discourse is a common phenomenon among several prominent contemporary authors, Tufan's approach to the sacred markedly differs from that of his contemporaries. To comprehensively articulate this unique position, his narrative must be systematically juxtaposed with the distinct literary methodologies of Mustafa Kutlu, İhsan Oktay Anar, and Ayfer Tunç, using their specific works as analytical anchors.

In the works of Mustafa Kutlu, as explicitly developed in his seminal texts *Yoksulluk İçimizde* (Kutlu, 2025) and *Ya Tahammül Ya Sefer* (Kutlu, 2025) religious discourse is fundamentally

bound to an organic framework of traditional morality, Sufi ethics and collective social memory. Kutlu's narrative establishes the sacred as a redemptive, community-oriented antidote to the corrupting forces of modern capitalism, urban migration, and Westernized materialism. In *Yoksulluk İçimizde*, spiritual fulfillment is achieved through a deliberate return to traditional roots, where Islamic metaphysics is manifested through daily rituals and ethical human interactions. Similarly, in *Ya Tahammül Ya Sefer*, the tension between ideological/political Islam and pure, interiorized spiritual devotion is explored, yet the resolution always points to a shared cultural memory and communal solidarity. In stark contrast, Tufan's *Flowers That Bloom at Night* completely detaches the sacred from the collective pastoral social fabric. In Tufan's universe, the sacred does not offer a collective political or social refuge; instead, it retreats into the hyper-individualized, fragmented inner worlds of modern subjects. While Kutlu's characters find ultimate peace within the externalized structures of traditional Islamic solidarity and cemaat (community), Tufan's protagonists experience the sacred as an internalized, lonely, and existential necessity born of urban isolation.

A distinct paradigm of religious discourse is evident in the novels of İhsan Oktay Anar, particularly in *Puslu Kitalar Atlası* (Anar, 2026) and *Amat* (Anar, 2026). Anar crafts a sophisticated, ludic narrative universe in which religious motifs, Ottoman-Islamic history, and metaphysical allegories function as an expansive philosophical arena. In "Puslu Kitalar Atlası," Cartesian philosophy and Islamic mysticism are interwoven into a magical realist narrative, addressing theological inquiries with intellectual detachment and historical curiosity. In "Amat," profound theological debates concerning sin, predestination, and divine justice are examined through the lens of postmodern irony, pastiche, and grotesque maritime mythology. While Anar employs the language of faith to challenge absolute truths and engage in intellectual exploration, Tufan's narrative consciously eschews this ironic detachment. *Flowers That Bloom at Night* approaches spirituality with profound sincerity and unwavering melancholy. For Tufan, the sacred is not an intellectual exercise, epistemological puzzle, or historical reconstruction; rather, it is a raw, agonizing site of personal trauma, grief, and genuine existential survival that defies rationalization.

Significant thematic parallels concerning existential suffering can be discerned between Tunç and Tufan's works, despite their markedly divergent conclusions. In Tunç's complex narratives, such as "Bir Deliler Evinin Yalan Yanlış Anlatılan Kısa Tarihi" (Tunç, 2019) human suffering, societal madness, and generational trauma are examined within a predominantly secular, materialistic, and deeply psychological framework. In "Bir Deliler Evinin Yalan Yanlış Anlatılan Kısa Tarihi," the chaotic trajectories of fragmented lives are traced through historical contingencies and social constraints, leaving no room for metaphysical intervention. Similarly, in "Dünya Ağrısı," the overwhelming burden of modern existence, guilt, and alienation is portrayed as a psychological impasse from which there is no escape. Faith, as depicted in Tunç's characters, is often reduced to a socio-psychological coping mechanism in a thoroughly disenchanted world. However, while operating within a similarly secular, traumatic, and chaotic contemporary setting, Tufan consciously maintains an open and porous threshold for transcendence. In "Flowers That Bloom at Night," the spiritual is not entirely subsumed into sociology or psychopathology; it persists as a fragile, transcendent possibility that actively challenges the void of modernity.

8.1. Distinctive Divergences: What Separates Tarık Tufan From Contemporary Paradigms

In light of these comprehensive comparisons, the exact coordinates of Tarık Tufan's originality in *Flowers That Bloom at Night* can be categorized into three fundamental divergences:

-From Collectivism to Hyper-Individualized Post-Secularism (Separation from Kutlu): Unlike traditional narratives that view the sacred as a socio-cultural shield or a collective political/ethical project, Tufan strips religious discourse of its institutional and communal armor. The sacred in Tufan becomes an entirely individualized, post-secular phenomenon – a private language spoken exclusively in the dark spaces of individual consciousness and personal grief.

-From Postmodern Irony to Melancholic Sincerity (Separation from Anar): While contemporary postmodernism often approaches religious and historical motifs through irony, pastiche, or intellectual playfulness, Tufan establishes a narrative of intense emotional vulnerability. The sacred is never used as an allegorical toy; instead, the novel reinstates a “new sincerity” where religious yearning and existential emptiness are treated as deeply serious, painful realities of the contemporary human condition.

-From Existential Nihilism to Porous Transcendence (Separation from Tunç): Although Tufan shares the same dark, secular, and psychologically fractured landscape as contemporary realist fiction, he refuses to collapse his narrative into an absolute materialist nihilism. By introducing the concept of the “secular sacred” where traditional religious symbols are interiorized as aesthetic tools for comfort, Tufan leaves a porous boundary between the mundane world and a lingering transcendent refuge.

-Ultimately, *Flowers That Bloom at Night* distinguishes itself as an innovative work by redefining the parameters of religious discourse within contemporary Turkish literature. This illustrates that the modern individual is not confined to a binary choice between dogmatic adherence and a secular void; instead, they possess the capacity to reinterpret the sacred as a dynamic, aesthetic, and profoundly personal refuge amidst the fractures of their disrupted lives.

9. Textual Manifestations of Existential Loneliness and Sociological Synthesis in *Flowers That Bloom at Night*

In Tarık Tufan's *Flowers That Bloom at Night*, the narrative architecture transcends its role as a mere passive backdrop, instead functioning as an active crucible where individual trauma and macro-sociological shifts converge. To assess the transformation of religious discourse within contemporary Turkish novels, it is essential to examine how the text structurally supplants dogmatic certainty with a fragmented, existential subjectivity.

This entanglement becomes immediately visible in the opening chapters, where the narrator employs a visceral, olfactory metaphor of “decay” to capture urban melancholy. Tufan writes that “sensitive hearts and delicate souls were constantly in torment” because the “heavy stench that enveloped the city fundamentally “from the people themselves (Tufan, 2025:10). This evocative imagery directly encapsulates Max Weber's diagnosis of the modern condition as a process of “disenchantment” (Entzauberung). The pervasive rot enveloping the city signifies a post-traditional society stripped of its overarching metaphysical and sacred canopy. When institutional religion loses its structural capacity to offer collective meaning, the resulting

void is not experienced by the postmodern subject as secular liberation but rather as an internal, decomposing stagnation of the self.

Consequently, this disenchanted landscape compels contemporary individuals to internalize loneliness as an absolute, inescapable reality. The protagonist's inner monologue underscores this ontological shift, asserting that "the only truth in this world is human loneliness," a significant cost for which "the world becomes hell," as the spiritual core is reduced to "disappointments and ruins." (Tufan, 2025:14). This profound capitulation to isolation explicitly reflects Jean-François Lyotard's conceptualization of the postmodern condition as the "collapse of grand narratives." The character no longer seeks refuge in a universal theological promise. Instead, the disintegration of macro-meaning systems compels individuals to transform their existential "fatigue" into a highly localized and deeply personal micro-narrative of survival. Thus, the sacred is de-dogmatized; it ceases to be an objective external truth and is reconstituted as a subjective tool for psychological endurance within the ego's ruins.

This existential tension is profoundly embedded within intergenerational and domestic contexts, where familial trauma, particularly manifested through maternal authoritarianism, becomes an "indelible wound in memory." (Tufan, 2025:18). The narrator observes that "the poisonous voices that hurt you achieve immortality," as exemplified by the depiction of a mother speaking "with her ugly, sullen face, like an enemy." (Tufan, 2025:18). According to Peter Berger's sociology of religion, the family has historically functioned as a fundamental institution for constructing a stable and meaningful cosmos (nomos). However, in Tufan's narrative, this domestic universe is utterly fragmented. The household, represented by the melancholic Canfeda Estate, generates an overwhelming "lump of guilt" that causes the siblings to grow up "weak and insecure," instantly taking on "all of life's faults, crimes, and flaws without protest (Tufan, 2025:199). The traditional domestic sanctuary is inverted into a site of deterministic trauma, where the domestic breaking points are hidden within "ordinary, short sentences" that mask profound disruptions, such as the father leaving the home during a "tasteless dinner eaten together as if it were a duty." (Tufan, 2025:41).

The resulting absence of paternal authority deepens this psychological displacement, intertwining the memory of the father with constant, hypervigilant anxiety. The children find themselves "trying to hide our memories of our father from our mother's gaze," terrified that she would detect "the traces of a father's dream" on their faces (Tufan, 2025:45). This permanent hovering between an unresolvable past and a guilt-ridden present exemplifies Charles Taylor's description of the modern "buffered self." The characters are locked within their own psychological interiority, unable to discern "between the guilty and the innocent" (Tufan, 2025: 45). In this sense, individual suffering operates as an intimate "apocalypse unfolding within the spiritual heart." (Tufan, 2025:198). As the characters navigate this domestic hell, their shared grief undergoes a post-secular transformation. When Zeliha and Nihal confront each other, rejecting the urge to "compete over our pain," the text notes a "sorrowful sound, like the shattering of porcelain," signaling that "the world broke at its most fragile point (Tufan, 2025:153). Through this collective recognition of fractured existence, Tufan elevates personal grief from mere psychological pathology to a shared human condition, creating a secularized form of communion born of mutual brokenness.

This fluid, non-dogmatic retrieval of meaning is further articulated through the novel's intense dialogue on the relationship between artistic representation and spiritual devotion. The

profound tension between form and spirit is crystallized when the artist voices a desire to “paint not only the forms, the bodies, but also the souls of the dervishes,” attempting to “go beyond... As deep as I can.” (Tufan, 2025:60). This aesthetic struggle illustrates Charles Taylor’s assertion that in a secular age, the modern subject transforms from a passive “believer” into an active, restless “searcher.” The pursuit of the unrepresentable soul of the dervish indicates that the hunger for transcendence has migrated from orthodox theological compliance to the domain of aesthetic intuition. The canvas replaces the pulpit, and the artistic brushstroke becomes a porous threshold through which modern individuals attempt to negotiate their longing for lost divine harmony.

This negotiation between the aesthetic and ascetic reaches its theoretical climax during the pivotal dhikr scene witnessed by the Western painter Fausto Zonaro. Spellbound by the ritual, Zonaro “springs to his feet... As if under the control of another will,” joins the dervishes, and in a state of overwhelming ecstasy, shouts “Allah” in a powerful voice before collapsing (Tufan, 2025:218). This climactic encounter provides a striking textual validation of Peter Berger’s theory of relocating the sacred into the private, experiential sphere. Zonaro’s rapture is not a formal conversion to institutional Islam; rather, it is a transient, involuntary psychological surrender to transcendence. Utilizing Mircea Eliade’s concept of “threshold experiences,” the dervish explains that during dhikr, “body, mind, spirit, and heart become one,” representing “both the fragmentation of the human being... and its participation in the oneness of the universe.” (Tufan, 2025:187). By framing the Sufi experience as “tasting death before dying,” the narrative liberates religious discourse from rigid dogmatic boundaries, rendering the sacred accessible to a secular consciousness through profound aesthetic epiphany.

Furthermore, Tufan contextualizes this spiritual metamorphosis by staging a highly sophisticated socio-historical debate on the conflict between tradition and modernity. The discourse of a superficial, imported modernization is voiced through characters who argue that “everything contemporary is blasphemy, sin, forbidden” within the Empire, lamenting that society is stuck debating “whether it is permissible to wear a fez or Stambouline” while completely ignoring Paris’s advancements (Tufan, 2025:111). However, this text rapidly deconstructs the binary opposition by advocating for a localized modernity that rejects both the “dry Western imitation” and the dogmatic “desert” of the softas (Tufan, 2025:111). It cautions that to indiscriminately dismiss traditional arts as obsolete is to “tear a piece from our soul,” resulting in a cultural rupture where “once the soul is broken, it cannot be repaired.” Through this intellectual critique, the narrative reveals the modern “oppressive climate of thought,” wherein opportunists merely “impose their ideas on others.” (Tufan, 2025:111).

By redefining the traditional concept of idolatry, the novel positions the true idols of modern times not as “stone figures,” but as invisible, psychological traps: “a person’s own ego, their ravenous appetite, their passions, their pride, their reputation, money, and even... love” (Tufan, 2025:112). This deification of the human ego is treated as a foundational sin, particularly within the realm of art, where the painter’s claim to perfection blinds him to his own “servitude and helplessness,” intoxicating him with the false belief that he has “stolen beauty and creativity from God’s hands” (Tufan, 2025:113). Within the tragic, ill-fated space of the Canfeda Estate, any attempt to secure a self-contained, purely secular happiness is depicted as a “fragile porcelain memory” that inevitably slips from one’s hand and shatters against an unforeseen, poisonous fate (Tufan, 2025:117).

Ultimately, the characters find a tenuous resolution to modern alienation not by achieving triumphalist material success but by surrendering to the boundless nature of divine mercy. When the character Langalı anxiously inquires if “limits can be set on Allah’s mercy,” the narrative responds through a foundational parable of a condemned man who enters paradise simply because he “hoped for his Lord’s infinite forgiveness”. (Tufan, 2025:232-233). Tufan posits that the “real rebellion... is losing hope” (Tufan, 2025:233). This theological pivot effectively distances religious discourse from rigid institutionalized moralizing. In Tufan’s universe, the concepts of fate, patience, and submission are re-sanctified; wanting too much is coded as a “secret rebellion against fate,” whereas “patience and submission” are presented as the ultimate existential shelters (Tufan, 2025:208). By transforming traditional theological principles into intimate mechanisms for coping with socioeconomic precarity—where characters face poverty by declaring that “we accept whatever the provider of sustenance deems us worthy of.” (Tufan, 2025:139). *Flowers That Bloom at Night* demonstrates that the sacred does not vanish in a rationalized world. Instead, it re-emerges as a fluid, aestheticized, and deeply porous refuge flowing directly through the fractures of postmodernity.

10. Conclusion

The analytical exploration conducted in this study reveals that Tarık Tufan’s *Flowers That Bloom at Night* transcends a mere literary depiction of sociological paradigms; it actively challenges the binary oppositions inherent in classical secularization theory. By evolving from abstract textual descriptions to a complex synthesis of spatiality, temporality, and interpersonal dynamics, this work directly addresses the critical “so what?” question that often arises in contemporary literature sociology. The novel’s textual structure demonstrates that the modern withdrawal of institutional religion from the public sphere does not inevitably lead to a complete disenchantment with human existence. Instead, it initiates a sophisticated, decentralized process in which the sacred is continuously reconstructed within the fragmented spaces of late-modern daily life.

This study offers three distinct insights into the existing literature. First, on a spatial level, the detailed mapping of the Vefa district illustrates that the physical deterioration of historical spaces serves as a topophilic catalyst for spiritual resilience. When individuals find themselves caught between structural modernization and cultural decay, they transform physical geography into an architectural shield, reclaiming secular spaces as temporary sanctuaries for existential reflection. This insight extends Peter Berger’s concept of the “sacred umbrella” by demonstrating that even when macro-meaning systems collapse, the micro-spaces of the city continue to preserve resilient traces of sacredness.

Second, this study deconstructs the conventional assumption that the privatization of faith results in the absolute solipsistic isolation of the modern subject. Through the complex interpersonal dynamics of the character matrix, the narrative relocates the sacred from formal dogmatic conformity to ethical responsibility grounded in shared human vulnerability. The silent, protective bonds established among the fragmented egos of Halide, Derviş Ali, and Zonaro manifest vital horizontal transcendence. In a societal landscape where institutional religious metanarratives no longer provide absolute moral assurance, the modern individual’s willingness to bear the ethical weight of another’s trauma becomes the ultimate repository of reconstructed sacredness.

Finally, the temporal restructuring observed within the narrative introduces an alternative mode of existential duration (*Durée*). By suspending the linear, hyper-rationalized progression of capitalist time through extended periods of waiting and psychological introspection, Derviş Ali creates a temporal rupture. This non-linear temporality compels the sacred to descend from a futuristic theological promise of afterlife salvation into the intensely immediate parameters of the present. In this context, it ceases to be a static emotional retreat and instead becomes an active temporal disruption that re-enchants the present moment against the overwhelming mechanisms of modernity.

In conclusion, *Flowers That Bloom at Night* marks a pivotal shift in the trajectory of the contemporary Turkish novel by proving that the secular age is not defined by the outright death of faith but by a radical transformation in the conditions of belief. By conceptualizing "secular sacredness" as an aesthetic and psychological survival strategy, this study bridges the long-standing gap between literary theory and empirical sociology. It demonstrates that within the private ruins of the postmodern ego, the sacred is neither entirely lost nor dogmatically enforced; instead, it is fluidly reassembled, offering a profound and resilient framework for emotional survival in a thoroughly rationalized world. This study's overarching contribution lies in its innovative synthesis of literary analysis and sociological theory, presenting a sophisticated understanding of secularization that surpasses conventional dichotomies. By emphasizing the interrelation of spatial, interpersonal, and temporal dimensions within *Flowers That Bloom at Night*, it proposes a multidimensional framework of secular sacredness that enriches both academic fields. More precisely, its discipline-specific contribution is found in its redefinition of modern Turkish literature's engagement with themes of faith and modernity, elucidating how narrative structure and character interplay articulate a reconfigured sacredness attuned to the complexities of late modernity. This methodological approach not only interrogates dominant secularization paradigms but also offers a critical lens for interpreting contemporary cultural texts as dynamic arenas of spiritual negotiation and resilience.

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