

TRACING MODERNITY IN THE POPULAR ROMANCES OF THE EARLY
REPUBLICAN PERIOD (1930-1945): THE NOVELS OF KERİME NADİR, ESAT
MAHMUT KARAKURT AND MUAZZEZ TAHSİN BERKAND

by

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“Tracing Modernity in the Popular Romances of the Early Republican Period (1930-1945): The Novels of Kerime Nadir, Esat Mahmut Karakurt and Muazzez Tahsin Berkand,” a thesis prepared by Kerem Özkurt in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree at the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University.

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Title: Tracing Modernity in the Popular Romances of the Early Republican Period (1930-1945): The Novels of Kerime Nadir, Esat Mahmut Karakurt and Muazzez Tahsin Berkand

This thesis seeks to unearth the modernity discourse in the popular romance novels of Kerime Nadir, Esat Mahmut Karakurt and Muazzez Tahsin Berkand published during the period between 1930 and 1945. The analysis of these novels is made within a cultural context in which the similarities and differences of the novels are examined along with the literary production and consumption mechanisms of the period. This context is related to a global trend, the rise of the popular romance novels that narrate the social change, which was brought about the interwar modernity, over the man-woman relations in most part of Europe. In this framework, it is observed that modernity narrated in the popular romance novels studied here indicates a different modernity discourse than that exists in the canonical novels. This discourse of the popular romance novels, which is welcomed by the re-emerging middle class in the early Republican period, approaches modernity in a more positive manner and signals an intrinsic social change.

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Başlık: Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Popüler Romanslarında Moderniteyi İzlemek (1930-1945): Kerime Nadir, Esat Mahmut Karakurt ve Muazzez Tahsin Berkand'ın Romanları

Bu tez Kerime Nadir, Esat Mahmut Karakurt ve Muazzez Tahsin Berkand'ın 1930 ile 1945 arasında yayınlanmış popüler romans romanlarındaki modernite söylemini açığa çıkartmaya çalışmaktadır. Bu romanların analizleri, romanlar arasındaki benzerlik ve farklılıkları, o dönemin yazınsal üretim ve tüketim mekanizmalarıyla beraber dikkate alan kültürel bir bağlam içinde yapılmaktadır. Bu bağlam, iki savaş arası modernitesiyle gelen sosyal değişimi kadın-erkek ilişkileri üzerinden anlatan popüler romans romanlarının yükselişte olduğu daha küresel bir eğilimle ilişkilendirilmiştir. Bu çerçevede içinde, burada çalışılan popüler romans romanlarında anlatılan modernite, kanon romanlarında bulunandan farklı bir modernite söylemine işaret etmektedir. Erken Cumhuriyet döneminde yeniden oluşan orta sınıf tarafından kabullenilen popüler romans romanlarının bu söylemi, moderniteye daha olumlu bir şekilde yaklaşır ve kendiliğinden bir sosyal değişimin sinyallerini verir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My first advisers in reading were my father and my older brother. I heard the names of many of the great authors first from their mouths and specifically selected these author's novels to read. That is why I was surprised when my father mourned Esat Mahmut Karakurt's novels the most among the books he failed to keep. At that time, I used to consult literary periodicals and books for the legitimization of my selective reading. Karakurt was not an author I came upon in these literary works or periodicals. My father said he was one of the most popular authors of his childhood in the 1950s who wrote "pulp" fiction. Some authors were doomed to be forgotten because their novels were not able to go beyond their period, unlike the great literary works, I thought at that time "snobbishly" without any intension of reading any of Karakurt's novels. They strictly belonged to the period in which they were written, addressing only the tastes and interests of the audience of that period. Years later, when I decided to study the early republican period, I presumed this "embeddedness" could help me in understanding the perception of the people specific to the period and hard to empathize with in our times. Now I am trying not only to self-criticize my naïve belief in the selection of reading based on literary criteria what indeed might be constructed more politically than aesthetically but

also, examining these so-called “pulp” fictions that were widely read at one time, asking if I can uncover some mental traits of a specific period.

This partly explains why I chose popular novels for inquiry. My selection of the period rests on the undergraduate courses about Turkish political thought given by Professor Ayhan Aktar where my interest in the early Republican regime which is called Kemalism, developed. Indeed, the early Republican period, which extended from 1923 to 1945, witnessed great political and social transformation. Although there were two failing attempts for transition to a multiparty regime in the period, the single-party regime of the governing elites led by Mustafa Kemal and the Republican People’s Party was dominant. In those years, society underwent a drastic change through the radical reforms that were put into action for modernization by the Kemalist elites. Even though the modernization process dated back to the late Ottoman period, assumingly it was during the early Republican regime, specifically in the 1930s -when the regime’s authoritarianism reached its peak and the emergence of nation-state accelerated- the sharp reforms for modernization were widely implemented.¹

This modernization was apparently a top-down model in which the Kemalist elites tried to modernize society despite society. Hence, it is assumed that Kemalist modernization did not rest on the consent of society.² At this point one can ask how the political regime could sustain such a modernization program for nearly two decades in the absence of popular support. Apart from the vague nature of the extent of this modernization reaching what parts of society, the more important question here is how this modernization might have been perceived by society. To put it

¹ Erik Jan Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), pp. 257-298.

² Mesut Yeğen, “Kemalizm ve Hegemonya?” *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce*, vol. 2, *Kemalizm*, ed. Ahmet İnsel (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), p. 60.

simple, how was modernity as a life experience perceived in the early Republican era? Was there a different modernity experienced by society than the modernity modeled in a top-down manner in the leading writings of the Kemalist elite?

I intended to trace the experience of modernity from its echoes in literature, specifically in popular novels, - a genre that came to the fore with modernization in Turkey. Literature is widely used in historical studies and the social sciences to help understand the studied period accurately. This tendency simply rests on the assumption that every literary work carries the marks of the milieu in which it is created; even it does not directly intend to do so. It is assumed to have the potential to present the “spirit of” the period through reflecting the daily life and climate of the opinions in that period.³

In the research concerning the early Turkish Republican era, literature, specifically its most exclusive genre, novels, are consulted in a similar manner. A closer look would reveal that most of the studies about the period give attribution to a group of canonic works while dismissing the popular novelists. In the historical studies, the popular works of Muazzez Tahsin Berkand are rarely mentioned beside Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu’s canonical works, for instance, although the former works had several editions and probably were read more widely. This attitude may be acceptable for the studies in history of literature whose motives are supposed to rest on so-called aesthetic evaluations. However, being a historian or a social scientist, to exclude these best-sellers as texts which were actually written and widely read in the period would cause failure in understanding of the period in its fuller sense.

³ Duygu Köksal, “Sosyal Bilimlerin Kıyısında Edebiyat,” *Sosyal Bilimleri Yeniden Düşünmek* (İstanbul: Metis, 1998), p. 221; A. Ömer Türkeş, “Romana Yazılan Tarih,” *Toplum ve Bilim* 91 (Winter, 2002), p. 167.

At the beginning of my study, I preferred popular novels to canonical ones not only because of family memories, but also with this common drive existing in every study of popular novels: to uncover what was left silent. As the research progressed, it appeared that the popular romances, in which I am particularly interested, present a fertile field in which the experience of the modernity may be traced. Unlike the canonical novels, they did not directly discuss modernity on an abstract level or not writing intentionally for questioning it. Rather, these popular romances were narrating unambitiously the transformation in the male-female relations; the change that was likely brought about by modernity. Although failing to represent the daily life in all aspects, this narration might still carry clues about the experience of modernity perceived in society.

In this respect, I will trace characteristics of modernity in the romance novels of three leading popular novelists, Esat Mahmut Karakurt, Kerime Nadir and Muazzez Tahsin Berkand in the period between 1930 and 1945, looking at the representations of modernity in the novels' forms and contents. Modernity in these novels is narrated through human experience and portrayed as an intrinsic social change rather than as a top-down process.

I was inspired by Ömer Türkeş's and Selim İleri's critiques of the popular novels of early Republican era while selecting the novelists for this study. Both of the critics mention Kerime Nadir and Muazzez Tahsin Berkand as the most exclusive representatives of their genre. The popular romances of the early Republican era were almost identified with these two novelists' names.⁴ Ahmet

⁴ Mehmet Nuri Yardım, *Romançılar Konuşuyor* (İstanbul: Kaknus, 2000), pp. 233-38; A. Ömer Türkeş "Aşk Romanlarının Unutulmaz Yazarları Aşk Olsun!," *Virgöl* 18 (April, 1999), p. 53.

Oktay adds Esat Mahmut Karakurt's to these two names in his analysis.⁵ Although Karakurt is also mentioned in other critiques as one of the most famous popular novelists, it does not appear as important as the two women authors. I decided to include Karakurt in the analysis because I wanted my analysis to be more comprehensive. Moreover, being a male romance novelist and having a different background than Berkand and Nadir, Karakurt would provide the chance to show the diversified identities of the popular novelists. As evidence of their popularity I should state that all of the three authors' novels had several editions in the period they were first published.

I determined the time range from 1930 to 1945 for various reasons. 1945 was not only the end of the single-party regime in Turkey, but also the end of Second World War. It was the beginning of a new era in Turkey parallel to the world system which was also changing dreadfully. This new historical context seemed to be different from that of the interwar period.⁶ Hence it would be better to limit the time range to the year 1945. I set the beginning, on the other hand, according to the alphabet reform in 1928. This was a sharp reform that transformed the Arabic letters to Latin ones. The publishing sector had difficulties in adaptation to this reform. New technical equipment was required. The personnel had to be trained. Some of the books in the old alphabet were not translated into the new alphabet and left unpublished.⁷ The newspapers, where the popular romances first appeared as serials, lost their audience and their circulation fell nearly fifty percent after the reform. Hereupon the government decided to support the newspapers financially

⁵ Ahmet Oktay, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Edebiyatı, 1923-1950* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1993), p.127.

⁶ Eric J.Hobsbawm, *Kısa 20. Yüzyıl 1914-1991: Aşırılikler Çağı*, trans. Yavuz Alogan (İstanbul: Sarmal Yayınları, 2002), pp. 18-20.

⁷ Arslan Kaynarca, "Yayın Dünyası," *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 10 (İstanbul: İletişim, 1985), p. 2825.

with a resolution enacted in March 1930.⁸ Only in the mid-thirties did the publishing sector return to normal. These years also coincided with the publishing of the first novels of Berkand and Nadir. Distinctively Karakurt had published a story book before 1928, but he published his first long novel in the mid 1930s.⁹

Politically, it was the period when the most repressive policies of the one-party regime were implemented. The dose of authoritarianism in the regime rose after the closing of *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (The Free Republican Party), which was the product of a failed attempt for transition to a multi-party regime. Etatism policies were put into action to assert state control of the economy and social life. In an era when fascism was on the rise in Italy and Germany, the unification of party and state occurred in the Republican regime. In short, it was a period when reforms were harshly implemented.¹⁰ Hence it would be better to look at the daily experience of modernity particularly in this period when the regime's effort for modernization was intensified.

In the defined period, Nadir published thirteen novels whereas Berkand published ten and Karakurt published eight. Although it was published in the same period, Nadir's story book, named *Mücrim*, is not included since this study focuses merely on the novels of the three authors. Berkand's adopted novels published between 1930 and 1945 are also excluded since they require another study to distinguish the elements that belong to the original work, from the contributions of

⁸ Bülent Özükan, "Basında Tirajlar," *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1 (İstanbul: İletişim, 1985), p. 229.

⁹ Karakurt's short story compilation, *Aşkın Alevleri*, was published in 1926. Two of the long stories of this book, "Çölde Bir İstanbul Kızı" and "Vahşi Bir Kız Sevdim" were republished separately in the 1930s. However, these two works are still long stories and for this reason they are not included into the analysis that focuses only on the novels.

¹⁰ Feroz Ahmad, *İttihatçılıktan Kemalizme*, trans. Fatmagül Berktaş (İstanbul: Kaynak, 1985), pp. 219-220.

Berkand.¹¹ I used different encyclopedias of literature, the information in the book covers, memoirs of the authors and interviews with the authors to define the publishing dates of the novels.¹² All of the novels studied here stayed within the defined period although there are some disagreements on the exact year, except two. One is Nadir's *Solan Ümit*, which was said to be published in 1945, but might have been published in 1948 according to the note at the end of the second edition. The other is Berkand's *Saadet Güneşi*, which appears to have been published in 1947, although two sources cite that the publishing year as 1944.¹³ Both novels were included in the analysis though acknowledging the uncertainty of their dates.

To define my methodological approach to these popular novels, it would be better to look at the previous approaches about popular novels and popular culture in general.¹⁴ Academic interest in popular novels rose in the 1980s with the appearance of cultural studies as a separate discipline. It was articulated by using the different methodological tools of different disciplines but mainly of sociology. However, studying popular materials dates back to the studies of the Frankfurt School in the early 1940s, which approached popular culture negatively, identifying it with the

¹¹ It would be interesting to study the adoption process of the original novels' components to the conditions of Turkey. It could have uncovered the author's consideration about what should be taken and what should be eliminated.

¹² Murat Yalçın, *Tanzimat'tan Bugüne Edebiyatçılar Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003); Behçet Necatigil, *Edebiyatımızda İsimler Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: Varlık, 2000); *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi: Devirler, İsimler, Eserler, Terimler* (İstanbul: Dergah, 1976); Neriman Malkoç Öztürkmen, *Edibeler, Sefireler, Hanımefendiler: İlk Nesil Cumhuriyet Kadınlarıyla Söyleşiler* (N.p., 1999); Selim İleri, *Türk Romanından Altın Sayfalar* (İstanbul: Doğan, 2001); İhsan Işık, *Türkiye Yazarlar Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Uyum Ajans, 2001); M. Behçet Yazar, *Genç Romancılarımız ve Eserleri* (İstanbul: Ahmet Sait, 1937).

¹³ Murat Yalçın, *Tanzimat'tan Bugüne Edebiyatçılar Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1, p. 207; "Muazzez Tahsin Berkand" Available [online]: <http://www.dogankitap.com/yazar.asp?id=17> [22 October 2006]. In addition, there is a phrase in the novel that gives attribution to the end of the totalitarian regimes. In the first look this might have supported 1947, -a date after the Second World War in which the totalitarian regimes were defeated- as the publishing year. However, by the year 1944, it was more or less certain that the totalitarian regimes would collapse. Hence it is hard to define the publishing date of the novel from this phrase. Muazzez Tahsin Berkand, *Saadet Güneşi* (İstanbul: İnkılap, 1959), p. 29.

¹⁴ For a helpful discussion about the approaches to the popular culture see Meral Özbek, *Popüler Kültür ve Orhan Gencebay Arabeski* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991). pp. 61-93.

mass culture. These studies were based on the separation of “high” and “low” culture, claiming that being low, popular culture was entirely controlled by the capitalist system. Being simply market-oriented, it led to the false consciousness of society. With a Marxist view, popular culture was accused of hiding the system’s existing inconsistencies through looking for solutions anywhere but in production relations. Hence, popular culture was simply reproducing the legitimization of the existing order through the cultural meanings produced and imposed by the market.¹⁵

The alternative to this approach came from the Birmingham School in the mid 1960s when studies on culture began to increase. Its leading scholar studying popular culture, Stuart Hall, defined the realm of popular culture as an area of struggle. Contrary to Frankfurt School, Hall claims that the meanings of cultural products are not predetermined but are emerging through a process between producer and the consumer. Hence he turned the portrayed relation between dominant producer and passive consumer into a relation that is based on conflict and compromise between producer and consumer to create the cultural meaning of the product. Hence this process, Hall called articulation, included repression and resistance at the same time.¹⁶

This approach of cultural studies throughout the following two decades made popular novels valuable material for inquiry. However, it was feminist literary criticism which matured at the beginning of the 1980s that directed the attention of academia to popular romances. The feminist approach brought about a decoding of the formulaic structure of the romance genre that has developed since the eighteenth

¹⁵Martin Jay, *Adorno*, trans. Ünsal Oskay (Istanbul: Der Yayınları, 2001), p. 163. Also see Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (London: Heinemann, 1976).

¹⁶ For the evaluation of Hall’s approach, see Jennifer Daryl Slack, “The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies,” *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 112-128; John Fiske, *Popüler Kültürü Anlamak*, trans. Süleyman İrvan (Ankara: Ark, 1999), pp. 178-179.

century. It sought to uncover how the dominant gender discourse, that generates inequality between the sexes, was reproduced through the plots of these romances in the twentieth century. Nevertheless its most significant contribution was to look from the side of the readers. The feminist literary criticism questioned how the romances were perceived by their readers, who were the women. Specifically Radway's *Reading the Romance* showed that there were various readings of the same text. Hence the formula in the romances is not always to be taken by the readers directly. The act of reading is personal although the text is patterned.¹⁷

In Turkey, popular romances became the subject of academic inquiry only recently as the popularity of cultural studies has increased since the 1990s. However, only a few studies have appeared recently on the novelists who are studied in this thesis. Although late, this attention to popular romances owes much to the writings of Selim İleri, who remembers these romances with a sweet nostalgia, and A. Ömer Türkeş, who tries to include every published novel in his analysis, reminding readers of the forgotten novels of the past. Ahmet Oktay, who included these novelists in his popular culture analysis at the beginning of the 1990s, should also be added to these two authors.¹⁸

In his inclusive study about social change in the Turkish novels between 1920 and 1945, Alemdar Yalçın underlines the importance of romances in Turkish literature. However, his approach to popular romances is negative. Yalçın goes for a division between romances on the basis of so-called aesthetics devaluing popular romances. He argues that popular romances underline themes such as goodness, honesty and self-sacrifice, but narrate them through abstracting from the social

¹⁷ Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, "Introduction," *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 51.

¹⁸ See Ahmet Oktay, *Türkiye'de Popüler Kültür* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1993).

reality. Popular romances are pulp fiction and only for the entertainment of the masses.¹⁹

There is no published academic work about the authors studied here although there are some theses. Aslı Yakın's dissertation²⁰ focuses on sexuality, marriage and the desire of women for power and authority in Kerime Nadir's novels. She follows Hall's conceptualization of popular culture as an area of struggle for the redefinition of meanings. Hence, the aim of her thesis is to uncover how the meanings of marriage, sexuality and desire of women are reshaped by Nadir.

Tulin Ural's thesis²¹ has a more general elaboration on the differences and similarities between the canonical and non-canonical novels in the early Republican era. She looks at these similarities and differences through the subjects of gender, sexuality, love and family. She claims that *namus* (sexual honor) and nationalism set the limits of the disparity of the non-canonical novels although they have a more positive view of modernization than the canonical ones.

Aslı Güneş, in her thesis²² evaluates the popular romances of the early republican novels as the manner of novels of the Kemalist modernization. Departing from Nobeit Elias's theory of civilization, she argues that these novels functioned as advisers who told society, specifically women, how to behave according to the civilization introduced by Kemalist modernization.

¹⁹ Alemdar Yalçın, *Siyasal ve Sosyal Değişmeler Açısından Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Romanı, 1920-1946* (Ankara: Akçağ, 2002), pp. 217-246.

²⁰ Aslı Yakın, "Popüler Kültür ve Cumhuriyet Dönemi Popüler Aşk Edebiyatı: Kerime Nadir Romanları" (Ph.D dissertation, Hacettepe University, Ankara, 1999).

²¹ Tulin Ural Kabacaoğlu, "The Representation of Gender, love, Family and Sexuality in the Canonical and Non-Canonical Novels of the Early Republican Period" (M.A. thesis, Boğaziçi University, İstanbul, 2001).

²² Aslı Güneş, "Kemalist Modernleşmenin Adab-ı Muaşeret Romanları: Popüler Aşk Anlatıları" (M.A, thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara, 2005).

Senem Bozkurt studies male representations in Esat Mahmut Karakurt's novels.²³ Following the theoretical approach of feminist literary criticism she unearths the formulaic features of the male characters which are exposed to have a national-conservative view, a modern good-looking appearance, a successful career and a reluctance to love.

All these studies are significant in that they attempt to unearth the novels that have been forgotten. In that sense they are opening doors to successive studies. Nevertheless, one may still raise questions about their approach to popular romances in general. It seems that the popular romances are considered as formulaic texts which repeat the same patterns in the same ways. However, this approach unintentionally leads to the disappearance of some characteristics of the studied novels because these novelists actually use romance patterns, but individually produce variations of them at the same time. Instead of focusing only on formulaic features, to study what makes the author distinguishable within the other authors and what makes her novel distinctive may maintain more prolific conclusions.²⁴ Such an analysis should not neglect the incoherence which is immanent to the popular novels either. Amazingly, contradictory elements between the different novels of the same popular novelist can be observed. Even in the same novel, there can be contradicting ideas and claims coming one after another. Hence, it might be more interesting to concentrate on these contradictions for unearthing the authorial intention of these novelists.

²³ Senem Timurođlu Bozkurt, "Esat Mahmut Karakurt'un Roman(s)larında Erkek Kahramanlar" (M.A. thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara, 2006).

²⁴ Indeed Ural underlines the differences between the novels grouped as the non-canonical in her thesis through categorizing them crossly with the canonical ones. However, throughout the thesis the weight seems to be given to the canonical ones' agencies.

This thesis has two main aims. The first one is to attempt to analyze the popular romances of Karakurt, Nadir and Berkand in a context with relation to the global trend which gave rises to popular romances all over the world in the interwar period. The second aim is to unearth their perception of modernity which seems different from the one that was promoted by the Kemalist modernization and its canonical novels.

With these drives, in the succeeding chapter I will draw a theoretical framework for my analysis of the popular romances. I will relate the popular romances of Nadir, Berkand and Karakurt to the globally rising interest in popular romances which was the result of the modernity experienced in the interwar period. Then I will look at how these popular romances were excluded from the Turkish literary canon. In the last part of this chapter I will present the writing, publishing and reading context of the early republican period in which these novels were produced and consumed.

The second chapter includes the textual analysis of the novels of Karakurt, Berkand and Nadir. Comparing and contrasting not only the novels of the same author but also novels of the different authors, I will try to unearth what kind of patterns they created and where they deviated from these patterns. Together with the last part of the previous chapter, this analysis will draw the general picture of the popular romances that is studied in this thesis.

The third chapter presents representation of modernity in the popular romances of Nadir, Berkand and Karakurt. The chapter begins with a part which seeks to uncover how these novels situated themselves as lived stories. Then, I will look at the modernity in the popular romances over the representation of the new and the old. I will handle the novels of the authors in separate parts.

In the conclusion chapter, briefly summarizing the previous chapters, I will evaluate the findings of this study. It seems that the analysis of these popular romances points the existence of an experience of modernity that is parallel to that of in the other parts of the world in the interwar period and that is different from the one that exists in the discourse of the Kemalist modernization project.

CHAPTER 2

THE ROMANCE OF CHANGE

Modernity and the Romance

Modernization theories tend to project a developmental trajectory where all societies are located on the basis of their comparability to European societies. Being already mature and modern, these European societies are situated in the modern temporality whereas the modernizing societies, which seek to catch up to their European counterparts, experience different temporalities than the modern one. This leads to a time lag which can be disclosed by the late comers only through tracing the developmental experience of the European examples.²⁵ In this thesis, however, modernity is defined as a temporality that is experienced by all societies.

I borrow the concept of the “experience of modernity” from Marshall Berman’s celebrated work, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*. Following him I take “modernity” as a “mode of vital experience- experience of space and time, self and the other, of life’s possibilities and the perils- that is shared by men and women all

²⁵ For a path breaking analysis about the modernization approaches, see Harry D. Harootunian. "Preface: All the Names of History," *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. xiii-xiv.

over the world” in a particular period.²⁶ Hence, modernity implies the total of the life strategies which people utilize for reconciling with the contemporary world. This experience includes simultaneously the desire for the transformation and the desire for the conservation of everything that people have. Most probably it is this ambiguous character of modernity which makes it a challenge with which to cope.

Modernity is a common experience regardless of the boundaries of nationality or geography. In that sense it is a global process that invites all societies to share the same historical temporality. Harootunian emphasizes this feature of the modernity with the adjective “co-eval.” He argues that “whatever and however a society develops, it is simply taking place at the same time as other modernities.”²⁷ Societies would probably be distinguishable due to their experience of this temporality. However, they remain contemporary while conciliating the same global process with their local cultural habits.

The societies of the interwar period seemingly shared such experience of modernity undergoing drastic transformations. Everything was changing so rapidly, destroying and rebuilding the worlds in which the people used to live. This experience can be best traced through the changing gender roles and relations. In the interwar period, the women gained their liberation not only in the Europe but also in most non-Western countries.²⁸ This was partly the result of the feminist movement that had been rising since the end of the previous century. The movement was alike to achieve some of its goals although still it failed to establish gender equality. The Great War also contributed to this liberation, inviting women to work life in the

²⁶ Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1988), p. 15.

²⁷ Harootunian, p. xvi.

²⁸ Chatterjee argues the late colonial period of India witnessed so drastic and rapid changes in the lives of especially middle class women. Partha Chatterjee, *Ulus ve Parçaları: Kolonyal ve Post-Kolonyal Tarihler*, trans. İsmail Çekem (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), p. 220.

absence of men. Both processes contributed to the transformation of women's social roles and conclusively man-woman relations in societies. However, the most influential motive of this transformation might be both sex's intensified intention of "becoming modern."

At the end of the war, people witnessed the collapse of the world they had known.²⁹ The recent image of Victorian woman that had remained unchanged for decades was replaced by image of the "modern woman." Women were more and more often appearing in the public sphere through working and spending their leisure time side by side with men. They were trying to "establish what they perceived to be 'modern' lives for themselves."³⁰ However, these women of the transformation period seemed unsure about what this "modern" meant, raising questions about it. "What exactly did it take to be 'modern'? How 'modern' were they going to be? What did a 'modern life' look like? What were its key components? What would replace the normative models that had guided older generations?"³¹ The same is valid for the men. "How would they treat this modern woman? How would they enter into love relations with them? What would be the course of the love relation? What did the contemporary world would require from them while being 'modern'?"³²

From politicians to sociologists, from journalists to authors, all were in a struggle to define women's new social roles and the course of the man-woman relations. All were trying to propose answers to the questions of men and women's

²⁹ Brigitte Soland, *Becoming Modern: Young Women and the Reconstruction of Womanhood in the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

being “modern.”³³ This trend generated a cultural discourse which presented a platform for discussing modernity. This is probably why the contradictory conclusions of modernity, being degenerated and being modern, were both narrated over the woman and her interaction with the opposite sex. Alongside this cultural discourse that offered solutions to the ambiguity of “what is modern” or “how modern would be,” women and men were able to find the answers in the experiences of the other “modern” women and men who were similarly looking for the answers.³⁴ The private lives and relations of others became issues about which to be curious about. Stories, novels and news that described the experience of these modern lives and modern relations began to be read widely.³⁵ Therefore it is not surprising that an old genre, romance, which tells the relations between men and women, became popular in this period.

One can find early patterns of romance in the folk tales and in early examples of the narratives in Europe. However, the romance novel as a genre supposedly came to the fore in the nineteenth century. The genre was primarily based on the narration of courtly love between the two protagonists and their struggle to join. It continues the classical romance plot that presents the repetitive structure in which the lovers separate, overcome difficulties perpetuating the loyalty of their love and join in the end.³⁶ Although the popularity of the genre was disrupted by the rise of the realistic novel, it came back in the form of popular novels at the turn of the century.

³³ Ibid., p. 5. Similarly Chatterjee argues that the dominant theme of the cultural discourse at the end of the nineteenth century of Bengali was “change.” Chatterjee, p. 225.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

³⁵ Martens argues that this is the reason for the increasing interest in intimate journals at the beginning of the century which offered a uniquely privileged insight into the personal lives of other individuals. Lorna Martens, *The Diary Novel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 116.

³⁶ Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 68.

The romance novel was welcomed by the mass publishing industry along with adventure and detective novels in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Globally the romance novelists were increasing in number due to the popularity of the genre. Carmen Icaza in Spain and Alice Ogando in Portugal built their fame as popular romance novelists for instance.³⁷ In Britain, as in the other European countries, women magazines published romance stories in serial.³⁸

The fall of interest in naturalism in literature probably contributed a great deal to this return of romances. At the beginning of the century, authors seem to avoid portraying real life in their novels. They were more interested in the inner thoughts of the characters. In other words, they gave more credit to the reflection of the reality in the human mind, rather than its bare existence in real life. This was the result of the developments in psychological studies which awakened interest in the human's perception of reality. As Martens puts it, "...the world we knew by experience is not the real world, that all we can know is what is in our minds, and that we in fact create reality as we perceive it."³⁹ This change in the perception presumably helped the rise of romances, which narrated reality in a more imaginary world and through the perspectives of its characters.

However what made romances the most popular genre of the interwar period might be its concentration on the image of woman and man-woman relations in a period when both of them were undergoing distinctive changes not only across Europe, but seemingly all over the world. However, it was unthinkable that romance, as a genre, would continue to tell purely courtly love as it had in the

³⁷ Debbie Maria Avila, "The Romance Novel of the 1930s and 1940s in Spain and Portugal: The Cases of Carmen de Icaza and Alice Ogando" (Ph.D dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 2005).

³⁸ Bridget Fowler, "True to Me Always: An analysis of women's Magazine Fiction," *British Journal of Sociology* 30 (March, 1979).

³⁹ Martens, p. 126.

nineteenth century. Now, it was seemingly narrating romantic relation between the “modern” men and “modern” women.⁴⁰ This was a love in modern times although still reserving some conservative features, and in that course trying to set up the borders of the “modern.” However, they were still far from giving certain answers to readers’ questions about the definition of the “modern.” Rather, they present a range of choices which would help the women and men of the interwar period in their struggle to solve this ambiguity called modernity.⁴¹

In this thesis I will approach the popular romances of Nadir, Karakurt and Berkand as part of this global trend which was brought on by the interwar modernity. It seems that since the late Ottoman period, cities such as İstanbul and İzmir shared the same temporality with the other parts of the world, experiencing a nearly common social transformation.⁴² One can notice, for instance, that the changes in social life of İstanbul, particularly in the image of women and man-woman relations, were parallel to those in Europe (and in nearly all over the world) in the interwar period. Hence, it is no coincidence that the criticism of modernity was made over this transformation of gender roles and relations, as was it in Europe.⁴³

⁴⁰ Du Plessis argues that many twentieth century romance novelists deviated from the traditional romance plot, through making “alternative statements about the gender and its institutions.” Quoted by Avila, p. 105.

⁴¹ Avila argues that the novels of Icaza and Ogando convey contradictory messages oscillating between conservative and liberal ideas. In that sense these authors avoid imposing one proper image of the “new woman” or the gender relations. Avila, p. 97. Barthlein, who also touches on the relation between the transformation of gender roles and relations, and modernity, points out a similar uncertainty in the representations of women and the man-woman relations in Chinese popular novels. Thomas Barthlein, “Mirrors of Transition: Conflicting Images of Society in Change from Popular Chinese Social Novels, 1908 to 1930,” *Modern China* 25 (April, 1999), pp. 208-211.

⁴² Duben and Behar argue in their inclusive study about the households of İstanbul between 1880 and 1940 that the changes in family structure, the conditions of marriage and man-woman relations went hand in hand with those in Europe. Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *İstanbul Haneleri: Evlilik, Aile ve Doğurganlık, 1880-1940* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1996).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

The traditional image of woman had already started to change at the turn of the century in this geography. The women of the late Ottoman period enjoyed some political and social rights parallel to those of their contemporaries in Europe. Being generally members of the upper class, these women did not constitute a crowded group. However, their struggle for further rights was enough to awake the anxiety of cultural discourse about modernity. According to this defensive discourse, too much liberation for women would lead to immorality and degeneration which, in the end, presented a threat to the fundamentals of society.⁴⁴ After the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 these “modern” women were the first ones to support the Kemalist reforms. However, they were called “İstanbul Women” and portrayed as degenerated figures by the political regime. The Kemalists championed the image of Anatolian women who would be modernized through reforms instead of that of İstanbul Women, who was already “modern.” Trying to detach itself from the earlier modernization movement, the political regime discursively excluded these women who symbolized the past.⁴⁵

The case of “İstanbul Women” shows us the existence of a social transformation that started in the late Ottoman period and proceeded parallel to the social transformations in Europe along with the other parts of the world. This social change maintained the connection with the modernity experienced throughout the world in the interwar period. The cultural discourse of the early Republican regime presumably neglected this social transformation, exposing the Kemalist modernization as institutionalized social change. However, the continuing social transformation, which was experienced by the upper strata of society so far, spread

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 213.

⁴⁵ Zehra Toska, “Cumhuriyet’in Kadın İdeali: Eşiği Aşanlar ve Aşamayanlar,” *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler*, ed. Ayşe Berktaş Hacımiraçoğlu (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1998), p. 78.

to the lower classes through the Kemalist reforms, in the end creating a middle class which was based on the intention of becoming “modern.”

This thesis assumes that the popular romances of Berkand, Karakurt and Nadir narrate this modernity newly experienced by the urban middle class in the interwar period. The words of Burhan Cahit Morkaya, a political intellectual and a famous popular romance novelist, best summarize the situation:

A social reform came to existence in the country. Women appeared. The shape of the public life changed. The homely entertainment turned into entertainment of outside. The rising generation does not know the previous life. You have to produce new works of art in order to sustain the movements of current life. We are the authors of this period of transformation, this period of conversion.⁴⁶

Canon

It should be underlined that these popular romances studied here fall outside the national literature canon. When I say canon, I refer to the texts that are identified within the “high culture.” Hence the term “canon” necessarily brings about a hierarchy between the texts. It implies a process of selection on the basis of some basic criteria. The valued ones survive while the others are left to be forgotten until the criteria are somehow changed.⁴⁷ Jusdanis argues in his important work, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture*, that these criteria are more political than aesthetic.

Moving from the example of Greek modernization, he indicates how the canon

⁴⁶ Server R. İskit, *Türkiye’de Neşriyat Hareketleri Tarihine Bir Bakış* (İstanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1939), p. 290. The original text is as follows: “Memlekette içtimai bir inkılap meydana geldi. Kadın ortaya çıktı. Umumi hayatın şekli değişti. Ev işi eğlenceler dışarının malı oldu. Yeni yetişenler dünkü hayatı bilmiyorlar. Bugünkü hayatın hareketlerini yaşatmak için yeni eserler vereceksiniz. Biz bu geçit, bu istihale devrinin muharrirleriyiz.”

⁴⁷For instance, Thackeray was more appreciated than Dickens in the nineteenth century. However, the latter one became the one of the most valuable authors of the twentieth century literature whereas the former is less recognizable today.

formation is shaped by the nation building process on the one hand, and how it helped the shaping of the process on the other. Tracing the canon formulation enables him to map the Greek modernization.⁴⁸

Türkeş argues that the relation between the Turkish modernization and Turkish literary canon gives less opportunity for such mapping. The political regime actually tried to build a national literary canon which legitimized the establishing regime in the early Republican period. However, seemingly it was able to establish a deficient one.⁴⁹ This argument seems to be valid but incomplete in that it overlooks the consequences of this formation. If literary textbooks, critiques and social studies give reference to the same group of novels from the early Republican period, one can argue that the job of establishing a national canon was achieved to some extent.

It seems that the novels which are written in the Republican period and are situated in the national canon today, directly discuss the problem of modernization and the confrontation of West and East, usually over the themes of woman and family.⁵⁰ They seek to narrate the changes in the private spheres which were brought about by modernization. To achieve this, the authors preferred to relate the individual lives of the characters to the political and historical events of the period that is drawn as a background. The authorial intention is seemingly to demonstrate how individuals are affected by historical and political changes. This relation is strengthened through the appearance of fictional figures such as the politicians,

⁴⁸ Greogory Jusdanis, *Gecikmiş Modernlik ve Estetik Kültür: Milli edebiyatın İcat Edilişi*, trans. Tuncay Birkan (İstanbul: Metis, 1998).

⁴⁹ Ömer A. Türkeş, "Güdük Bir Edebiyat Kanonu," *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, vol. 2, *Kemalizm*, ed. Ahmet İnel (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), p. 429.

⁵⁰ Moran states that Westernization (modernization) is not only the main theme of the Turkish novel until 1950s but also the main drive that defines the construction of the plot and type along with its function. Berna Moran, *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış*, p. 24. Also Şerif Mardin argues that the Turkish novel is an appropriate material to trace the thoughts of the Turkish intellectuals about modernization. Şerif Mardin, "Tanzimat'tan Sonra Aşırı Batılılaşma," *Makaleler*. Vol. 4, *Türk Modernleşmesi*, eds. Mümtaz'er Türköne and Tuncay Önder (İstanbul: İletişim, 1997), p. 30.

government official or intellectual of the narrated period. Selim Pasha, an important figure of Adivar's *Sinekli Bakkal* is a government official in the reign of Sultan Abdulhamit II who sends the heroine's father into exile.⁵¹ The hero in Karaosmanoğlu's *Yaban* (1932) is an intellectual who becomes disabled in the First World War. The novel mainly tells of the hero's exclusion by the residents of the village in which he starts to live in during the Independence War.

The intention of setting a connection between individual lives and historical background usually leads to the production of representative types in the narrative. The author tries to give place to the representation of the different social segments through fictional characters. In *Ankara*, for instance, Karaosmanoğlu narrates three successive but different periods in Republican history. In every period the heroine marries a different man who is the representative character of the period. Her first husband is a banker in the late Ottoman period whereas she marries an army official during the Independence War. In the end she finds happiness with an intellectual in the Republican period.⁵² Similarly Adivar seeks to present the panorama of the late Ottoman period in *Sinekli Bakkal* and that of the early Republican period in *Tatarcık* (1939). The author even sets continuity between the two novels in that one of the characters of *Tatarcık*, Recep, is the son of *Sinekli Bakkal*'s heroine, Rabia. While in *Sinekli Bakkal*, the people, the palace and the reformist intellectuals are represented through the characters, in *Tatarcık*, the seven youth are seemingly the representatives of the seven different groups existing in society including the bourgeois, intellectuals, religious conservatives, aristocrats and Kurds.

The most influential typology of the canonic novels might be the "dandy," who is a degenerated figure due to the unconditional modernization. The roots of

⁵¹ Halide Edib Adivar, *Sinekli Bakkal* (İstanbul: Özgür, 2005 [1936]).

⁵² Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, *Ankara* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1998 [1934]).

this type can be dated back to late Ottoman period when the first criticism of modernization (westernization) in the novels began to appear.⁵³ For instance in *Araba Sevdası* (1896) Rezaizade Mahmut Ekrem narrates the satirical story of an upper-class dandy who tries to imitate the European life style but fails due to his intellectual inefficiency. A similar type appears as the character Felatun in *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* (1875), but this time with his positive counterpart, Rakım, who, contrary to Felatun, has become truly modern. Moran underlines the role of this novel of Ahmet Mithat in determining the course of the construction of the fictional characters in the early Turkish novel.⁵⁴ He argues that the main intention of Ahmet Mithat in creating the character of Felatun was to criticize the consumerism promoted by the unconditioned modernization (westernization). Indeed, the destructive effects of this consumerism attached to the modernization also would be narrated in later examples of canonic novels such as *Yaprak Dökümü* (1939) or *Kiralık Konak* (1922). In both novels, the family is disposed due to the unquestioned modernization which is embodied in the costly habits of the European life style such as dances, parties, clothes and western music.

The narration of the modernization of the family, particularly of women seems to be a popular tendency in the novels we call canonic today.⁵⁵ In the examples which the authors directly narrate the collapse of the family, the reason for the destruction is the degeneration of the women in the family. Indeed the woman is

⁵³ Moran points the change of the type of “dandy” through the time. Whereas it was mostly defined over the consumerism in the late Ottoman period, the type evolved into the betrayer in the early Republican novels. For the entire analysis, see Moran, pp. 259-269.

⁵⁴ Moran, p. 48.

⁵⁵ Nüket Esen, “Türk Ailesindeki Değişimin Romanımıza Yansımaları,” *Modern Türk Edebiyatı Üzerine Okumalar* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), p. 224. Gürbilek states that the anxieties about modernization have been narrated through the theme of the woman. Nurdan Gürbilek, “Erkek Yazar, Kadın Okur: Etkilenen Okur, Etkilenmeyen Yazar,” *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark* (İstanbul: Metis, 2004), p. 29.

usually portrayed as the one who is the most liable to influence. “Women are doomed to understand civilization through their eyes”.⁵⁶ They are easily captured by the colorful clothes of the modern (West) losing their intrinsic values such as nationality and morality. Hence, the anxiety of the author about the degeneration of woman, in a way, overlaps with the reflex to protect the national culture from the negative influence of the West (modernization). The image of woman in these novels turns into the allegory of the nation which must be guarded against the undesired effects of modernization.⁵⁷

The author of the so-called canonic novels of the early Republican period describes women who enjoy the liberation to some extent. The women in the novels are portrayed in public sphere side by side with men. What frightens the author seems to be that this liberation may lead to the degeneration of women, conclusively to immorality in society. Hence they criticize, in the novels, the image of the woman who can be called “salon women,” who does not work and produce anything but runs from parties to balls only considering her appearance.⁵⁸ In a sense, these are “dandy women.” Against these salon women, the authors appreciate the working women who are willingly productive, particularly with a mission of serving the nation. For this reason, the heroes in these novels usually appear as teachers or nurses.

In general terms, the authors who are perceived as canonic today seem to narrate the question of modernization over the dualities such as modern and tradition, West and East, and degenerated and moral. These categories usually are clearly defined and the authors do not let transgression between the two. The

⁵⁶ Peyami Safa, *Fatih-Harbiye*, 19th ed. (İstanbul: Ötüken, 1999 [1931]), p. 94.

⁵⁷ Gürbilek, p. 32.

⁵⁸ Bahriye Çeri, *Türk Romanında Kadın: 1923-38 Dönemi* (İstanbul: Simurg, 1996), p. 247.

heroine of *Sinekli Bakkal* is a religious Muslim girl, growing up in a poor district of İstanbul while her lover is an atheist European pianist tutor who lives in İstanbul, having inherited a fortune from his family. The heroine symbolizes the East whereas her lover is representative of the West. The peak of this tendency of categorization might be *Fatih-Harbiye* by Peyami Safa, in which the duality starts from its title. Fatih as a district in İstanbul represents the East, tradition, the poor and the old whereas another province of İstanbul, Harbiye, signifies the West, the modern, the rich and the new. The separation is so certain that the heroine is unable to locate herself between them, having to choose one of them. Although she is more liable to the West, Harbiye, because of the “dandy” she newly meets, through the appropriate interference of her ex-lover, she chooses Fatih, the East.

To sum up, the so-called canonic novels of the early republican period narrate modernization (westernization) over the national allegories. The families become minimized models of the nation. Like the nation, the families try to overcome the problems brought by the modernization. Repetitive narration of the negative sides of the change signals the authors’ suspicious approach to modernization. Being modern always includes the danger of being degenerated. Hence these novels prefer to narrate “how not to modernize” rather than “how to modernize.”⁵⁹

The popular romances of Berkand, Nadir and Karakurt are perceived as non-canonical, being excluded from the literature textbooks and neglected by the literature critics. They, just like the other popular romances, remain unmentioned while their more “realistic” contemporaries are generally listed as the “novels of the period.” This tendency also finds its echoes in other branches of the social studies

⁵⁹ Kabacaoğlu, p. xxxvii.

that benefit from literature as a source. Most of the social studies concerning the period do not pay attention to these popular romances. Any literary or social science student would situate them within the popular culture instead of the canonic literature without hesitation. However, their place seemingly was not so definite in the period in which they were written.

It seems that the popular romances were not entirely excluded in the early Republican period. In a lecture about contemporary Turkish authors given in the Kadıköy People House in 1937, Mehmet Behçet Yazar mentioned the names of popular romance novelists beside those of other authors like Peyami Safa, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu and Halide Edip Adivar, who are certainly perceived as canonic today.⁶⁰ Although he might have included these authors in order to expose all published novels in the period, avoiding the separation between the canonic and non-canonic is still meaningful. One of the famous literature critics of the period, Murat Uraz, gave place to most of the women's popular novelists including Nadir and Berkand along with other valuable women authors that are named as canonic now.⁶¹ A literature history book, İsmail Habib Sevük's *Tanzimat'tan Beri* (1942) also mentioned the names of Berkand and Karakurt among the contemporary novelists with a populist reasoning. He stated beforehand that it was unusual to cite contemporary novels in literary histories because their aesthetic value cannot be evaluated objectively yet. However, it was still necessary to recommend these novels to the new readers who had difficulties in finding material for reading after the alphabet reform.⁶²

⁶⁰ M. Behçet Yazar, *Genç Romancılarımız ve Eserleri* (İstanbul: Ahmet Sait, 1937).

⁶¹ Murat Uraz, *Resimli Kadın Şair ve Muharrirlerimiz* (İstanbul: Tefeyyüz Kİtabevi, 1941)

⁶² İsmail Habib Sevük, *Tanzimattan Beri* (İstanbul: Remzi, 1944), p. 417.

Such examples demonstrate that the literary appreciation of the novels co-existed with the criticisms.⁶³ The attitude against these novels seems to have been uncertain in the early Republican period, blurring the borders between the canonic and non-canonic. Today, a literary critic would doubtlessly leave these popular romances out of the analysis. They are completely outside of the literary field. However, in the context of the 1930s, presumably there was no problem about their inclusion. It seems that the canon formation was not completed yet.⁶⁴ Rather these popular romances might have been excluded long after the period in which they were written.

The Context of Writing, Publishing and Reading

To analyze any text, one needs the description of the historical environment in which it is produced and consumed. In this part I will try to draw the picture of the context in which these novels were written, published and read.

This context was extensively shaped by the Alphabet Reform of 1928. The reform was for the transition of the alphabet from Arabic to Latin. With Resolution No: 1353, enacted on November 1, 1928, the Latin alphabet became the official alphabet of the Turkish State. The implementation of the law started immediately. *Türkçe Gazete*, the first newspaper in the Turkish Latin alphabet, had almost appeared one month before the resolution. The other newspapers also started to be printed in Latin alphabet shortly after the reform. By December 1 in the same year,

⁶³ Nadir tells in her memories repetitively that she was criticized as a popular novelist. However, she also quotes the criticism that appreciated her novels like the one made by M. Turhan Tan about *Hıçkırık*. Kerime Nadir, *Romancının Dünyası (Yazarlık Anıları)* (İstanbul: İnkılap ve Aka, 1981) p. 40

⁶⁴ Yaşar Nabi underlined in the 1930s that there were many famous authors because the “value judgment” (*kıymet ölçüleri*) had not entirely emerged yet. Yaşar Nabi, *Edebiyatımızın Bugünkü Meseleleri* (İstanbul: Kanaat, 1937), p. 67.

all the periodicals, signboards and advertisements were to be printed in the new Turkish alphabet. The readers were also prepared for this transformation. At the beginning of the semester of 1928-1929, there were textbooks printed in the Turkish Latin alphabet on the desks. For the adults, *Millet Mektepleri* (National Schools) were opened in January 1929, to start a campaign to teach the new alphabet.⁶⁵

The alphabet reform was a great attempt to rupture the newly emerging Turkish Republic from its Ottoman past. Through changing the alphabet, not only were all of the written documents of the past left out of circulation, but also the access of successive readers to this near past became more difficult. Hence the reform likely helped the republic to deny its immediate past and organic ties with the Ottoman Empire. At the same time this was also an immense transformation of the reading and the publishing public. It is uncertain to what extent the passage of the existing reading public to the new alphabet was successful. Yet, presumably the new readers educated in the Latin alphabet were on the scene by the mid-1930s. Until that time, the publishing sector had to be sustained by a few readers for a couple of years. The crisis of the publishing ended in the first half of the 1930s with government support, but the sector seems to have returned to pre-reform conditions towards the end of the decade.

The popular romances of Berkand, Nadir and Karakurt all were published first in newspapers as serialized novels, and then were published as books. Therefore, while setting the publishing context of these novels, both newspapers and book publishing should be taken into consideration. Both sectors were strongly influenced by the lack of readership which was the result of the alphabet reform. For instance, the newspaper *İkdam*, whose owner was the honorable journalist Ahmet

⁶⁵ Sami N. Özerdim, "Türk Harflerinin İlk On Yılında Devlet Yayınları," *İletişim* 3 (1981), p. 53.

Cevdet, was closed because of this destitution in 1928.⁶⁶ The total number of the newspapers sold fell from 45,000 in 1927 to 19,727 in 1928 after the alphabet reform, suddenly dropping the income of the newspaper.⁶⁷ To compensate this cost of the reform, the government decided to support the newspapers financially for three years. According to the resolution enacted in March 1930, newspapers would be given financial support in proportion to their circulation. This government policy seems to have contributed to the recovery of the press in that the numbers of circulations returned to its normal course in the mid-1930s.⁶⁸

However, it was doubtful that the government supported the ideal of the free press. The newspapers were more restricted in their content throughout the 1930s. This was the reflection of the failed attempt of the transition to a multi-party regime at the beginning of the decade.⁶⁹ Some of the newspapers such as *Yarın* and *Son Posta* took the side of the opposition party, criticizing the single-party government. At that time, the murder of a young army officer in İzmir by religious extremists gave the government reason to repress all political opposition. It blamed the opposition party for provoking religious movements against the regime. The closing of the opposition party led to a more repressive government.

In the 1930s, authoritarianism was rising not only in Germany and Italy, but also, to some degree, in the democratic countries like England and France.

⁶⁶ Ali Gevgili, "Türkiye Basını," *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1 (İstanbul, İletişim, 1985), p. 215.

⁶⁷ Özükan, p. 231.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁶⁹ The government initiatively encouraged the establishment of *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (Free Republican Party), an opposition party, to calm down the discontent in society that appeared after the Great Depression of 1929. The governing elite proposed an opposition party as the controller of the government policies at the beginning. This control would relieve the tension in the society which blamed the single-party government for the severe living conditions. However, unexpectedly the opposition party was supported widely and became a threat to the authority of the one-party.

Libertarian rights were gradually suspended.⁷⁰ Turkey more or less followed this tendency. In these conditions, the Turkish Republic's first Law of Press was enacted in 1931. With this law, the government gained the right to close newspapers due to the reason of "publishing against the interests of the country"⁷¹ The establishment of *Matbuat Umum Müdürlüğü* (General Directory of Press) in 1933 increased the government's pressure on the press. The Directory was responsible for the effective control of the news in the press. It had the power to close newspapers with a single "phone call" to the newspaper.⁷² The press of the 1930s in that sense seems to have been under political pressure.

The constraints on the press increasingly continued in the first half of the 1940s. The Law of Press was revised in 1938 bringing the compulsion of governmental permit while establishing a newspaper.⁷³ The press became more dependent on the government through this legal change. On the other hand, the content of the newspapers was restricted more in the Second War years due to the increasing governmental control of the news. Only news glorifying the "Great Chief" İsmet İnönü who became the leader of the governing elite upon the death of Mustafa Kemal in 1938, was allowed. Hence, the press was politically paralyzed and in most of the cases had to be supportive of the single-party government. This situation changed in the last year of the Second World War, when the authoritarian regime began to soften.

In the period between 1928 and 1945, it was hard to see the existence of an exclusively free press. To some extent, it was effective in politics but not as much as

⁷⁰ Hobsbawm, pp. 146-148.

⁷¹ Gevgili, p. 215.

⁷² Ibid., p. 215. Gevgili mentions that even Falih Rifkî Atay, the editor of *Ulus* which was like the spokesman of the government, complained about this pressure in one of his articles.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 217.

it is today as a fourth estate. There might be two reasons for this powerlessness. First, the literacy rates were still low due to the alphabet reform. The readers of the Latin alphabet would enter into the scene barely in the mid-1930s and their number would start to increase just towards the end of the decade. Hence the influence of the press was limited to a small population. Second, there were problems in the distribution of newspapers because of the insufficiency in transportation. Although the railways constructed in few years “weaving the homeland with iron web,”⁷⁴ the rural areas, even some cities were unable to deliver newspapers daily. The capacity of the press could not have met the demand of the reading public even if it had not been destroyed by the alphabet reform. Özükan takes 1950s as the turning point for the media, stressing that the “mass press” in the literal sense developed in those years.⁷⁵ Only after the construction of highways that connected cities to rural areas in the 1950s, were newspapers able to reach more people. In addition, the government policy of promoting competition in the economy stimulated advertising in the media. This would conclusively sustain a considerable financial benefit to the newspapers, in turn increasing their efficiency. Before the 1950s, however, newspaper publishing was far from being a powerful sector.

The same was valid for the publishing of books. Publishing experienced a depression after the Alphabet Reform of 1928. Technically the sector was not ready for the adaptation. New bars for the new letters were required. The pressing machines were to be adjusted to the new letters. The printing houses had to find typesetters who were accustomed to the Turkish Latin alphabet and time was needed

⁷⁴ From the anthem for the tenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic that was written by the famous poets Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, Behçet Kemal Çağlar. The original text is as follows: “Çıktık açık alımla on yılda her savaştan; On yılda on beş milyon genç yarattık her yaştan; Başta bütün dünyanın saydığı başkumandan, Demir ağlarla ördük anayurdu dört baştan.”

⁷⁵ Özükan, p. 229.

for their training. All these were for printing books in the new alphabet since only they were valuable. All the books printed in Arabic letters were taken out of the circulation and were collected only by second hand dealers.⁷⁶ The overall products of the pre-reform publishing became useless overnight. Some of them were translated into the new letters within a few years whereas some of them waited one or two decades to appear in the Latin alphabet. Nevertheless, most of them were unable to reach to the readers of successive periods, since they were not translated into the new alphabet at all.

It is impossible to find the exact numbers on published books according to the years. From the years of the Second Constitutional Monarchy when regular publishing started to develop, until 1928, approximately 27,000 books were published. Over 4,500 of them were printed between 1923 and 1928, in the first years of the Turkish Republic.⁷⁷ In the years following the alphabet reform, after a fall for few months, the numbers of published books gradually increased. In the first five years following the reform, 5,443 books were published.⁷⁸ In the second five years, on the other hand, this number doubled to 9,801.⁷⁹ It seems there was an intensive healing in the publishing sector in the second half of the 1930s compared to the first years of the reform.

The government also started to deal with the publishing sector more seriously by the mid-1930s. *Basma Yazı ve Resimleri Derleme Müdürlüğü* (The Directory of Collecting Printed Writings and Pictures) was established in 1934 to record the published books. All the print houses had to send five copies of each

⁷⁶ Arslan Kaynardağ, p. 2825.

⁷⁷ Sami N. Özerdim, *Elli Yılda Kitap (1923-1973)* (Ankara: [s.n.], 1974), pp. 15-16.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.21.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

published item to this entity. Hence the records after 1934 were relatively more accurate than those of previous years. Starting from the same year, this directory annually published *Türkiye Bibliyografyası* (The Bibliography of Turkey) which included the list of items published in that year.⁸⁰ The intention of the government to list the published books somehow indicates the existence of an effective publishing sector that must be controlled.

The numbers of published books continued to increase steadily except for sharp falls and rises during the war years.⁸¹ It seems that the crisis in the publishing sector had settled. The success of this settlement largely belonged to the newly established publishing houses. Ahmet Halit, Remzi, Vakıf, İnkılap, Semih Lütfü, Resimli Ay were some of them founded after the Alphabet reform.⁸² However, the power of the sector was still doubtful. The best example for showing the limits of its influence on politics might be the discussions on the publishing and printing of textbooks. The government decided to allow only textbooks printed by the state in the mid-thirties. This meant taking away the most lucrative work of the publishers and printing houses. Although they insisted, they could not change the government's decision. This case simply shows the limits beyond which the publishers could not pass in that period.

The limit of publisher's power is significant because the analysis of popular literature often underlines the commercial feature of the popular novels. It is usually argued that these novels were produced according to the demands and expectations of the readers, aiming to sell more. The publishers in this configuration appear as

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

⁸¹ Özerdim, *Elli Yılda Kitap*, p. 32. Özerdim takes the numbers from *Türkiye Bibliyografyası*. Between 1940 and 1942 the number of the published books fell from 2,520 in 1938 to 1,906 in 1942. The number rose in 1943 and 1944. After a fall in 1945 it rose again in 1946. Until the mid-1950s, it was unable to reach the numbers in 1946.

⁸² Kaynaradağ, p.2826.

“gate-keepers” who mediated between the production and consumption.⁸³

McCracken starts this market-oriented literary production with the industrial age. Until that time, the distinction between the popular and the high (elite) culture had been unclear. It is not surprising that Dickens had serialized novels in popular periodicals although addressing more to family reading. However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, “high” literature needed to set itself apart from the “popular” one because publishing transformed its form. Instead of library circulation, the audience began to buy books which were published in short and single volumes. While science fiction and detective stories became popular genres in the first days of this new publishing phenomenon, romance and gothic were added at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁸⁴

The 1920s and 1930s were the heydays of publishing popular novels for the masses in Europe. This partly explains why the first criticisms of mass culture rose in the interwar period. The Frankfurt School’s studies, beginning in the 1930s, conceptualized this trend with the term “culture industry” in the following decade.⁸⁵ However, the publishing of popular novels really became one of the leading branches of the culture industry after the Second World War.⁸⁶ The most famous publishers such as Harlequin Enterprises or St. Martin’s Griffin, whose names became synonymous with popular romances, were founded in the post-war era. In this course, it seems that the author of the popular romance gradually lost his/her autonomy, becoming rather a producer who simply followed the patterns to satisfy

⁸³ Fowler, p. 92.

⁸⁴ Scott McCracken, *Pulp: Reading Popular Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p 20.

⁸⁵ The term was first used in a theory by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York : Continuum, 1993 [1944]).

⁸⁶ McCracken, p. 21.

the demands of the market. The agency of the author disappeared while the novels became more trapped within the demanded patterns. By the 1980s, ones who looked at the popular romances would see that they were more mass culture oriented than ever. The novels even became known by the name of the publisher rather than the name of the author.⁸⁷

However, the relations between publishers, reading public and the authors in the 1930s and 1940s in Turkey were not so developed to sustain such a context yet, although the popularity of romances was rising in Turkey like it was in Europe. Both newspapers and publishing houses were in the process of recovering from the negative effects of the alphabet reform and were exhausted because of this remedy. Distribution, which was the initial requirement in producing for the market, was not efficient. On the other side, the reading public which had been decimated by the change in the alphabet, was also re-emerging throughout the 1930s and did far from constitute an efficient market for the publishers. In these circumstances, the authors including Nadir, Karakurt and Berkand, in the interwar period were relatively free of market considerations and had autonomy with their works to some extent.⁸⁸ Indeed, these popular novels increased the circulation of the newspapers in which they were published. The newspapers intensively demanded popular romances. They advertised the serialized novel beforehand with announcements. Likely the publishing houses were in competition for the copyright of these popular romances,

⁸⁷ Meltem Ağduk Gevrek, "Bir Yudum Aşk Alır mıydınız?: Harlequin Enterprises Limited," *Virgöl* 4 (January, 1998), pp. 2-6.

⁸⁸ Cahit Uçuk, a popular novelist of the same period, refused to write a novel in a short time when Nadir Nadi, the editor of *Cumhuriyet*, asked her, for example. Cahit Uçuk, *Silsilename*, vol. 1 (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), p. 79. Likely, although her first novel was cut, successively Nadir refused to change the end or shorten the volume of her novels. Nadir, *Romancının Dünyası*, p. 54. Both of them were famous authors and probably resting on this fame they were able to resist the demands of the newspapers. Yet the examples still show the limits of publishing's power on the authors.

which brought the largest income among all publishing activities.⁸⁹ In that sense the authors were producing partly for the mass culture. Yet the writing of the popular romances was still an authorial activity rather than a production purely for the market.⁹⁰

As told in her memoirs, Nadir usually gave a novel that she had already written, when the newspapers asked. Yet there were cases in which she wrote a new novel or re-ordered one of her old novels upon the request of the newspapers, after the Second World War. She called some of her short novels “interval novels,” which were penned between her serious novels.⁹¹ The novels that she wrote upon the request of the newspapers were included usually in this “interval” group. It is striking that Nadir went for such a distinction, accepting that she partly produced for mass culture, but claiming that she mainly wrote with aesthetic concerns. In that sense, she located herself as not a producer of popular novels for the masses but an author whose novels were popular.⁹²

There is one certain thing about these romances: They were popular. They were read in newspapers as serials and the readers wanted for the next installment

⁸⁹ İskit quotes a survey made by Nusret Safa Çoşkun and published in *Posta* in July 1936. The survey asks “why are people not reading?” of the authors and publishers. Ethem İzzet Behice, a famous author of that period, blamed the publishers who printed pulp fiction, acting commercially. Semih Lütfü, as a publisher, accepted this claim but recalled that the publishing is naturally a commercial act. İskit, p. 286-299.

⁹⁰ The writing experiences of the authors support this argument. The authors did not write while their novels were being published in series; the authors submitted complete novels to the newspaper after they finished it. Hence the newspapers were unable to intervene in the ongoing story. However, they reserved the right to cut or demand to prolong the publication of the novel. Berkand said that sometimes the editors of the newspapers asked her to prolong the novels because they were so liked. Öztürkmen, p. 45. The newspapers could cut some parts of the novels since the serial novel required a standard volume. One third of Nadir’s *Hıçkırık* was cut in such concerns by the famous poet Nazım Hikmet, who was then in the editing commission of *Tan*. Nadir, *Romancının Dünyası*, p. 31.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.85-86.

⁹² The same attitude can be traced in an interview with Berkand. Similarly she explained that she wrote adopted novels upon the requests of the newspapers, implying that these novels were written due to the financial worries. She added that she wrote easily but spent more time on reorganizing and improving her writing. Öztürkmen, p. 46. Except for Karakurt, who admits that he wrote pulp fiction only to earn a living, the authors valued their activity of writing, denying that they produced only for the mass culture.

with impatience. After the serialization, these novels were printed in several editions. A novel could be borrowed within a friend group, so it was able to reach more than one reader.⁹³ Considering that the newspapers and books circulated intensively in the cities (due to the lack of effective distribution to the rural areas), it is estimated that the readers of these popular romances were mostly urban residents.⁹⁴ Although drawing an efficient profile of the reader is still difficult, we may try with the help of a simple observation from that period. In his analysis of the profiles of the current readers, Özön (1936) mentioned a group of novel reader that constituted a large population living in cities. The members of this group were more “advanced” than the group that resided in rural region, due to the wisdom and the experience that the urban life provided them.⁹⁵ Özön’s simple analysis gives clues about the reader of the popular romance, who was probably this urban middle class.

When it is considered that the popular romances of the interwar period, narrating the gender roles and gender relations, contributed to the struggle of defining what was “modern,” the claim that these novels were mostly read by the middle class seems concrete. The middle class is presumably the social strata where modernity was intensively experienced. Indeed the middle classness builds its own self-identity around this struggle to be “modern.” The members of the middle class seek to adopt what is perceived as “modern” values. This assumes that the middle classness is probably constructed in the cultural field more than the political or

⁹³ My aunt told me that the first novel she read was Nadir’s *Gelinlik Kızı*. She read it secretly borrowing from one of her friends, because novel reading was not allowed by adults. Although this memory belonged to the 1950s of a rural area, it gives clues about how these novels might have been read in 1930s and 1940s.

⁹⁴ However, evidently there were rural readers, too. In *Lale*, and in *Kezban*, Berkand fictionally mentions the rural residents who read popular romances. Nadir tells in her memoirs that she came across her fans in rural areas. *Nadir, Romancının Dünyası*, p. 151.

⁹⁵ Mustafa Nihat Özön, *Türkçe’de Roman* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1985), p. 110.

economic one. In that sense being middle class is a project of self-fashioning, rather than a fixed sociological category bounded by income or occupation.⁹⁶

However, historically this self-fashioning was not simply the adaptation of the social norms and values that were already established as “modern”. On the contrary, these patterns of social conduct were being reconstructed while the societies were undergoing social transformation in the interwar period.⁹⁷ It was the middle class that determined mostly the characteristics of the new, “modern” values and norms. In its struggle to describe what is “modern”, the middle class developed “new forms of public discourse,” defined “new criteria for social respectability” and promoted “new aesthetic and moral values.”⁹⁸ In that sense, this class was shaped by modernity while simultaneously shaping what it meant to be “modern.”

The emergence of the middle class, hence, went hand in hand with the establishment of a cultural discourse that sought to redefine the new modes of social relations perceived as “modern.” Such a middle class seems to have emerged in the late Ottoman period. Particularly, starting from the mid-nineteenth century, the social transformation which was brought about by modernity was experienced exclusively by this middle class. However, it consisted of only the group of people who mostly belonged to the upper strata of society.⁹⁹ The scope of this middle class enlarged with the inclusion of the lower strata in the 1920s and 1930s, partly due to the Kemalist reforms that legitimized the ongoing social transformation. These reforms institutionalized the almost granted changes in the daily life such as the

⁹⁶ Sanjay Joshi, *Fractured Modernity: Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India* (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 2.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3

⁹⁸ Chatterjee, p. 70.

⁹⁹ Duben and Behar, p. 218.

changes in the usage of calendar or changes in clothing.¹⁰⁰ The Kemalist reforms seem to have provided lower classes a legitimate ground for a more free experience of modernity, institutionally attempting to change the social norms and values that put constraints on their intention to be “modern.” This presumably encouraged the lower classes who intended to be “modern” and indeed had already joined, to some extent, the experience of modernity through following the modern images that appeared in the cultural sphere.¹⁰¹

It seems the lower strata of society met with the upper one on the basis of the drive to “become modern.” The Great War might have contributed to this closeness between the levels of society. Duben and Behar argue that the harsh circumstances of the war led to drastic changes not only in the economic condition, but also in the status of the upper middle classes. They were compelled to move from great mansions which also symbolized their status to apartment houses. This physical closeness along with the chaotic and desperate common experience of the war conditions led to the convergence of the upper middle class with lower strata which would evolve into the middle class of the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁰²

In the early republican period, one may claim, both strata shared the same cultural sphere as a middle class. This class struggled to construct the new values guiding the domestic and public life with conformity with its contemporaries in the other parts of the world in the interwar period. The popular romances of Berkand, Nadir and Karakurt, which narrate the lives of this middle class, contributed to this struggle, generating patterns for the “modern” gender roles and relations. Hence

¹⁰⁰ Murat Belge, “Türkiye’de Günlük Hayat,” *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1 (İstanbul, İletişim, 1985), p. 845.

¹⁰¹ Duben and Behar, p. 219.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 216.

these novels were probably read as guide for being “modern” and being a member of the middle class.

CHAPTER 3

WRITING SIMILARLY, WRITING DIFFERENTLY

In one of his interviews Selim İleri, an author who is interested in early popular romances, complains about the literary critics' prejudicial approach to these novels. He argues that it is the general tendency of the critics to put labels on the popular romances and categorize them with these labels. However, each popular romance novel is distinguishable from the others in many ways. Neglecting the distinctive characteristic of the each popular romance, according to İleri's claim, the critics fail to appreciate the value of these texts which provide interestingly productive material for studies of literary sociology.¹⁰³

What İleri complains about is indeed more than a common hindrance in the analysis of the texts. The interpretation act is under the constraints of previous interpretations which have already formed a general view about the text. This constructed view is originally the product of a historical process but portrays itself as an ahistorical and intrinsic judgment. It imposes how a text can be read and understood. In that sense, as Jameson writes, "texts come before us as the always-already-read; we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous

¹⁰³ Yardım, p. 235.

interpretations.”¹⁰⁴ After layers of initial reading, the texts lose its centrality in the act of interpretation and serve as the justification of the previous interpretations. To overcome this problem, we have to return to the original text. As Northrop Frye argues, “the first thing the literary critic has to do is to read literature, to make an inductive survey of his own field and let his critical principles shape themselves solely out of his knowledge of that field.”¹⁰⁵ That leads us to find a different, probably more literary context, from the context that feeds the previous interpretations.

The suggestion of K roĝlu in his study on Turkish literature during the First World War can be helpful in finding such a context. While the Turkish historiography uses the literary as a supplementary source and the Turkish literary history takes the historical conditions as a context, K roĝlu prefers to situate the studied literary texts within a cultural context taking into consideration both the literary text and the historical circumstances. To construct this context, he presupposes to unearth the synchronic and diachronic features of it along with the literary production mechanisms of that time. The novels as literary outputs are examined in this context.¹⁰⁶

In this chapter, following K roĝlu, I will set a context, with the help of the conceptualization of genre, through a synchronic and diachronic reading not only between the novels of the same author but also between the novels of the three authors. This analysis of differences and similarities will be made over the forms along with the contents of the novels. I prefer to concentrate on the repeating themes

¹⁰⁴ Fredric Jameson, *Political Unconscious* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (New York: Antheneum, 1966), p. 17.

¹⁰⁶ Erol K roĝlu, “From Propaganda to National Identity Construction: Turkish Literature and The First World War, 1941-1918” (Ph.D dissertation, Bogazici University, İstanbul, 2003), p. xxi. This study is published in Turkish as Erol K roĝlu, *T rk Edebiyatı ve Birinci D nya Savaşı, 1914-1918: Propagandadan Milli Kimlik İnşasına* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004).

in each author's novels to base my arguments. Nevertheless, this will inevitably lead to overlooking some of the existing themes in such a vast material. Hence the analysis of each author in this part should be taken as a starting point rather than a complete analysis, for further researches.

The Love of Aphrodite: Sexuality in Karakurt's Novels

When I first told my uncle that I was studying Esat Mahmut Karakurt, he immediately began to tell me the plot of *Son Gece* (1938), which he remembered in great detail. It was surprising enough to learn that my uncle, who was a goalkeeper in the 1960s and actually interested in communist Russian literature, had read Karakurt. Moreover, he remembered the plots and the name of the heroine. Although it is widely accepted that popular romances were read by women, it seems that Karakurt attracted mostly male readers. This is probably because of the masculine but still romantic tone and the smooth sexual representations in his novels. In this part, I will try to unearth these repeating themes in Karakurt's novels in order to find what made his works read in the genre of popular romance and what it was that made him special among other popular romance novelists.

Esat Mahmut Karakurt (1902-1977) was born in Istanbul. His father was Mahmud Nedim Pasha, a member of *Şurâ-ı Devlet*, who came from a village of Urfa and had been promoted due to his intelligence and honesty.¹⁰⁷ Among the three authors studied here, Karakurt was the only from a governing elite family and had a university degree. He graduated from the Faculty of Law of İstanbul University in 1930. Nevertheless, Karakurt did not work as a lawyer except for his defense in the

¹⁰⁷ Haldun Taner, *Ölürse Ten Ölür, Canlar Ölesi Değil* (Ankara: Bilgi, 1998), p. 220.

Aphrodite Case.¹⁰⁸ He worked as a journalist and a literature teacher in Galatasaray High School. In *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* and *İleri*, Karakurt's first writings appeared with no name. Later his novels and reportages were printed in the newspapers like *İkdam*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Tasvir* and *Yeni Sabah*. Again differently from Nadir and Berkand, he was in active politics after the mid 1950s. Between 1954 and 1960, he was the deputy of Urfa and in the term of 1961-1966 he became the senator of Urfa from Republican People's Party.¹⁰⁹ Joining the governing elite might have contributed to his later claim that his writing pulp fictions was for a noble mission.

Critics are likely to see the popular romances as literarily simple novels, with attractive but light subjects, serving only the stimulation of the interest for reading in the early Republican Period.¹¹⁰ Departing from the other two, Karakurt seems to have accepted this claim, devaluing his novels as they were written only for the enjoyment of the readers. Once he even criticized a student who attempted to imitate his writing style in a composition assignment. He said "I write these to earn money

¹⁰⁸ *Aphrodite* was a novel by Pierre Louys, a French author. Its translation in Turkish was seized on account that it was "obscene publishing" in 1940. In the case opened against the seizure of the novel, Karakurt was the lawyer and performed a victorious defense. In his speech, he convinced the court that the obscenity in the novel was no more serious than the bawdy references in Holy Scriptures. Doğan Hızlan, *Yazılı İlişkiler* (İstanbul: Altın Kitaplar, 1983), p. 21.

¹⁰⁹ *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 1, (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları), p. 183.

¹¹⁰ Increasing the interest in reading is strongly related to the notion of educating. Educating people through the writing was a popular theme from the early modernization attempts in the late Ottoman period. The first novelists of Turkish literature located themselves at the same time as the teachers of society. See Moran, p. 17; Esen, "Tanzimat Romanında Yazarın Konumu," *Modern Türk Edebiyatı Üzerine Okumalar*, p. 86. Successively, one of the aims of the Kemalist Modernization was to educate the ordinary people in order to create elegant citizens who would be members of Western civilization. In that sense, the Kemalist governing elite had the mission of raising the intellectual level of the ordinary people. This would be possible through books, newspapers and other products of publishing. However, firstly they had to make people read. It was these popular romances and other popular works that accustomed the ordinary people to read. These novels were "light" in subject, literarily poor, but promoted the principles of the Republican regime. See Oktay, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Edebiyatı (1923-1950)*, p. 126. This discourse undervalues the literary essence of the popular romance novels while emphasizing their service to the Republican project. It is also used in explaining why these "worthless" works were allowed in that period. Hızlan and Taner share the view that Karakurt's novels increased the interest of the masses in reading. Taner, p. 218; Hızlan, p. 19.

and you think it is literature”¹¹¹ Later he clothed this writing for the mass culture with a missionary attempt of accustoming the ordinary people to reading.¹¹² It seems that Karakurt’s writing style was more mass culture-oriented when compared to that of Nadir and Berkand. However, still he had a reflex to defend himself. In his memoirs, he tries to prove to Fahri Ozansoy, who was his former literary teacher and later his colleague in Galatasaray, that his novels were successful in literary term.¹¹³

One should first acknowledge the sexual discourse in Karakurt’s novels. It was apparently overdosed in the conditions of the 1930s. Descriptions such as “her breast trembling as two black points on her pale yellow chest, drop out of the lace of her chemise with the rolling of a little crinkled leaf of orange,”¹¹⁴ or “the girl has stooped to the table. In this situation her breasts, which give the impression of that they were left haphazard under her clothing, slide with a marvelously beautiful and shaking bend like the two crinkled leaves of a pomegranate,”¹¹⁵ and even more obscene ones are familiar to Karakurt readers. Oktay describes this narrating tone as “pornographic.”¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, it should be remembered that these sexual representations go hand in hand with romantic love. Karakurt seems to underline that love includes sexuality.

¹¹¹ Taner, p. 220. The Original text is as follows: “*Ben bunları ekmek parası kazanmak için yazıyorum sen de edebiyat sanıyorsun.*”

¹¹² Ibid., p. 218.

¹¹³ Halit Fahri Ozansoy, *Edebiyat Çevremde* (Ankara: Sümerbank Yayınları, 1970) p. 91.

¹¹⁴ Karakurt, *Kadın Severse*, 11th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap ve Aka, 1981 [1939]) p. 19. The Original text is as follows: “*...uçuk sarı göğsünde, uçları iki siyah nokta gibi titreyen memeleri, buruşturulmuş küçük bir portakal yaprağı yuvarlanışı ile kombenzenonunun dantellerinden dışarı fırlıyor...*”

¹¹⁵ Karakurt, *İlk ve Son*, 10th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap ve Aka, 1982 [1940]), p. 42. The Original text is as follows: “*Kız masaya doğru eğilmiştir. Bu vaziyette, buruşturulmuş iki nar yaprağı gibi, entarisinin gelişi güzel altına terkedilmiş hissini veren memeleri harikulade güzel ve titrek bir inhina ile yana doğru kayıyor.*”

¹¹⁶ Ahmet Oktay, *Türkiye’de Popüler Kültür* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1993), p. 156.

Karakurt simply follows the basic patterns of popular romances. He tells the story of the love between the hero and the heroine, and of their struggle to join. Nevertheless, the love story sometimes loses its core position at the plot. In *Ölünceye Kadar* (1937),¹¹⁷ for instance, the focus is on the love relation at the beginning, but later the tragedy of the hero's sister replaces it. She is deceived by a playboy with whom she has had sexual intercourse and got pregnant. With her brother she decides on an abortion after a discussion in which Karakurt uses as the opportunity to point out the unequal treatment of women in society. To the sister, it is unjust that society leaves the responsibility of defending sexual honor only to the woman. It would morally blame the women in such a situation even though she was deceived by an immoral man. On the other hand, the brother, who is ironically a law professor, reminds her that the same morality imposed by society is a device to protect women from such men. Hence the truly moral woman is the one who would not become involved in troubled situations. In the end neither argument wins, the question of whether the sister or the brother is right is left unsolved.

Interestingly, beside the love story, all of the three authors give place to discussions of subjects such as morality, gender equality, and society-individual relations, which all were undergoing transformations in that period. It seems that the authors seek reconciliation with the social change engendered in twentieth century modernism. In that sense their novels are not escapist, but rather aim to re-order the relations between men and women. These subjects are discussed between the characters. However, these discussions are inconclusive without bringing a solution to the question. Different from the canonic authors who usually interrupt the

¹¹⁷ Esat Mahmut Karakurt, *Ölünceye Kadar*, 10th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap ve Aka, 1973 [1937]).

ongoing story to convey their thoughts from the mouth of a character, the authors of popular romances seem to avoid imposing a single thought. Rather they present the existing views on an issue giving the reader a chance to take side. They write as if they are thinking aloud about a question the answer to which they themselves are not sure.

In his early novels, Karakurt prefers to tell about love through an adventure story. *Dağları Bekleyen Kız* (1934), *Allahısımarladık* (1936), and *Son Gece* (1938) are romances set against the backdrop of war. While in the first one the Turkish officer is in love with a female rebel in East Anatolia who is actually Turkish, in the rest the heroines are foreigners. Inevitably this configuration carries the features of the masculine nationalistic discourse.¹¹⁸ However, it somehow weakens the nationalistic features of the discourse at the same time. Faruk in *Son Gece*, is a patriotic Turkish officer who is in charge of the army that occupied Romania in the First World War. He falls in love with Maryora, a Romanian girl whose brother is a brave officer in the Romanian army. The love itself is impossible in these conditions, but the lovers insist. Faruk promises Maryora that he will marry her when the war ends. Shortly after his return to Turkey, he is called to military service for the Independence of War in Anatolia. He is ready for the duty, but asks permission to go to Romania first to find Maryora. Faruk's priority seems to be his love for Maryora rather than the love for the country although not dismantling the latter.

During the Second World War Karakurt turned to love stories that took place in the cities, particularly in İstanbul. These are *Kadın Severse* (1939), *İlk ve Son*

¹¹⁸ Senem Timuroğlu Bozkurt, "Esat Mahmut Karakurt'un Roman(s)larında Erkek Kahramanlar" (M.A. thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara, 2006).

(1940), *Kocamı Aldatacağım* (1940)¹¹⁹, *Sokaktan Gelen Kadın* (1945).¹²⁰ In these novels, the protagonists fall in love immediately with people they meet accidentally. The love starts with sexual attraction, even sexual intercourse in some cases. However, due to the misfortune or social constraints, the lovers fall apart. The rest of the novel tells the story of the protagonists' struggle with the misfortune that separates them. With this course of events, Karakurt differs from Nadir and Berkand. The love in their narratives is more platonic. As we will see later, especially in Nadir's novels, unlike the lovers in Karakurt's novels, the protagonists hardly spend time together as lovers. The sexual relations usually come with the joining or with the marriage that is often left as a happy end in the imagination of the reader. It seems that the love in Nadir's novels carries the air of nostalgia that reminds the image of love in previous century when the man and the women fall in love without a reciprocal relation.

Karakurt tells the course of the love relation in contemporary times. In the world of Karakurt, men and women can flirt or they can even have an affair. In that sense, Karakurt breaks the traditional view of love in the previous century that saw pre-marriage interaction between men and women as immoral. Nevertheless, there are limits of this escape from tradition. Karakurt goes for a division of loving "internally" and "externally" in order to set the borders of the sexual relationship. Loving externally is negatively defined as having sexual relations with different people only for the satisfaction of sexual desires. Loving internally, on the other hand, necessitates strong emotional ties. The sexual relation is legitimized if the partners love internally. In *Kadın Severse*, Ferit, a psychologist and Nevin, a high

¹¹⁹ This novel is published later under the title of *Aldatacağım*. It will be mentioned with this title henceforth.

¹²⁰ *Ölünceye Kadar* can be included in this group although it was published earlier.

school student, previously not known to each other, have to spend a night in a hut to be protected from a snow storm. Ferit is unable to stay indifferent to the sexual attractiveness of the young body of Nevin. On the other hand, the sexuality of Nevin is awakened, stimulating the sexual tension between them. This leads Ferit to lose control of himself. Having completed the sexual act, Nevin starts to cry because she has lost her “most precious value.” Ferit tells her not to because he has fallen in love with her. He will marry her and with this oath, Nevin’s sadness and shame disappear. Despite its having been considered a grave mistake made unconsciously a minute before, the sexual intercourse suddenly turns into a lovely experience for Nevin. She loves him more now.¹²¹

Sexual intercourse is allowed, but only as long as the hero intends to marry the heroine in the end. In that sense, Karakurt seems to put the responsibility of the relationship on men. A man should not deceive a woman only for his sexual satisfaction. Acting honestly a man should avoid love relations with a woman with whom he does not intend to marry. This view sees the nature of women in positive terms -even her sexuality is apparent in the relationship. It is the behavior of dishonest men that leads to immorality, not the sexual intercourse or the sexuality of the woman. The woman who is unable to protect her *namus* (sexual honor) is not immoral, unlike the man who deceives her for the sexual intercourse pretending he really loves her. Unlike the canonic authors who take woman, especially the woman with sexual desires, as the source of the decadence since the early modernization period, Karakurt points to the irresponsibility of dishonest men as the source of indecency.

¹²¹ Karakurt, *Kadın Severse*, p. 41.

The divide between the internal and external does exist in the earlier novels of Karakurt. However, it is in his later novels that this particular separation finds more places and is questioned. Indeed, social criticism seems to increase towards the end of the Second World War. *Sokaktan Gelen Kadın* makes the peak in that sense. The novel tells the story of Semra, who is the mistress of a rich man. One day she falls in love with a man and decides to leave her way of life. However, society gossips about her, always reminding of her former life. She resists the moral pressure of society in the name of her love. A short story told in the novel best exemplifies the situation. It is about Jesus forgiving a woman who is charged with sexual intercourse. Jesus warns the people who are preparing to punish her: Only ones who are without a sin could throw a stone at the woman. Nobody can. Then Jesus says: “This woman’s sins were forgiven at God’s empyrean. Because, she loved.”¹²² According to the story love appears as an excuse, implying that Semra’s previous sins will be forgiven. However, the struggle between society and the individual in the novel will conclude in the victory of the former. The character who tells the story of Jesus signs the end of the novel: “Sometimes people do not forgive those sins that God forgave”¹²³

The Novel of the *Konaks*: The Nostalgic Narratives of Nadir

My cousin, who was a young girl in 1970s, told me why she had never read Kerime Nadir. She started to read the “great classics” at an early age and was not

¹²² Esat Mahmut Karakurt, *Sokaktan Gelen Kadın*. 6th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap ve Aka, 1973 [1945]), p. 164. The original texts is as follows: “*Bu kadının günahları indi ilahide affedildi. Çünkü bu kadın seviyordu*”.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 165. The original text is as follows: “*Bazen Allah’ın affettiği günahları insanlar affetmezler*”.

interested in pulp love novels like those of Nadir. To my cousin, a novel must include social reality first. However, she quickly added that she is a little romantic. Actually she likes films and novels about love. Nevertheless, she does not appreciate the love told in Nadir's novels. Actually this is why she is not interested in popular romances. When I asked her to define this love in Nadir's novels, she talked about the easy love relations between the hero and the heroine who join quickly, have sex, and do not suffer for their love. Then, I inquired about the love stories my cousin admired. She told me she likes the love stories in which the hero and the heroine love sacrificially and platonically; in which there are dances in big halls; in which the plot takes place in large *konaks* (mansions); in which the story takes place in the late Ottoman period, in the old İstanbul.¹²⁴ Actually, this old-time love did exist in the novels she disliked. Without realizing, she was describing the love stories in Nadir's novels. In this part I will try to concentrate on the characteristics of this nostalgic love in Nadir's novels and question the existence of nostalgia.

Kerime Nadir Azrak (1917-1984) was born in Istanbul. Her grandfather, Yahya was the *kadı* of Egypt. Her family seems to belong to the governing elite of the previous century. However, in the 1920s being more likely a middle class family, she was the daughter of Nadir Bey, who worked as a high public officer.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ My cousin seems to confuse Nadir's novels with those produced for the mass culture. Harlequin novels are the most famous example of the latter group. Although established in the 1930s, the popular romances of Harlequin/Mills&Boon came late to Turkey, in 1981. These novels are written by various authors; even some novels have no signature. They are directly produced for the mass culture with a standard format. The interest in these novels increased in academic studies towards the end of the 1970s. For example, Tania Modleski's prominent study about the popular romances, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* (1982) focuses on the Harlequin novels. Gevrek, pp. 2-6. The approach to these popular romances produced for the mass culture, especially in the 1980s, seems to lead to the misperception of popular romances of those like Nadir, Berkand and Karakurt who wrote in an earlier period. Although they have less common features with the romances for mass culture than one can predict, these earlier popular romances are usually classified along with them. The confusion of my cousin, unfortunately, seems to exist in most academic studies' on these novels.

¹²⁵ Öztürkmen, p. 38. For a brief discussion of the middle class, see the part entitled "The Context of Writing, Publishing and Reading" in Chapter 2.

She was grown up in a *konak* (mansion) like most of the characters in her novels. Indeed, there are many autobiographical features in Nadir's novel. She graduated from Saint Joseph High School, like the most of the girls in her novels who attended foreign schools. Beginning to write at the early age of 14, her novels were published in newspapers like *Tan*, *Uyanış*, *Vatan*, *Hakikat*, *Tasvir* and *Yedigün*.

Contrary to Karakurt, Nadir opposed the claim that she wrote for the mass culture. Although accepting some of her novels as "unimportant," she complained that all the critics who were willing to criticize her novels as literarily poor, put forward these unimportant novels neglecting the important ones.¹²⁶ Indeed, Kerime Nadir is the most well-known name not only among the three authors of this study, but all among the popular romance novelists. This is why the criticism of popular romances was made mostly about her novels. *Romancının Dünyası*, Nadir's memoirs that were published in 1981, appears to be her reply to this criticism. Here she repeatedly objected to the claim of being read only by women and by teenagers at school, a feature usually attributed to the popular romances written for mass culture. Actually the criticisms addressed toward the popular romances devalue not only the literary text but also its audience. To distinguish her novels from the popular romances of mass culture, she presents the variety of her readers that included doctors, engineers and even professors.¹²⁷

Nadir did not situate herself in the popular culture. Rather she felt belonged to a literary "genre" that was popular once upon a time: "Today's genre of 'realist novel' which presents the most ill and the most atrocious sides of life in its plot, has not dominated the literature world yet. Romanticism was still living its golden age.

¹²⁶ Nadir, *Romancının Dünyası*, p.93.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.119. She states that she is writing to inform those who claim that her novels are read only by teenagers.

The concept of novel was so different from the one that exists today.”¹²⁸ Hence, she explains the devaluation of her novels due to the decrease in the popularity of the genre rather than seeing her novels as poor in the literary sense. The depreciation of her novels is not about their intrinsic literary value as the critics claim; it is about the context of writing that has changed in 50 years since 1930s.

Indeed, towards the end of the Second World War, Nadir started to give more place to social issues. In her words, she was *condemned* to adjust her novels to realism because she had unwillingly realized the realities of the world.¹²⁹ *Gelinlik Kız* (1943) is the clearest example of this change in Nadir’s writing towards discussing leads her to discuss social issues more directly in her novels. Nadir questions the means of the marriage in *Gelinlik Kız* and the inferior place of the woman in society. Although not having the same dose, one can feel the influence of realism in her other novels such as *Aşka Tövbe* (1945), *Solan Ümit* (1945) and *Uykusuz Geceler* (1945). In these novels either the rational choice wins over sentimentalism, as is the case in *Aşka Tövbe* and *Solan Ümit*, or the love is now out of the *konaks* (mansions), confronting more of the problems of daily life.¹³⁰ These novels still display features of romances, except for *Gelinlik Kız*. However, they are distinguishably different from her earlier novels.

Nadir’s celebrity came with these earlier works, among which *Hıçkırık* (1938), *Samanyolu* (1941), and *Funda* (1941) are the most noteworthy. Nearly all of

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 69. The original text is as follows: “*Konularında genellikle hayatın en kötü en çirkin yanlarını sergileyen bugünün “gerçekçi roman” türü edebiyat alanına daha egemen olmamıştı o zamanlar. Romantizm hala altın çağını sürdürüyordu. Roman anlayışı bugünkünden çok farklıydı.*”

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 71. Beside the harsh conditions of the War years, what made Nadir more realistic seems to have been more personal. She was cheated on by her fiancé with a woman he had introduced as his sister. Moreover, in 1946 she lost her father.

¹³⁰ The heroine of *Uykusuz Geceler* had to play piano in the clubs to earn her living while attending the conservatoire. In the novels that take place in *konaks*, there is almost no protagonist struggling to earn a living.

the plots of her earlier novels take place in the *konaks* of Istanbul at the beginning of the twentieth century. Because of this singularity in the scene, Nadir is often accused of being indifferent to the social background of the period in which she lived. Indeed, the social background intrinsically exists in her novels.¹³¹ Still, this criticism must have disturbed her since she sought to defend herself as having been young and inexperienced in life while writing these novels.¹³² The reader can sense the idealized world of a young girl in the novels. İleri rightfully argues that “Nadir developed a genre of *mansion novel* (*köşk romanı*) that is entirely open to the *alaturka* sensitivity,” but apparently different from medieval romances.¹³³ The image of “mansion” here refers not only to the settings of the novels, but also mimesis of a period that was disappearing. Indeed, Nadir conveyed the nostalgia for the near past just before the First World War and the İstanbul of that period. It was a time when the distinguished people still live in mansions, loved with pain and

¹³¹ The polemic between Türkeş and Yakın is meaningful in that sense. Türkeş compares Muazzez Tahsin with Kerime Nadir as two leading novelists of early Republican period. Muazzez Tahsin served the promotion of the “Republican woman” image that is constructed by the Kemalist Republican regime while Kerime Nadir wrote indifferently about the social background of her period. He argues that the characters of the latter are isolated from their time and society. The plots of Nadir’s novels take place only in *konaks*; hence “the influence of the abnormal conditions of the Turkish history” is not seen in her novels. In short, Türkeş goes for a division between two authors on the basis of their so-called loyalty to the historical facts of the period. Türkeş, “Aşk Romanlarının Unutulmaz Yazarları: Aşkolsun!,” pp. 53-54.

In her reply, Yakın rightfully states that approaching a literary text about the compatibility of its subject to the historical reality is suspicious. A novel does not have to narrate realistically the historical period in which it is written. Moreover, a close reading would reveal that Nadir’s novels do carry the influence of their period. The singular scene should not be seen as a defect either while there exist many appreciated novels that are unable to reflect “the abnormal conditions of the Turkish history.” To Yakın, Türkeş’s approach to Kerime Nadir is under the influence of the discourse which labels popular romances, a genre that is literarily pathetic. Türkeş’s criticism, that values the approach to realism in narration, is prejudiced in that sense. It is an example of how “the interpretation anticipates the main text” because of the widespread discourse. Aslı Yakın, “Bu Metni Yorumlasak da mı Okusak...” *Virgöl* 21 (July, 1999), pp. 23-24.

¹³² Nadir, *Romancının Dünyası*, p. 65.

¹³³ Selim İleri, *Düşünce ve Duyarlılık* (İstanbul: Adam, 1982), p. 30. The italics belong to me. İleri does not explain what he means by *alaturka* sensitivity. However, he presumably talks about the sweet nostalgia existing in Nadir’s novels. The *alaturka* sensitivity might refer to the old social values and norms which Nadir seeks to conserve in a period when they all tend to disappear.

respected for morality. The characters, mostly the women, seem to belong to the previous century with their pale, fragile but beautiful demeanors.¹³⁴

Nadir wrote to remind the reader of the relations between the people living in *konaks* because everything was changing in her time. Modernity in the interwar period was challenging the existing values of society throughout the world like morality, male-female relations and gender roles in a rush. Hence it was normal that Nadir and her audience, who mostly had grown up with the old social values, responded to the change through remembering the past. However, it is not exclusively a conservative resistance. While conveying the nostalgia, Nadir shows implicitly that she was aware of its anachronism. This nostalgic imagination had to be modified according the conditions of the contemporary world and time. It is possible to trace these modifications, for example, in the perception of love in *Hıçkırık*.

In *Hıçkırık*, Kenan loves Nalan who has grown up with him in the same *konak*. His unreturned love continues even after she marries another. Kenan suffers for his platonic love and sacrifices his happiness to that of Nalan. This self-sacrificed love that excludes sexuality is similar to the romance existing in the novels of the second half of the nineteenth century in Ottoman society,¹³⁵ except for

¹³⁴ See Deniz Arzuk, "Cumhuriyet ve Aşk: Kerime Nadir'in Erken Dönem Romanları," *Mesele* 6 (Haziran 2007), pp. 35-39; and Reyhan Tutumlu, "Popüler Aşk Romanlarının Yarattığı Dünya: Kerime Nadir Romanları," *Pasaj* 1 (May-August, 2005), pp. 85-100. Both analyses rightfully state that the female characters in Nadir's novels do not fit the female model of the Republican regime's discourse. This model, very briefly, envisages an educated modern woman who accompanies man not only at home as a good housewife and mother, but also in the public sphere as a working professional. However, the former duties of the woman at home precede this professional life. For detail analyses, see Yeşim Arat, "Türkiye'de Modernleşme Projesi ve Kadınlar," *Türkiye'de Modernleşme ve Ulusal Kimlik*, eds. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), pp. 82-98; Ayşe Durakbaşa, "Cumhuriyet Döneminde Modern Kadın ve Erkek Kimliklerinin Oluşumu: Kemalist Kadın Kimliği ve 'Münevver Erkekler'," *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler*, ed. Ayşe Berktaş Hacımiraçoğlu (İstanbul, Tarih Vakfı, 1998), pp. 29-50 ; Toska, pp. 71-88.

¹³⁵ These novels are taken as the first products of the modern Turkish literature at the same time. The first novelists of Ottoman literature in the second half of the nineteenth century appreciated love

one scene that dismantles the entire plot in the novel. Kenan is caught up with his sexual desires and attempts at sexual intercourse. He deserves at least this as a price for all his suffering. Nalan refuses and says “Am I decayed so much?” The reply of Kenan is meaningful: “I wish you were, so you were able to love.”¹³⁶ Although Kenan will be regretful of what he has done, his words simply include sexuality in their love. Nadir could not ignore the sexual part of love, writing in the conditions of the interwar period, while this was hardly thinkable in the love presented by the novelists in the late Ottoman period.

The nostalgia at the same time carries self-irony. The old world is missed but at the same time it does not belong to the contemporary world. Hence, the protagonists of Nadir, on the one hand self-question their devotion to the old social values while, on the other hand, reminding the glory past to the readers who live in a modern world. In *Gelinlik Kız* in which Nadir speaks her messages more directly, the protagonist, Feyza, is cheated in her love relation and decides to try an arranged marriage although she was formerly against it. The candidate for marriage, Kasım, is portrayed as a businessman who intends to imitate the European lifestyle, precisely the man-woman relation which opens door for sexual interaction. He continuously criticizes Feyza for being traditional and failing to adapt herself to the modern European life. Although Kasım’s imitation of the European life style is not appreciated in the novel, Feyza is unable to avoid self-criticism. Is she so conservative? Her aunts advise her to be more understanding to the demands of

without sexuality. They attributed sexuality only to the evil female characters who usually tried to deceive the hero. Sexual love brings disaster in that sense. Gürbilek argues that this plot represents the fear of uncontrolled Westernization (can be read as modernization). The sexual desire for the woman is dangerous like the uncontrolled intention for the imitation of Europe. Hence, both have to be tamed; probably one is with pure love, the other is with sensibility. Nurdan Gürbilek, “Doğu’nun Cinsiyeti: Kudretli Erkek, İhtiyar Aşık, Mistik Anne,” *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark* (İstanbul: Metis, 2004), p. 82.

¹³⁶ Kerime Nadir, *Hıçkırık*, 18th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap ve Aka, 1967[1938]), p. 84.

Kasım but “without going too far.”¹³⁷ Even her grandmother finds her too conservative, upside-downing the generational conflict.¹³⁸ Feyza replies to the joke that she is getting used to the requirements of the “century’s extensive mentality,” as follows: “I have to. Otherwise I will be perceived as a brainless conservative.”¹³⁹

The position Nadir takes as an author is ambiguous. The intention to reserve the past mixes with the intention of being modern. Her authorial voice in the novel is indecisive in that sense. This lack of authorial authority on the narrative is seen in Berkand’s and Karakurt’s novels, too. Sirman argues that this is a type of author that appears in the early novels of Halide Edip Adivar, a famous author of the national literature. In this type, author prefers to narrate from the mouth of the woman who is unsure about her choices. Even in the novels narrated in the third person, the author seems unsure about what to do and inquires for the alternative answers to the problem, like the protagonist of the novel. Although Halide Edip abandoned this authorial voice in the 1930s, it is continued by the novelists like Muazzez Tahsin and Kerime Nadir.¹⁴⁰

Contrary to those of Karakurt, Nadir’s lovers have known each other since childhood, and are usually relatives. The love begins from very early on as if they were created for each other. The hero realizes first that their relation is love-like. Nevertheless the heroine seems indifferent to his love because she either intends to hide her love from the hero or has not discovered her love yet. Although they are separated by the marriage of the heroine to another man, the protagonists are able to find happiness only if they can join. One man/woman can love only one

¹³⁷ Kerime Nadir, *Gelinlik Kız*, 4th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap, 1960[1943]), p. 238.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

¹⁴⁰ Nükhet Sirman, “Kadınların Milliyeti,” *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce*, vol. 4, *Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), p. 241.

man/woman for a life time. This is the main plot of *Hıçkırık* (1938), *Samanyolu* (1941) and *Sonbahar* (1943). However, it would be mistake to evaluate all her novels with this pattern because Nadir used others as well.

Some of her novels are written with entirely different plots. *Gelinlik Kız*, rather than being a romance, is a novel that discusses the means of marriage such as arranged relations or free love. *Günah Bende mi* (1939) is more like an adventure novel that includes romantic love. *Funda* (1941) narrates a love story that does not end in marriage but begins with it. Some of them consist of deviations. In *Yeşil Işıklar* (1937), *Gönül Hırsız* (1941), *Seven Ne Yapmaz* (1940), *Kalp Yarası* (1941), *Solan Ümit* (1945) and *Uykusuz Geceler* (1945) the protagonists do not grow up together. It is the heroine who first realizes the existence of the love in *Kalp Yarası*. The heroine in *Solan Ümit* continues to love the hero even after she marries another although in the end she realizes that she is actually in love with her husband.

Nadir uses variations even at the expense of dismantling the previous plots. *Aşka Tövbe* is probably the best example in which to see this change. The novel starts like *Sonbahar*, giving sign that it will follow a similar plot pattern. However, as the story goes on, deviations from the pattern appear. Mübin and Şehbal have grown together but are not relatives. Şehbal, the heroine, is the one who first discovers her feelings of love. She leaves home to become a teacher in the countryside when she realizes that Mübin loves another woman. One night Mübin comes to Şehbal's home, regretful that he did not notice her love before. They have an affair. However, the sexual involvement does not bring the happy ending as it does in *Funda*. It reveals that Mübin continues to love the other woman. Şehbal terminates the child with which she is pregnant from Mübin, and decides to marry another man. In the end of the novel she swears that she will never love again.

Stepping Outside: The Transforming Woman Images in Berkand's Novels

When I told one of my friends the subject of my thesis, she proposed to arrange a meeting with her mother and aunt who were popular romance readers in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁴¹ We all met at my friend's house to have breakfast one weekend. At the breakfast table, while talking with them about popular romance novels, my friend, who was born in the 1980s like I was, asked her mother and her aunt what they found interesting in such novels then that were written and became popular 30 years ago. Her aunt replied: "The life we lived in." Although the anachronism of this phrase is apparent, it still makes its point. Not of Nadir's or Karakurt's, working as a typist in one of the leading translation office in İstanbul and falling in love with their future husbands, these two sisters might well be characters in a Berkand's novel in the interwar period.¹⁴² This is because Berkand narrated the story of woman in modern times. In this part I will concentrate on this type of woman who repetitively appears in Berkand's popular romances and distinguishes the author from the other two novelists.

Muazzez Tahsin Berkand (1899-1984) was born in Selanik and immigrated with her family during the Balkan War to settle in Istanbul. Her father Hasan Tahsin, was a lawyer. Like Nadir, she went to a French school. In addition she studied English and French with tutors. After graduating from first Istanbul Feyziye High school, then the Teacher Training College for Girls (*Kız Öğretmen Okulu*), she taught French and Turkish in high schools. Due to her admiration for Halide Edip

¹⁴¹ I'd like to thank my friend Hande Göksun for her attention and thank her mother and her aunt for their sweet conversation.

¹⁴² Maybe my friend's mother and aunt were right in saying that things changed so slowly until the 1980s.

Adivar, she went to work in the schools Halide Edip was planning to open in Syria. She taught Turkish at the Beirut Teacher Training College for Girls for two years. After arriving in Istanbul, she worked at Şişli Terakki High School, lecturing on Turkish and on Morality. From 1929 to 1956 she worked as a translator in the department of law affairs at the Ottomann Bank.¹⁴³

Berkand, unlike Nadir, did not write to earn her life. She worked as a translator while writing her novels. That may be the reason why she chose to write about working women so much. The appearance of working women in her novels is interpreted as the promotion of the Republican's modern woman image. Indeed, she is the only author among the three who gives attribution directly to the Republican regime and its reforms although these are not at the center of the novel.¹⁴⁴ After *Sonsuz Gece* (1938), these attributions are not seen again. The represented image of woman had some common features with that of the Republican regime, but it seems that the authorial intention of Berkand is something else. She explains in one of her interviews:

In my works, I do not assert any claim of imposing any opinion or emotion on my readers. If my readers enjoy while reading, and pleurably need to review some of their intimate relations, it means that I have succeeded. Taking the readers out of the disgusting and miserable parts of the life, I want to make them walk through the beautiful and sweet worlds I imagine, and want to make them enjoy.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Murat Yalçın, *Tanzimat'tan Bugüne Edebiyatçılar Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1, p. 207.

¹⁴⁴ In *Sen ve Ben* (1933), *Bahar Çiçeği*, (1935) and *Sonsuz Gece* (1938) the heroines meet Europeans who are surprised to see modern Turkish woman. These foreigners' perception of the Turkish women is still orientalist but challenged with the modern appearance of the heroines. In their conversation it is explained that this is the result of changes undergone recently in Turkey.

¹⁴⁵ Öztürkmen, p.46. The original text is as follows: "Eserlerimde okuyucularına herhangi bir fikir veya duygu aşulamak iddiasında değilim. Okuyucularım romanlarımı severek okurlar ve bazı samimiyetlerini tekrar ve zevkle gözden geçirmek ihtiyaçlarını duyarlarsa gayeme varmışım demektir. Ben yazdığım romanlarla okuyucuyu hayatın iğrenç ve ıstıraplı sahalardan sıyrarak hayalimde yaşadığım güzel ve tatlı alemlerde gezdirmek ve onlara hoş saatler geçirtmek isterim."

Like Nadir she avoids realism, however, one can find more influence of realism in Berkand's novels. The author uses outside venues such as offices, hospitals, cafes and beaches. The lovers are usually outside, touring the city. Mostly they are portrayed in their daily lives. Sometimes the irrelevant dialogues of, say, a woman with her child, or two workers from countryside, also can be heard in the scene. There exist attributions to the historical events such as the First World War or Republican reforms. In *Aşk Fırtınası* (1935) the heroine criticizes the people who make unfair fortunes in the war conditions.¹⁴⁶ However, these events are likely to have little place in the plot, unlike the canonic novels in which the fate of the character overlaps with the historical events.¹⁴⁷

Berkand narrates, like Karakurt, love in contemporary times in the cities. In that sense both authors are different from Nadir, who prefers the atmosphere of the previous century in her earlier novels. However, Berkand's narration of love relation is more like Nadir's. Karakurt's lovers meet accidentally, love intuitively, and start relations immediately. On the other hand, Berkand's narrates the long and painful process of courtly loving, like Nadir, although leaving more room for flirting. The love in Berkand's novels is less platonic than the love in Nadir's novels. The hero and heroine spend time together like the protagonists of Karakurt. Nevertheless the sexuality, which is explicitly an inseparable part of love in Karakurt's novels, is included in a few novels of Berkand in 1940s.¹⁴⁸ Even Nadir

¹⁴⁶ Muazzez Tahsin Berkand, *Aşk Fırtınası*, 9th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap ve Aka, 1982 [1935]), p. 62.

¹⁴⁷ For instance, in *Ankara* of Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, a well-known canonical author of the 1930s, the life of the heroine is divided into three parts each of which represents a period of the national history. The heroine gets married three times with the characters who allegorically represent the three succeeding historical periods.

¹⁴⁸ Astonishingly Berkand narrates sexuality within marriage life in *Kızım ve Aşkım [Perdeler]* (1943) and in *Lale* (1945). In the former, the heroine finds sexual satisfaction not in her marriage but in illegitimate sexual intercourse with her love after the divorce. This seemingly destroys the attachment of sexuality to the marriage. What makes sexual involvement glorious is obviously the love. Moreover, while Karakurt's heroines, after having affair, want to marry the heroes in order to

interestingly is likely to give more places to the sexual scenes in her novels than Berkand. It seems hard to generalize the characteristic of the love in these novels since the authors present significantly diverse attitudes.

Although narrating similarly the contemporary times, what mainly distinguishes Berkand from Karakurt is her characterization of the heroine as a modern working woman. Whereas Karakurt's heroines need to be sheltered, Berkand draws strong women characters that stand on their own feet through working. The emphasis on the working woman and her problems is apparent in Berkand's novels. Although in her first novels, *Sen ve Ben* (1933) and *Aşk Fırtınası* (1935) the heroines do not actually work,¹⁴⁹ still there are phrases to encourage women to work. Feriha of *Aşk Fırtınası* thinks: "Work...Work for living...To me, it is something humane and deserves respect. I read it in the books: In Europe, even the daughters of rich families naturally work like the men."¹⁵⁰ However, she limits the right of work with marriage: "For my part, like the man who withdraws his hands from his father's money and lives on his own, a woman should work until she gets married. Those young girls who do not intend to get married should choose a profession and proceed in their careers like the ones in Europe."¹⁵¹

legitimate their action, the heroine of *Perdeler* does not come with such a demand. The pleasure of the love is enough for her.

The use of the theme of sexuality is more interesting in *Lale*. The heroine marries her friend thinking she is in love with. However, after the marriage it appears that she is not. What is striking in the plot is that the heroine can't leave her husband because she is addicted to the sexual intercourse with him. She hates her husband during the day but continues the sexual involvement passionately. She is sexually tied to her husband although this disgusts her. This kind of representation of the sexuality implies that Berkand is aware of its power in love relation.

¹⁴⁹ These earlier novels of Berkand are more like the *novel of mansion* of Kerime Nadir. The plot takes place in a *konak* and starts from the pre-World War One years.

¹⁵⁰ Berkand, *Aşk Fırtınası*, p. 22. The original text is as follows: "Çalışmak...Yaşamak için çalışmak... Bence çok hürmete layık ve insani bir şeydir. Okuduğum kitaplarda görüyorum: Avrupa'da zengin ailelerin kızları bile gayet tabii bir surette, erkekler gibi çalışıyorlarmış."

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22. The original text is as follows: "Bana kalırsa muayyen bir yaşa gelince bir erkek nasıl babasının parasından el çeker, kendi sayile yaşarsa, bir kadın da evleneceği güne kadar aynı şekilde

The working of women is mostly temporarily. It makes a woman strong until she is sheltered by a man (husband or father).¹⁵² This approach to the working of women repeats in the successive novels which include working heroines. In most of the cases, the heroines work because they have to. Mualla of *Sonsuz Gece* (1938) has to look after her relative attending university. Semra of *Saadet Güneşi* (1944) has to contribute to the household in which she lives with her mother and her aunts. In some cases, the heroine works in order to prove that she can manage on her own, although she has inherited a fortune from her father or is supported by one of her relatives.¹⁵³ In all examples working appears as an alternative to the arranged marriage. The heroines reject many proposals, some of which promise a “proper” marriage,¹⁵⁴ because she hopes to fall in love. If she prefers a love marriage in the future with her lover or with someone she has not met yet, she has to earn her living until that time.

Carrying this romantic dream of anticipated love, the heroines are similar to those in Nadir’s novels. While Nadir narrates “İstanbul Women”¹⁵⁵ in the previous century, Berkand seems to carry them into contemporary times. The women of the

çalışmalıdır. Hatta hayattaki gayeleri evlenmek olmayan genç kızlar Avrupa’da olduğu gibi kendilerine bir meslek seçmeli ve o dalda ilerlemelidir.”

¹⁵² In *Saadet Güneşi* (1944), the heroine gives up working when her father who is told to be dead, re-appears and joins her mother. The heroines of Berkand’s other novels seem willing to stop working after they get married. The exception is the heroine of *Lale* who wants to be an actress despite of disallowance of her parents and her fiancé. She also refuses the marriage proposals by men who would not allow her playing after getting married.

¹⁵³ This is the case in *Kezban* (1941) and *Bir Genç Kızın Romanı* (1943)

¹⁵⁴ I refer to the marriage that is found “proper” by her relatives or friends. This proper marriage seems to be with a respectful man who earns enough for his family and cares her wife.

¹⁵⁵ “İstanbul Women” is a term that was used in the early Republican period for separating the upper class woman in İstanbul from the women in Anatolia. Living in the capital which was also a cultural center, they were able to benefit from the social change at the dawn of the twentieth century. The İstanbul Women enjoyed most of the opportunities provided by the Republican reforms, since the late Ottoman period. Hence, they could raise their voices for further political and social rights. However, presumably because İstanbul Women represent continuity with the Ottoman Empire or because they do need reformers for being modern, the Republican regime did favor the Anatolian Women as the woman model against them. Toska, p. 86. Although having some common features with the Republican woman model, it is indeed these İstanbul Women whom Berkand describes in her novels.

konaks are stepping out in Berkand's novels. In the conditions of the post-war era, a woman no longer can stay at home if she is not married. The modern times call (enable) women to work, undergoing a transformation in their social role. However, this change has caught the generation who was not born into this modernity unprepared. This pre-war generation was raised for the social role that was being challenged in the first half of the twentieth century. What they have in their hands when they are compelled to work are unprofessional skills gained at home through the tutors, such as foreign languages. This is why the heroines from the pre-war generation work in unprofessional jobs whereas the next generation, who are more familiar to the contemporary modernity, attend university for the professional jobs in the novels.

The women of Berkand leave their *konaks* in order to join "modern" life while maintaining the morals with which they grew up. It is this attitude that would keep them from lowering themselves in their relations with men. These women could interact with the opposite sex in a friendly manner but love only one man for a life time. They would flirt like modern girls but love like their mothers and grand mothers. In *Saadet Güneşi*, for instance, the young heroine, Semra, oscillates between these two approaches to the love represented by her two aunts. Lamia is more like a nineteenth century woman who withdraws into herself after she is cheated on by her love because one can only love once in a lifetime. She is more tied to morality and passively accepts her fate in love. On the other hand, Fazilet is the twentieth century woman type, being more social and active in her love relations. She divorces three times and each time she marries lovingly. She advises her nephew that one woman must be a little "enticing (*fettan*)": "If we look for the words for those I want to tell, we are vulgarizing my opinion and my aim. When I

say that a woman should be woman in the whole sense, the twenty-year-old Semra must understand what I mean.”¹⁵⁶ Although she follows Fazilet’s approach at the beginning, after falling in love, Semra appreciates the loyalty and the strength of Lamia. Criticizing and admiring of the woman of the previous century co-exist.

The attitude of this woman is not tied to a social class. It seems that Berkand values this respectful attitude rather than attitude of a social class. What draws me to this conclusion is that the changeable characterizations of Berkand’s novels. In *Aşk Fırtınası*, the heroine Feriha grows up with Nermin, who is sheltered by Feriha’s family. Nermin comes from a rural background, being the daughter of an army officer. Her family is poorer and this makes Nermin jealous of Feriha. In the continuing parts, Nermin marries an old man for his fortune. She tries to make Feriha jealous. Nevertheless, it is not enough to take revenge. Neriman lures Feriha’s fiancé, Refik, with her beauty. In a letter, she explains that she is not in love with him. Anyway, love means sexual attraction for her.¹⁵⁷ What distinguishes Nermin from the descended women in the canonic novels is the explanation of why she became the villain. In her confession letter to Feriha, she tells the story of her life. She reasons out her bad manners. It is left to the reader to accept the reasons or not, but it is meaningful that the author gives the villain a chance to defend herself.

One can say that the bad manners are attached to the lower social classes. However, another novel of Berkand, *Kezban* (1941) changes the place of the characters in the plot. Kezban, the young heroine, comes from a rural background to the *konak* of her father, Ali Bey the engineer. Kezban is the daughter of his ex-wife,

¹⁵⁶ Berkand, *Saadet Güneşi* (İstanbul: İnkılap, 1959), p. 20. The original text is as follows: “Benim anlatmak istediği şeyler için kelime ararsak fikirlerimi ve maksadımı bayağılaştırmış oluruz. Kadın tam manasıyla kadın olmalı dediğim vakit, yirmi yaşındaki Semra benim ne demek istediğimi anlamalıdır.”

¹⁵⁷ Berkand, *Aşk Fırtınası*, p. 114.

but nobody knows the truth, even Kezban herself. Ali introduces himself as a friend of Kezban's father who has promised to look after his daughter. The heroine starts to live with this family. However, Vicdan, who is Ali's daughter from his current wife, is jealous of her. This setting of the novel is reminiscent of the plot of *Aşk Fırtınası*, but with a few changes. The place of Feriha in the plot is filled by Vicdan, who is more like the villain of *Aşk Fırtınası*, Nermin, due to her admiration of wealth. On the other hand, Kezban, who comes from a rural setting, behaves like Feriha. Although, like Nermin, she is attracted to Vicdan's fiancé, her love is not like that of Nermin. Rather she loves like Feriha, like the women of the previous century.

This change of roles shows two conclusions. First, the author uses deviations from a plot in which one variation can dismantle the message of the previous one. This creates ambiguity about the message that the author wants to convey, while at the same time opening a fertile interpretive area for the reader. Second, this change of roles implies that the author tries to promote precisely the "modern" attitude itself rather than emphasizing the attitude's attachment to the upper class.

Indeed, all three authors describe the urban middle class which was building its self-identity on this "modern" attitude rather than economic indicators of income or occupation. This social class was rooted in the early social transformations in the late Ottoman period. While it was a small group belonging to the upper strata of society, it enlarged with the joining of the lower classes who also wanted to be "modern." Nadir and Berkand particularly describe the early participants of the middle class, while Karakurt is more likely to tell about the late joiners.

The characters in Nadir's early *mansion novels* are the early members of this middle class before the Great War. They belong to the upper strata of society, but not at the apex. Financially they are comfortable but still need to earn livings unlike the aristocratic families who inherited titles or fortunes. Berkand, on the other hand, portrays the transformation of this social group due to the effects of the Great War. The war ruined not only their economic life but also partly their social statuses, leading them to share more experiences with the lower social strata. They converge with the ones from the lower strata who seek to become "modern," forming the middle class of the early Republican period. Karakurt describes those in the middle class who come from a relatively lower stratum and gained their social statuses due to education. That is probably why he underlines the occupation or the education of the protagonists in the novels. In the end, all three popular romance novelists tell the life a social group, middle class, who share a new set of beliefs, values and norms.

CHAPTER 4

THE EXPERIENCE OF MODERNITY IN THE NOVELS

At the turn of the twentieth century, Romance as a genre had failed to perpetuate its existence in the form that existed in nineteenth century. “The failure of a particular genre structure to reproduce itself,” as Jameson argues, signals for the fact that the historical ground which makes the structure meaningful has disappeared.¹⁵⁸ The global context in which I tried to situate these popular romances implies such a change in the historical ground, which was brought about, I presume, by the modernity in the interwar period. In this chapter the positions the popular romance novelists took during the process of this change will be discussed. Their encounter with modernity is ambiguous since they describe modernity in a positive manner, but also keep a distance from it at the same time.

I will try to follow the methodology that Thomas Barthlein used in analyzing the Chinese social novels published between 1908 and 1930 along with that Daryo Mizrahi used in looking at the discourse on modernity in the popular novels of the early Turkish Republican period.¹⁵⁹ Barthlein works on a group of popular novelists

¹⁵⁸ Jameson, p. 146.

¹⁵⁹ Daryo Mizrahi, “Popular Poetics Discourse on Modernity in Early Republican İstanbul,” *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 15 (March, 1991), pp. 83-96; Thomas Barthlein, “Mirrors of

(the Butterflies School) that were criticized by revolutionist novelists (May Fourth Literature) and were neglected by the historians dealing with Chinese literature at the turn of the century. The critics tend to portray these popular novels as the advocates of the traditional values which repeat the same patterns. Barthlein, on the other hand, is interested in the open contradictions in the novels rather than unearthing clichés and repetitive patterns. These contradictions are sharp distinctions between new and old, civilized and uncivilized or barbaric or degenerate which are described by the serious reform discourse. Barthlein observes that the narration in these popular novels blurs the distinction between the formulated categories. For instance, these popular novels do not take side between the camps like the West and the East, the modern and the traditional, or the new and the old. They also do not compel the reader to do so either. Instead, they present a co-existence of new and old and a “combination of modern and traditional elements in amazing arrangements.”¹⁶⁰

The attitude of these popular novels toward modernity, Barthlein argues, is ambiguous. Different narrative strategies contribute to the creation of this ambiguity. For instance the popular novelists used irony and parody when talking about the issues on which formal discourse on modernity generally narrates, such as the social role of woman, the relation between man and woman or the contradiction between scientific and traditional ways of explanation. Through these narrative styles these popular novelists produced texts which undermine the cultural meanings and representations that were constructed by the “serious” literature. Hence the popular novels avoided promoting fixed meanings and representations. Rather they

Transition: Conflicting Images of Society in Change from Popular Chinese Social Novels, 1908 to 1930,” *Modern China* 25 (April, 1999), pp. 204-228.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 208-209.

present various choices, so let the readers to find their positions against modernity.¹⁶¹

In short, to unearth the discourse on modernity, Barthlein looks at the narrative styles and plot constructions that these popular novelists employ while talking about the contradictory categories of modernity. What makes his methodology useful is the emphasis on “how is narrated” rather than “what is narrated.” This formalist approach helps Barthlein to understand what did these popular novelists intend to produce or reproduce in the cultural sphere. In other words, the emphasis on the former question gives clues about the authorial intention of the popular novelists, which, in the end enables Barthlein to decode the discourse on modernity existing in the popular novels. Barthlein’s analysis shows that these popular novels include a different modernity discourse than the formal one promoted by May Fourth authors. The former discourse is not built on the abstract contradiction of the new and the old which are usually portrayed as the rigid categories by the latter one. Rather, it envisages the arrangements and the harmony of the new and the old. In that sense, this discourse in the popular novels promotes various pragmatic solutions to deal with the challenge that the modernity brought about. Moving one step further, Barthlein conclusively claims that this discourse points the existence of such an experience of the modernity. He writes: “Many readers enjoyed books which entertained them with a whole range of interesting phenomena, both old and new, did not give them any hard and fast answers to important questions of the day, and left it to them to find their position if they wanted.”¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 212-219.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 219.

Similar discourse on modernity can be observed in the popular novels of the early Turkish Republican era. In his significant article, Mizrahi shows the differences between the approaches to modernity in the popular and political cultural discourse. He takes two novels of Peyami Safa: *Fatih-Harbiye*, which is more political and written under his own name and, *Cumbadan Rumbaya* which Safa signed with his pseudonym Server Bedi like he did in all his popular novels. Both novels, although from different literary genres, are based on the confrontation of the East and the West, and the cultural discourse that this confrontation generated. Both the popular and the formal poetics of the same author turn around the theme of contradiction between modernity and traditionalism although each narrates it in different ways. Thus, the compare of the plots, characters and narrative styles of these two novels of Peyami Safa gives Mizrahi an opportunity to analyze the difference in their discourse on modernity.

Mizrahi writes that at the dawn of the twentieth century Turkish-Ottoman society was undergoing a significant social change. However, this change cannot be understood completely only looking at the top-down reforms that had been implanted since the late Ottoman period. Mizrahi rightfully argues that the key to comprehend this social change is to unearth the cultural meanings and representations that this change generated in cultural sphere. Literature presents a fruitful realm for such an attempt since it “provided a suitable channel for the creation and modification” of these cultural elements.¹⁶³ Mizrahi seeks to uncover and compare some of these meanings and representations that were situated in the two distinctive discourses.

¹⁶³ Mizrahi, p. 85.

However, Mizrahi is aware of the hierarchy between these two discourses on modernity. The discourse in the popular literary works is generally excluded from the literature analysis.

The popular dimension of print culture has largely been ignored in the study of Turkish literature. Art forms have been studied in terms of their and their author's political allegiances rather than in relation to a general discussion of poetics and literary history. As a result, the elements especially important for literary texts such as language, style, plot, and point of view have been addressed less than the ideological stands of authors.¹⁶⁴

Mizrahi suggests analyzing the literary works primarily on the basis of the literary features without politically going for a distinction between the texts. In that sense, he argues that the texts should be evaluated according to their narrative strategies and within the cultural context in which they were produced and consumed.

Mizrahi analyzes the modernity discourses in *Fatih-Harbiye* and *Cumbadan Rumbaya* in this framework. He argues that *Fatih-Harbiye* seems to be written directly to discuss the change itself.¹⁶⁵ The narration of the story is of secondary importance. In order to present its manifestation, the author divides the elements of the plot into two main camps: the East and the West. Every element including the protagonists signifies either the East or the West.¹⁶⁶ This modernity narrated through abstract categories is portrayed as a threat to the status quo. The change that tends to destroy the personal lives of the protagonists (the status quo) starts with heroine's intention for westernization. Hence the westernization appears as a threat to the existing

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 89.

order. The balance restored only after the heroine preferred the East to the West.

On the other hand, Mizrahi argues, the modernity discourse in *Cumbadan Rumbaya* is narrated in a more positive manner. The representations of the East and the West also exist in *Cumbadan Rumbaya* but this time the protagonists are not torn between the two. There is no supremacy of the West over the East or vice versa. What is underlined is not the contradiction of the two categories that are portrayed relatively less rigid than it is in *Fatih-Harbiye*, but is “the well being of the characters.”¹⁶⁷ When the heroine of *Cumbadan Rumbaya*, desired for the western way of life, she only wishes, for practical reasons, to improve her life standards. Hence the image of her contrasts with the heroine of *Fatih-Harbiye* who compares and contrasts the East and the West on a metaphysical level and whose intention for westernization is built upon that.

In the end, Mizrahi summarizes the difference between the modernity discourses as:

In Peyami Safa novels, change is usually problematic, a deterioration. The modern ways, mostly associated with material gains, threaten to disrupt the spiritual balance of individuals, families, and societies. In contrast, Server Bedi novels accommodate change more readily. Instead of presenting the situation in absolute terms and through metaphors, Server Bedi focuses on characters, suggesting the possibility of change as improvement. Modernity is not necessarily threatening but a challenge to be met.¹⁶⁸

Like Barthlein, Mizrahi looks at the narrative styles and plot constructions, this time in the two different poetics of the same author. He tries to uncover two different narrative strategies that Safa utilized to build his stories. Similar to the Chinese popular novels at the beginning of the twentieth century, the

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 96.

popular poetics which Mizrahi uncovered signal the existence of an alternative discourse on modernity beside the one that was promoted in the canonical novels and the cultural discourse of the Kemalist elites. However, he does not pay attention to the social aura from which this discourse was nourished. Why did such a cultural discourse exist? To whose demands did this discourse refer? Who does appreciate this way of modernity? Nevertheless, the method he applied for the analysis of the popular novels may still help us to find the answers.

In this part I will try to look at the confrontation between the “new” and the “old” in the popular romances of Nadir, Berkand and Karakurt, concentrating on the themes to which the canonic literature usually gave emphasis. Inspired by Barthlein and Mizrahi, I will look at the narrative styles and plot constructions in the novels, seeking to unearth the authorial intention of these popular romance novelists. This attempt will help us to describe the discourse on modernity that exists in these novels.

The modernity is ultimately the experience of the new. However, this experience does not necessarily exclude the old. In contrary, the new needs the old for its self-definition. The new or the modern is new or modern because it is defined differently from the old or the traditional. Harootunian writes “the new is experienced as modern because the old and archaic are still around.”¹⁶⁹ This is why the discourse of modernization generally concentrates on the dichotomy of the new and the old, the modern and the traditional. My aim here is to look at how this dichotomy is echoed in the popular romances of the single-party era of Turkey in which the country is said to have experienced a

¹⁶⁹ Harootunian, p. xxiv.

top-down modernization. It seems that these popular romances include the co-existence and the amazing arrangements of the new and the old, instead of the sharp contradiction or inorganic synthesis between the two.

Exposing the Lived Story

The novel as a genre entered the cultural life of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century with the claim of exposing everyday life. This feature influenced the narration in the early Turkish novel, in terms of its relation to reality. The distinction between the fictional and the non-fictional seems to disappear in some examples. For instance, Ahmet Mithat, one of the leading novelists of the nineteenth century, continuously reminds the reader that he is telling a real story in *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*.¹⁷⁰ The popular romances we study share a great deal with this nineteenth century novel tradition while differing from the national canonic novels in several ways. The authorial intention in the nineteenth century novels continues in the popular romances, which seek to narrate the change in the social relations of their contemporary time.

In the novels studied here, there is an explicit effort to maintain the verisimilitude. All three authors, in their own ways, struggle to present their texts as lived stories. They had to try hard since their texts were published as fiction in newspaper columns where right next to them everyday events were presented.¹⁷¹

The novels were the only fictional texts in the ordinary pages of the newspaper. The

¹⁷⁰ Nüket Esen, “Ahmet Mithat’ta Anlatıcı ve Muhatapı,” *Modern Türk Edebiyatı Üzerine Okumalar* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), pp. 20-34.

¹⁷¹ The serial novel is printed in the second page of *Cumhuriyet*, for instance, side by side with the news that has taken in the city. Mümtaz Faik’s column “Kadınlık” (Femininity) is on the same page. Aysun Köktener, *Tek Parti Dönemi Cumhuriyet Gazetesi* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2005), p. 29.

real and the fictional were simultaneously presented on the same page. This visible contradiction stimulated and sharpened the reader's mental discrimination between the real and the fictional. In the end, it becomes more difficult for the novelist to persuade the reader about the reality of the text because the reader already knows what is real (news) and what is fictional (the serial novel).

However, the same situation might open a door for the author to overcome this handicap. It should be noted that these novels appeared on the page where the sensational news was published. Love murders, suicides and personal tragedies were placed side by side with these serial novels. Writing about love and personal tragedies, these authors indirectly gave attribution to the news on the same page, as if the unknown story behind the ordinary news was released by these novels.¹⁷² The similarity between the events in the novel and the story told in the news showed the reader that the fiction might really have happened.

In addition to this attempt for mimesis in the novels, due to their placement in the newspapers, the authors find distinctive methods for the creation of reality in the novels. While Nadir and Berkand use first person narration and diary form, Karakurt goes even further applying different journalistic tools. The differentiation of their methods also derives partly from the themes they emphasized and the language they utilized.

In none of the eight novels published between 1930 and 1945 does Karakurt use the first person narrator. Unlike Berkand and Nadir, he does not maintain the reality of a fictional character who tells his/her experiences. Rather, he employs four main methods to set the reality in his novels: the use of first plural in narrating,

¹⁷² In one of his interview, Karakurt admits that he was inspired by the materials he faced in his journalist life. Hızlan, p. 19.

attribution to news in the text, the use of the metaphor of the “novel” and portraying court scenes.

Karakurt allows dialogues to constitute the largest portion of the novel. For the rest, he narrates in first plural person with incomplete sentences in the present tense. This method, which depends more on the visual than the verbal, creates the feeling that what is being told is currently happening.¹⁷³

We are at the outskirts of Uludağ now...We are climbing to the long
ridges that the mad wind strolls...
One, five, ten steps...
Suddenly we stop...
A ghost appears before us...The ghost of a human...¹⁷⁴

He is no one but Ferit, the male protagonist of *Kadın Severse*. The author, so to speak, stands with the reader in that scene while all of the events are happening. While narrating the story, short and broken sentences create the feeling that the author is whispering in the reader’s ear trying not to disturb what is happening. Hence the story proceeds with the reader, who is watching the events with the author and this contributes greatly to the reality of the novel. There are jumps but flashbacks are generally not used.

After the jumps in the novel, there is a need for narration to tell what happened in the missing part. Karakurt establishes this link through reading news

¹⁷³ A. Ömer Türkeş uses the term “camera eye” to describe this narrative style of Karakurt. A. Ömer Türkeş, *Esat Mahmut Karakurt: Ankara Ekspresi*, Available {online]: <http://www.pandora.com.tr/sahaf/eski.asp?pid=11>. [22 October 2006]. The same narrative method is used by Ahmet Mithat in *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*. Nüket Esen, “Ahmet Mithat’ta Anlatıcı ve Muhatabı”, p. 22.

¹⁷⁴ Karakurt, *Kadın Severse*, p. 5. The original text is as follows: “*Şimdi Uludağ’ın eteklerindeyiz...Uzun ve kudurmuş rüzgarın dolaştığı sırtlara tırmanıyoruz.....*

Bir, beş, on adım...

Birdenbire duruyoruz...

Önümüzde bir hayalet beliriyor...Bir insan hayaleti!...”

from the newspapers. This technique exists in the four novels Karakurt published between 1930 and 1945. For instance in *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*, the author cuts the story when the Turkish army's operations begin. Then, he shows the news announcing that the war has ended and Zeynep is alive.¹⁷⁵ In addition, the reader follows some parts of her ongoing trial by means of the newspapers when Zeynep is being judged. Similarly the details of the murder committed by Mualla in *Aldatacağım* are narrated through the newspapers.¹⁷⁶ Thereupon, the reader encounters news about her trial in the proceeding pages. While displaying the news, the author perpetuates the same narrative manner. He reads the news with the readers using expressions such as “we are reading...” or “we are looking at the headings...” Then he gives the full text of the news in quotations. This creates the sense that the author has copied the news word for word from a newspaper. Thus the text seems to give reference to real news, increasing the sense that the story really happened.

The existence of the trials in the novels creates a sense of reality and of lived life. The court scenes take up a large part in Karakurt's novels. Almost one-third of *Aldatacağım* is reserved for the dialogues in the court. Mainly the statements of the protagonists which narrate the story are told in details. Karakurt, who had a career in law, gives specific references to certain articles of the laws. Moreover, the court scene is so important for the plot that in *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*, *Ölünceye Kadar*, and *Aldatacağım*, the conclusions come with the verdict. The protagonist of the last two is charged with murder and sent to prison. This emphasis on court scenes implies

¹⁷⁵ Esat Mahmut Karakurt, *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*, 13th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap ve Aka, 1980 [1934]), pp. 121-122

¹⁷⁶ Esat Mahmut Karakurt, *Aldatacağım [Kocamı Aldatacağım]*, 10th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap ve Aka, 1983 [1940]), pp. 73-75.

that the plots of these novels might be inspired by statements in the real courts.

Hence, the reader would think that this is probably a real story.

These novels, by their nature, narrate what is sensational. In daily life, the reader rarely comes across such events. The plots of the novels are unusual in that sense. It is somewhat difficult for the author to present them as real stories. Karakurt uses the metaphor of “novel” to overcome this hindrance of unusualness for everyday life.¹⁷⁷ When Leyla of *Kadın Severse* is about to confess to her daughter her illicit relationship with Ferit, she begins with “This night, I will read a mystery novel that is filled with disasters.”¹⁷⁸ Like in *Sokaktan Gelen Kadın*, the heroine Semra’s letter, in which she tells her past, begins with these words: “Today I will read the novel of a woman who lives only with her flesh and her skin, but has almost died with her heart and soul, whose each page is a tragedy, each part is full of unprecedented disaster and fault.”¹⁷⁹ When Bülent of *Ölünceye Kadar* is telling the court what actually happened, the narrator says that she is “reading the novel of a disaster filled up with affliction”.¹⁸⁰

While using the metaphor of “novel” in their dialogues, the characters situate themselves in real life. They liken their lives to the plot of a novel, as if they were not the fictional characters of a novel. They seem to speak from outside of the fiction, like the people who find similarity between their real lives and the lives narrated in the novels. In that sense, the characters present themselves as real

¹⁷⁷ In *Dürdane Hanım*, Ahmet Mithad uses the similar method in creating verisimilitude in the novel but more directly. Mithad explicitly and continuously claims that his novel is based on real events. Esen, “Dürdane Hanım Romanında Anlatım,” *Modern Türk Edebiyatı Üzerine Okumalar*, pp. 68-71.

¹⁷⁸ Karakurt, *Kadın Severse*, p. 128. The original text is as follows: “Sana bu gece içi facialarla dolu, esrarengiz bir roman okuyacağım.”

¹⁷⁹ Karakurt, *Sokaktan Gelen Kadın*, p. 184. The original text is as follows: “Sana bugün, yalnız eti ve derisi ile yaşayan, fakat içi ve ruhu ile, çoktan ölüp giden bir kadının; her sahifesi bir facia, her faslı, işitilmemiş bir felaket ve ayıpla dolu bir romanını okuyacağım!”

¹⁸⁰ Karakurt, *Ölünceye Kadar*, p. 225.

persons. Moreover, the same metaphor convinces the reader that the events actually did take place regardless of how incredible they are. When a character implies that what he/she has lived is as unusual as the plot of a novel, the reader has already witnessed the happenings throughout the novel. Therefore, the novel that the reader is holding his hands narrates a story which might be unbelievable like a “novel,” but is certainly lived.

Berkand also uses the metaphor of the “novel” repeatedly in her novels.¹⁸¹ However, in maintaining the reality, her narrative is more familiar to that of Nadir. In both authors’ novels, the sense of exposing a lived story is embedded by the means of first person narration. While in some examples the narrator directly tells her personal memories, in some others, the reader follows the fiction through the diaries and letters of the protagonists. In both forms, the plot proceeds with the reader, without any attribution to the future events. The protagonist seems to live that moment again with the reader, while narrating. In that way it becomes easier for the reader to identify with the experience of the protagonist.

Indeed, the novel as a genre presents many fictional experiences to the readers which they might not have experienced otherwise in a life time. It is no coincidence that the first examples of the novel appeared in the form of *picaresque*, which depends on a traveler’s struggling to gain a status in society, or of *epistolary*, which is a collection of personal letters. Both forms are based on conveying the personal experience to the reader. In that course, the novel appeared as a means of communication between individuals. The information it passed around was based on experience and accessible to everyone. Generally speaking, Ergun writes that, this is

¹⁸¹ The metaphor of novel is used in a similar way in Berkand’s novels too. In *Bir Genç Kızın Romanı*, the heroine finds herself in a life like the one narrated in the novels she read. Similarly the heroine of *Kezban* who resides in rural, thinks that she can live the life that she read in the novels, if she accepts the invitation of his father’s friend who lives in İstanbul.

“the most demanded fact in a society in which especially the middle class was rising.”¹⁸²

Through narration in the first person and through the use of a diary form, Nadir and Berkand seek to maintain such experiences for middle class people who were not only objects but also subjects of modernity.¹⁸³ These narrative methods help the authors to situate the narrated experiences in real life, increasing the credibility. The diary form, itself, leaves the impression that it was written by a real person. However, Nadir goes one step further explaining fictionally how the diary is founded by the fictional narrator.

The narrator of *Günah Bende mi* is actually Ümran’s friend. Ümran has told her how she is in love with the man in her neighborhood. One night this man invites Ümran home and after a mysterious talk he gives his diary. After reading it, Ümran says to his friend: “Do you know what afflicts me most?...Personal sufferings often are left uncovered...Maybe you did not understand my intention... I do not mean that whole world should cry for a person’s disaster... but they should know that there is such a disaster...”¹⁸⁴ After these words, impressed by the diary she has read, the narrator suggests publishing it in the form of a novel. “And after exhausting work I finished this novel, which is the story of a real life.”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Zeynep Ergun, *Kardeşimin Bekçisi: Başlangıcından İkinci Dünya Savaşına İngiliz Dedektif Yazını* (İstanbul: Everest, 2003), p. 17.

¹⁸³ Modernity is not a process simply that presents new social norms and values for the members of the middle class. It is also a common experience in which the middle class has the chance to shape these norms and values which are defined as “modern”. In that sense, being middle class is primarily a project that promotes the self-fashioning. While the members of the middle class look for the examples which can help them in defining the new norms of social conduct, the diary form might be said to contribute to this self-fashioning through exposing others’ experience of being “modern.”

¹⁸⁴ Kerime Nadir, *Günah Bende mi*, 6th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap, 1954 [1939]), p. 21. The original text is as follows: “Beni en ziyade müteessir eden nokta hangisidir biliyor musun?...Ferdî ıstırapların çok defa gizli kalması!...Belki maksadımı anlamadın...Bir kişinin felaketine bütün dünya ağlasın demiyorum...ancak o insanın böyle bir felaketi olduğu bilinsin!...”

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.21. The original text is as follows: “Ve ben yorucu bir çalışmadan sonra hakiki bir hayat hikayesi olan bu romanı yazıp bitirdim.”

According to the fiction, the novel that is presented to the reader is actually this diary edited by Ümran's friend.

Likewise *Hıçkırık* is the diary of Kenan that was given to the narrator. *Hıçkırık* begins with the curiosity of the narrator about an officer carrying an armful of flowers and walking with a young lady every morning. One day, when the officer is alone, the narrator follows him to the cemetery, but is unable to give meaning to this routine. It remains mysterious even after they meet and become friends. When the officer is leaving for duty, he gives the narrator his diary that explains everything. Then the reader reads the diary of Kenan.

Interest in other individual lives and experiences was rising at the beginning of the century throughout Europe. The period witnessed the revival of the intimate journal which was originally a genre of the eighteenth century. Authors frequently used the diary form in their novels.¹⁸⁶ This curiosity about others' lives was indeed the result of rapid social change, particularly in man-woman relations brought about by the modernity at the turn of the century. Women and men of the middle class in the interwar period were eager to adopt the new norms of social conduct in order to become "modern" although they hardly had a definite description of what the modern is. These narratives presented possible solutions pretending to expose the experience of the others who were modern or strived to become "modern." How did the others experience this modernity? How did they become modern? In such a context, popular romance novelists like Nadir, Berkand and Karakurt tried to present their narratives as lived stories in order to provide models for the emerging modern social relations. Hence, what exists in their novels seems to be that hesitant experience of modernity.

¹⁸⁶ Martens, p. 115.

The Co-existence of the New and the Old: Music in Nadir's Novels

This part seeks to unearth the relation between the old and the new in Kerime Nadir's novels. To underline the difference of this relation with the one in canonical works, I will take *Fatih-Harbiye* as an example to study on. *Fatih-Harbiye* (1931) is one of the most famous canonic novels of Peyami Safa in which the clash between West and East is narrated over constructed categories. The characters, places and other elements of the novel are all categorized allegorically as representations of either the West (the new) or the East (the old). Music is one of these areas where the contradiction between two is indicated. The well-behaved protagonist, Şinasi, who represents the East plays *alaturka* music, whereas the degenerated figure, Macit, who is identified with the West is interested in *alafiranga* music. Like the divisions in other areas in the novel, the separation between these two kinds of music is so sharp that the reader, like Neriman, the heroine, is expected to take one side. This attitude is familiar to the other canonic novels, although seemingly it does not exist in popular romances. In this part I shall show, particularly on the theme of music, how this categorization is undermined in Kerime Nadir's novels through the softening of the contradiction between the two.

Fatih-Harbiye narrates the Neriman's attempt to leave her social environment to become "modern." All the cultural features of this environment is represented as symbolizing the East. Neriman attends the *alaturka* department of the conservatory in İstanbul, playing *ud*. She lives in a poor district, Fatih, where the traditional way of life still continues. Her father reads at nights *Mesnevi*, one of the Eastern classics. Şinasi, her boyfriend, plays *kemençe* and is strict to the traditional

values. This status quo is disturbed by Neriman's meeting with Macit who attended the *alafranga* department of the conservatory for only a couple of months. However, this time is enough to set a friendship with Neriman and to introduce her the western way of life in Harbiye, the district which represented as the most westernized province of İstanbul. Neriman is impressed of what she has seen in this new world. She desired to be a part of it. Hence, she leaves traditional clothes for "modern" ones, makes her hair cut in western style, and secretly goes to the parties and balls. This change in her manner worries her father and Şinasi. Neriman argues with them first but later she realizes that they were right. Being regretful, she returns to the Eastern way of life. In the end of the novel, everything has gone back to normal.

In this novel, Safa takes the modernity in a negative manner. The novel starts with a scene in which Neriman lies to Şinasi in order to go to *Harbiye*. In a hurry she leaves Şinasi and secretly takes the tramway to *Harbiye*. She does not know that Şinasi has seen her at that moment. Hence, Neriman's story of "becoming modern" starts with a deception and throughout the novel, she will continuously tell lies and try to deceive her boy friend and father while she seeks to adopt a western life style. Westernization, in that sense, is portrayed as a sin or as a deception that damage the morality, particularly, of the women. It disturbs the status quo and brings about the destruction of not only the family but also society.

Safa does not narrate only a personal experience of becoming "modern." Rather, Neriman seems to represent all the women in the Republican regime. The change in Neriman's attitudes starts after she meets Macit but the real source of her desire to become "modern" dates back to an earlier age. She was grown up, "like every Turkish girl," in a social environment that maintains both cultural values of the West and the East. After her family was settled in İstanbul, she was impressed

by her relatives living there who were used to a European way of life. Hence her intention to be “modern” has already woken but this intention has come to the fore with the Republican reforms. Safa narrates that the Republican regime legitimized the ongoing modernization which was promoted through the books, theaters, cinemas and the daily life of İstanbul. This legitimization stimulated the intention of Neriman to become “modern” which was so far hidden.¹⁸⁷ In that way Safa underlines that the reason of the change in Neriman’s attitudes is not Macit but it is the result of a more general phenomena, the aura which created by the Republican reforms. She says: “Once I only felt it, but did not know what I wanted... Look what is happening around. Is not everything changing? Am I not a girl living in this country? Do not I have the right to have a modern life?...”¹⁸⁸

Safa continuously attempts to relate the experience of Neriman with a more general question about modernity. She wishes to be “modern”, like every girl, benefiting the conditions that were created by the Republican regime. Nevertheless, she is unable to achieve a “true” modernization since she fails to understand what actually “modern” is. About this failed modernization, the dominant authorial voice of Safa speaks through the words of Ferit, an intellectual and the friend of Şinasi, in the novel: “Women are doomed to comprehend the modern through their eyes. They are happier than the true modernists: They are satisfied with forms and the changing colors entertain them. But think of the disappointment of an English girl who is sophisticated and believes in progress. She has gained everything but finds nothing!”¹⁸⁹ Hence, Safa directly deals with the question about how modernity

¹⁸⁷ Safa, p. 56.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 86. The original text is as follows: “Eskiden yalnız hissederdim, fakat ne istediğimi bilmezdim...Bak ortalıkta da neler oluyor, her şey değişmiyor mu? Ben de bu memleketin kızı değil miyim? Benim de medenî yaşamaya hakkım yok mu?...”

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 94. The original text is as follows: “Kadınlar, medeniyeti gözleriyle anlamaya mahkumdur. Bunlar hakiki medeniyetçilerden daha bahtiyardırlar: Şekillerle iktifa ederler ve renklerin değişmesi

should be experienced. In the concluding part, he presents his solution through the dialogues of the intellectuals who discuss modernity over the issue of music.

In this part, Neriman, joins a gathering in which the abolishment of the department of the *alaturka* in the conservatory is discussed. Safa probably attributes to the reform of the Republican regime that abolished *alaturka* in 1926. He does not introduce the characters in this group in detail; only narrates the ideas which they put forward and the impression that the discussion leaves on Neriman. Hence Safa's intention here is to attract the reader's full attention to the discussion. However, this discussion is not to present different views about modernity. Rather, it promotes one main argument and the views of the speakers are either simple or more sophisticated versions of the same approach. Şeref, for instance, gives directly reference to Ziya Gökalp's analysis that separates the civilization and the culture. He says that the civilization is international and based on the scientific development. On the other hand culture differs from nation to nation and must be conserved. The westernization is limited to the adaptation of the material development, civilization. However, Şeref complains, the change has spoiled to the culture too.¹⁹⁰ Ferit supports this argument and adds that the intention of Neriman's for the western way of life indicates her intention to a different culture. This intention, which is common to all Turkish women, is "shallow" that they adopt not the mentality of the culture but the some fashions it produced. However, it is still the appreciation of the western culture against the eastern one. This is, indeed, "the clash of the western and eastern cultures."¹⁹¹

onları eğlendirir. Fakat hakiki terakkiye inanan, kültür sahibi bir İngiliz kızın sükûtu hayalini düşün!"

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 116.

However, Ferit argues, there should not be a clash between the two. Indeed, they are not so different as it is argued. Western civilization includes eastern features whereas the eastern civilization includes western ones. Hence the civilization appears as the arrangement of the two in different ratios. In some civilizations western features are dominant, in some the eastern ones. Today, Ferit argues, the western civilization suffering from being too materialist. The cure of this situation is to increase the eastern features in western civilization. Therefore, Turkey, which was, so far, a member of the eastern civilization, should not give up eastern features during the transition to the westernization civilization. Turkey should take western features, but reserving the eastern ones which the western civilization demands to overcome its cultural turmoil. Therefore, western influence should not overdose to change the eastern characteristic of Turkish culture. *Alaturka* music is one of these characteristics that should be reserved. Hence the *alaturka* department of the conservatory should not be closed.¹⁹²

On the hand Safa intends for westernization while, on the other hand, he seems to be fear of the negative influence of this process. Koçak argues this paradox is common to all intellectuals and the cultural discourse of the regime of the early Republican period who discuss the problem of modernization. Contradictorily, West appears as a role model to be followed in the process of modernization and as an enemy which seeks to degenerate the national culture.¹⁹³ However, this contradiction is neglected, at least, at the discourse level; and instead, the questions of “what will be conserved” and “what will be adopted” are emphasized. In the issue of music, Safa argues that *alaturka* music should be reserved since it is one of the eastern features of the culture which will provide a better modernization than the

¹⁹² Ibid., pp. 118-119.

¹⁹³ Orhan Koçak, “1920’lerden 1970’lere Kültür Politikaları,” *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce*, vol. 2, *Kemalizm*, ed. Ahmet İnel (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), pp. 370-419.

modernization of Europe. The Kemalist reformers, on the other hand, did not include *alaturka* music in the national culture since it was a characteristic of Ottoman culture. The Republican regime which built its legitimacy on the denial of the previous regime, promoted the folk music, instead of *alaturka*, as the part of the national culture. The regime encouraged the reorganization of this folk music in the western forms which would reserve the national culture while, at the same time, modernizing it.¹⁹⁴

Both discourse of Safa and Kemalist reformers on modernity, are based on the guardianship of the process. Both are anxious about the uncontrolled modernization would lead to the destruction of the national culture –although they do not define national culture in the same way-, so the disturbance of the order of society. In this configuration, the national culture is taken as a pure and steady entity that must be protected in the process of change. Ahıska conceptualized this attitude as the “anxiety of society” which labels all uncontrolled changes in society that produce different ways of social conduct as the “degeneration”. However, she underlines, this is a “belated reaction” because the modernization has already changed what is referred as the national culture after the capitalist economy rooted in Turkey.¹⁹⁵

While the canonic and reformist discourse seeks to control the change and looks for the ways of arrangement of the new and the old, it is a less problematic issue in the popular romances. The confrontation of the *alaturka* and *alafranga* is narrated in these novels as a natural process; and both the new and the old co-exist without a need of any arrangement. This attitude can be traced in Kerime Nadir’s novels over the theme of music.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 392.

¹⁹⁵ Meltem Ahıska, “Hayal Edilemeyen Toplum: Türkiye’de ‘Çevresiz Merkez’ ve Garbiyatçılık,” *Toplum ve Bilim* 105 (Summer, 2006), p. 17.

Nadir used music as a theme in five of her novels.¹⁹⁶ However, only in one of them, in *Uykusuz Geceler*, is music the main theme. The author generally presents music as an area of harmony between lovers. This harmony is embodied sometimes in the protagonists' performances with their instruments, sometimes in their views about music. Besides, a closer reading uncovers that the discussions on music also show how the new (European music-*alafranga*) and the old (Turkish music-*alaturka*) co-exist without dismantling each other. It seems that the new does not necessarily exclude the old. Indeed they can co-exist naturally without the need for synthesis.

In *Hıçkırık*, for instance, Kenan plays the piano for the narrator, Miralay, at the beginning of the novel. First he plays his last composition, which he calls "Hıçkırık" (The Sob). After this *alafranga* composition, he plays an *alaturka* song with *tanbur*. As the reader sees in the following parts of the novel, Kenan was trained in both kinds of music as he plays sometimes *alaturka* sometimes *alafranga*.¹⁹⁷ Apparently there is a distinction between the two kinds of music although this does not necessarily force the hero or the other characters to choose one of them. The short dialogue between Kenan and Miralay just before Kenan plays his *alafranga* composition illustrates the situation best:

- Let me play my last composition. But do you like *alafranga*?
- Isn't it music? All of them are the same to me.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ These novels are *Hıçkırık*, *Samanyolu*, *Sonbahar*, *Uykusuz Geceler* and *Gelinlik Kız*. In *Gönül Hırsız*, Saffet is attracted by the singing of Piraye, the heroine. Yet this novel is not included under this title since it includes no discussion about the music.

¹⁹⁷ Nadir, *Hıçkırık*, p. 32

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8. The original text is as follows: "- Size en son bestelediğim bir parçayı çalayım...Bilmem *alafrangadan* hoşlanırsınız? - Musiki değil mi? dedim. Benim için hepsi bir..."

In another example, Nadir distorts the contradiction between the *alafranga* and *alaturka* music through showing that it might be not more than the bias of the hero. In *Samanyolu*, Nejat, the hero, is talented at playing the *ud*, whereas his platonic love, Zülal, is trained in piano. She is attending a foreign college but this education, according to Nejat, makes her immoral and snobbish.¹⁹⁹ One day while Zülal is sitting with her school friends at home, she asks Nejat to play the *ud*. Being so sure that the girls will make fun of him and his *alaturka* music, Nejat refuses. They insist although he degrades the *alaturka* music himself as saying “My humble music is not of the nature that would satisfy you. It is so poor and laughable...”²⁰⁰ When Şükran, a friend of Zülal, says she loves the *ud*, Nejat replies:

- I appreciate your humility. Nevertheless, I know what the *ud* means to a college girl.
- Big Mistake!...It may be Zühal who gives you that impression. But I am sure that she loves the *ud* too. I speak so certainly because we usually hear from her that she likes to annoy you.
- She may like to annoy, even aggravate me. But it is not a reason to change my view. Zülal is not the only one who teaches me that a young man who plays the *ud*, is laughed in this century...²⁰¹

Here the distinction between *alaturka* and *alafranga* is clear but the contradiction is opaque. The reader is not sure whether Nejat, being an *alaturka* player, is against *alafranga* or not. He even discredits *alaturka* claiming that it does not belong to the contemporary modern world. On the other hand, the attitude of

¹⁹⁹ Kerime Nadir, *Samanyolu*, 7th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap, 1959 [1941]), p. 75.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 36. The original text is as follows: “Benim naçiz musikim sizi tatmin edecek mahiyette değildir... O kadar zavallı ve o kadar gülünçtür ki...”

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 36. The original text is as follows: “ - Tevazu göstermenizden dolayı müteşekkirim. Lakin bir kolejli nazarında *udun* manasını bilirim.. - Büyük hata!... Size bu hissi veren belki Zülal’dir...Fakat eminim ki, o da *uddan* hazzeder. Sizi darıltmaktan zevk duyduğunu daima ağzından işittiğimiz için böyle emniyetle konuşurum. - Zülal beni darıltmaktan, hatta kızdırmaktan zevk duyabilir...Fakat bu benim kanaatlerimin değişmesi için bir sebep değildir. Bu asırda *ud çalan* bir gence gülündüğünü bana yalnız o öğretmedi...”

Zülal's friends is not certain either. Are they joking or really interested in *alaturka* music? It may be even a compliment of Şükran, who likes Nejat. Indeed, the impression of contradiction derives from Nejat's attitude. The view that *alaturka* is inferior to *alafranga* seems to be only in Nejat's mind. He is convinced that the *alaturka* is not appreciated by modern girls but is that true or is that a complex of Nejat? Şükran's words at the end of the dialogue imply that it is only Nejat's personal bias. Moreover, this bias is most probably misleading because Zülal assumingly likes *alaturka* although she pretends not to, in order to annoy Nejat. Hence, the author is able to present the contradiction between *alaturka* and *alafranga* as a personal bias rather than a general fact.

Softening the contradiction implies the co-existence of *alafranga* and *alaturka* but in their pure forms. It seems that Nadir avoids synthesis between the two. In *Gelinlik Kız*, Kasım, the fiancé of Feyza, the heroine, is represented as a degenerated figure in the canonic novels who wants to imitate the European life style. He claims that Feyza is an old-fashioned girl who is outdated by the contemporary time. Hence, he will undertake the mission of modernizing her. In a discussion about music, Kasım says that he finds *alaturka* music lazy, whirring and garbage. Warning Feyza he says: "You will be fully interested in Western music. I will change you from tip to toe."²⁰² Feyza replies that no one can debar her from being committed to "national music." Beside, "it is not obligatory to give up entirely the other kind of music, to listen and love Western music. Both of them have properly joyful and woeful features."²⁰³ Although Feyza says that ultimately she

²⁰² Nadir, *Gelinlik Kız*, p. 277. The original text is as follows: "Hep Garp müziğiyle meşgul olacaksın! Seni baştan başa değiştireceğim ben!..."

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 277. The original text is as follows: "Garp Musikisini sevmek ve onu dinlemek diğerinden mutlak feragatle kaim değildir ki! Her ikisinin de kendine mahsus zevkli, gamlı kısımları vardır."

would choose *alaturka* for playing, she avoids taking sides reasoning that it is a matter of choice.

After underlining the co-existence of *alaturka* and *alafranga*, the dialogue continues through dismantling the strained struggles for a synthesis. When Kasım argues that *alaturka* must at least be improved, Feyza's does not take this proposition seriously: "We warn poets not to write despondent lyrics and warn composers not to compose sorrowful songs. Such a perfect idea has never been thought before!"

- Always derision! You have nothing serious!
- How can I take such an idea seriously²⁰⁴

Nadir uses parody while discussing the issue. In that way she does not only speak with a less authoritarian authorial voice but also presents that it is not awkward to see that both music forms co-exist. However, as understood from the words of Feyza, the co-existence of *alafranga* and *alaturka* is welcomed when both are in their pure form.

This approach is embodied more directly in *Uykusuz Geceler*. In the plot, Ercüment, a famous violinist, visits his friend Şefik in Elazığ. The sister-in-laws of Şefik wants to play music with him. They go to the People's House of Elazığ where they can find instruments. While playing, a curious audience gathers around them. Seeing the interest in Western music, the head of the People's House asks them to give a concert. After hesitation, Ercüment accepts the proposal and starts to work on the repertoire for the concert with his partners. He senses that two sisters, Efser and

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 277. The original text is as follows: "Şairlere bedbin güfteler hazırlamamalarını ihtar eder, bestekarlara da hazin besteler yapmamaları için direktifler veririz. Şimdiye kadar böyle mükemmel bir fikir düşünülmemiştir...- Hep alay! Ciddi bir fikrin yok!" - Böyle bir fikri nasıl ciddiye alabilirim."

Kevser want to play “some songs in hybrid forms like tango and fantasia, which is somewhere between western music and national music.”²⁰⁵ Efser defines these songs as “Popular songs that will be enjoyed by the audience in the concert.”²⁰⁶ According to her, the audience would not like classic music since this is not Vienna, not even Ankara or İstanbul but Elazığ.²⁰⁷ Ercüment thinks it would be a disaster in such a classical music concert. It seems that Ercüment is not against *alaturka*, but hybrid forms of music. Indeed, he started the music with *alaturka* and likes it as much as the classical music. Both *alaturka* and *alafranga* forms of music can co-exist but there is no room for hybrid forms.

Modern for the Old, Conservative for the New: The Generational Gap in Berkand’s Novels

In this part, I will try to look at the confrontation of the old and the new in Berkand’s novels which was usually narrated over the theme of generational gap. This confrontation is a popular theme in the canonical novels too. *Yaprak Dökümü* (1939), written by Reşat Nuri Güntekin, is probably one of the best canonical novels in which this confrontation is narrated through a story about family. The reader witness how the intention to live a modern life penetrates insidiously into a middle class family and gradually demolish it. It is also the representation of the defeat of the traditional values in modern times. In the novel the old is unable to survive before the new. In that sense, the author seems to underline the sharp distinction between the two. Although this attitude is familiar to the canonical novels, it is less

²⁰⁵ Kerime Nadir, *Uykusuz Geceler*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap, 1947 [1945]), p. 34.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 34. The original text is as follows: “*Konserde hazır bulunacakların son derece hoşlanacağı gayet hoş halk havaları...*”

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 34.

seen in the popular romances. In this part, I will show how Berkand undermines this distinction through setting transitivity between the two categories.

The disaster of the family in *Yaprak Dökümü* starts with resignation of the father, Ali Rıza Bey because of the immoral manner of his employer. This young employer had an affair with a girl from the office who was employed with the reference of Ali Rıza Bey. He can't stand the immorality of his employer and resigns. However, this leads to financial problems of the family. Although Şevket, the only son of the family, finds a job immediately; the intentions of Necla and Leyla, sisters of Şevket, to go to parties and balls, like every "modern" girl living in İstanbul, make the situation uneasy. At that moment Şevket has a love relation with a married woman, Ferhunde, from the office and wants to marry her. Although Ali Rıza Bey first rejects this suspicious woman, later he approves the marriage. The "modern" life actually starts with Ferhunde. With Necla and Leyla they organize parties at home, go to balls, and buy costly clothes and luxurious furniture. To sustain this "modern" life the family sinks in debt but this does not bother the girls and Ferhunde. Fikret, the older sister cannot stand this life and leaves home for an arranged marriage. Then it releases that Şevket has stolen money from the office. He is sentenced to prison for one and a half year. While he is in jail, Ferhunde leaves home. Soon after Necla marries a rich Syrian and goes to Syria with the dream of a wealthy life. However, it appears that she has married as the third wife of a poor Arabian. In the end, when he learns that Leyla becomes the mistress of a married lawyer, Ali Rıza Bey rejects her daughter and during the discussion he has a stroke. His wife, Hayirye Hanım and his little child Ayşe demanded to move to the flat that the lawyer is hired for Leyla. Ali Rıza Bey first refuses but in the end, being half-paralyzed he moves to Leyla's flat at the end of the novel.

Yaprak Dökümü is a family tragedy in a changing world. It is not the world any more that Ali Rıza Bey is used to know. In the modern times, the cultural values that are appreciated by the previous generation, such as honor and fairness are no more respected. Wealth, no matter how it is built, becomes the only respected value. The novel opens up with the scene in which a young man describes this new order. He says to Ali Rıza Bey: “Particularly after the Great War, the whole world strangely becomes aware of something. They are no more the people of your time. This awareness increased the ambitions. No one is satisfied with his/her situation. How you think the old moral norms would not demolish and change in the result of this trend.”²⁰⁸ Later Ali Rıza Bey would remember the words of this young man, “Honor or a title is useless if they are not accompanied more or less by a fortune.” when her wife says that the honor of the children would be in danger if they had no money. Ali Rıza Bey asks himself that what kind of a dreadful power leads two different people to say the similar words.²⁰⁹ He does not name it but this power is unquestionably the modernity.

Güntekin does not directly discuss the modernity but narrates the destructive effects of the “modern” life. Moreover he describes this “modern” life in negative terms. For instance, the wedding party of Şevket in the garden is perceived by Ali Rıza Bey as opening the doors of his house to the modernity. This scene is narrated like a description of a war arena. Ali Rıza Bey watches the wedding like watching the “burning of his house”. The house had “resisted” the change that continued outside. Nevertheless, in the end, this change, all of a sudden, “attacked” the house and all the things Ali Rıza Bey feared of has “occupied” the house. He had no more

²⁰⁸ Reşat Nuri Güntekin, *Yaprak Dökümü*, 25th ed. (İstanbul: İletişim, 1998 [1939]), p. 9.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

hope. He lost his best “companion at arms,” Şevket, with this wedding.²¹⁰ Güntekin narrates the story as a war against the change which, in the end Ali Rıza Bey will be defeated.

Indeed, the defeat is inevitable and Ali Rıza Bey is aware of this. Güntekin implies that modernity is not only a damaging process but also an inevitable one. No one can escape from the affects of this change. Although his wife, Hayriye Hanım and his older daughter, Fikret, blame Ali Rıza Bey of the destruction of the family, the author implies that he has less to do to protect his family from the ongoing change. Indeed he is portrayed as a passive figure. Particularly after he resigned, Ali Rıza Bey’s authority in the family is wounded since he is no more earning the living of the family. This is why he leaves his place at dinner table, at the first night of his resignation, to his son who has recently found a job. Nevertheless, in the end of the novel no reader can deny that he has done everything to save his family.

The reason why Ali Rıza Bey suffers from this change is that he is the member of an older generation. When he criticizes the going to parties and balls, Hayriye Hanım states that they are necessary to arrange husbands to their daughters. The time has changed and they all had to adopt it. Şevket supports the same idea: “Dad, the life has changed. Be sure that there is nothing to fear in these entertainments as you believe...Now whole world is like that. What can we do? We have to adjust the requirements of the century. You are unable to see how these are natural and necessary because you are the man of a different time.”²¹¹ There is a generational gap between the father and his children. Hence he has difficulties in understanding the contemporary world and resists being a part of it. Since the new is

²¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 58-59.

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 67. The original text is as follows: “*Baba hayat değişmiş, emin ol ki bu eğlencelerde zannettiğin kadar korkulacak bir şey yok...Şimdi bütün dünya böyle. Ne yapalım? Asrın icabatına uymaya mecburuz. Sen başka bir zamanın adamı olduğun için bunların ne kadar tabii ve zaruri olduğunu görmüyorsun.*”

represented as the degenerated one in the novel, this attitude of Ali Rız Bey gains the sympathy of the reader. Carrying the anxiety of losing the cultural values of a former period, Güntekin seems to take side of Ali Rıza Bey's generation against the new and degenerated generation.

This tragic nature of the confrontation between the new and the old can be traced in other canonical novels. However, the popular romances seem to tell a less traumatic one. Berkand narrates the confrontation of the new and the old over the generational gap. However, the difference between the generations is not clear-cut as it is *Yaprak Dökümü*. There is transitivity between the two generations. Moreover, the new one is not necessarily represented as the degenerated and does not lead to the destruction of the family. In that sense the modernity is narrated in softer terms and in a positive manner.

The existence of two distinct generations is clear in Berkand's novels, peculiarly starting from *Sonsuz Gece*. Each generation is identified with a historical period. In that sense the division reminds one of Refik Halit Karay's *Üç Nesil Üç Hayat* (1915). Whereas Karay narrates three generations and their life styles successively dividing the last one hundred years into three general periods, Berkand presents two generations from before and after the First World War.²¹² Although the reader can see that the women of each generation bodily exist, the representation of the generation evidently appears in the attitudes. When Semra of *Saadet Güneşi* starts to write a diary, she accepts in advance that keeping diary is actually a characteristic of the previous century's women. Similarly, in *Sonsuz Gece*, Mualla attributes the ability of feeling comfortable in a swim suit on the beach to the post-war generation.

²¹² Muazzez Tahsin Berkand, *Sonsuz Gece*, 4th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap, 1959 [1938]), p. 17; Muazzez Tahsin Berkand, *Kezban* (İstanbul: İnkılap, 1959 [1941]), p. 80.

Making this distinction between the generations over the attitudes leads to a transitivity between the generations. A character who belongs to the generation after the war can act in the attitude of the previous generation or vice versa. On that point, Berkand presents a heroine who feels she partly belongs to both generations. She is actually the woman type of a transition period who has connections with both generations. She rejects neither the old conserved by the previous generation nor the new promoted by the next generation. It is in this type of woman that the social change brought about with modernity can be traced.²¹³ This part looks at examples of this type in Berkand's novels.

The characterization of the generations appears in *Saadet Güneşi* in its purest form. The heroine's two aunts represent two different generations. Lamia has the image of a typical nineteenth century woman. She is moralistic, keeping her duties and pride over her love. When her fiancé confessed that he probably was not in love with her anymore, she fatefully accepts the breakup, without struggling to save her happiness. She seems to withdraw from the world, mourning her lost love for the rest of her life. On the other hand, the other aunt, Fazilet, finds this attitude too sentimental, being a twentieth century woman. Loving like Lamia is a kind of "spiritual apathy" or "being afraid of living."²¹⁴ Hence, loyalty to only one love is meaningless for her. She is more comfortable in her relations with men and apparently restricts herself less with morality. To Fazilet, "a woman should

²¹³ Indeed, this social change might be familiar to the reader of that period. Chatterjee claims that in India, the life of middle class women changed most rapidly in the period of national movements. "This change is so rapid that every women belonging to a different generation in the last one hundred years can claim that her life is distinguishably different from that of the previous generation." Chatterjee, p. 220. It was valid for the most part of the Europe at the dawn of the century. The social role of the women seems to be re-defined all over the world. The generational gap is inevitable during such a transformation while the girls were born into a completely different world than that of their mothers. It is not coincidence in such conditions that Berkand narrates the differences of the generations.

²¹⁴ Muazzez Tahsin Berkand, *Saadet Güneşi* (İstanbul: İnkılap, 1959 [1944]), p. 21.

remember her femininity before men without lowering her self-esteem or being morally corrupted.”²¹⁵

These two women bodily belong to the pre-war generation although they are different in their attitudes. Berkand also uses two girls in *Kezban*, who this time belong to the next generation, for exposing the dissimilarity. Being at the same age, their attitudes are different.

Vivet was speaking freely, without hesitating to talk about any subject among everyone, was remaining in her swim suit, taking her bathrobe off and then she was jumping into the water, was dancing with whomever she wanted and saw nothing wrong in taking the first move, found it normal to take to the boat alone with Necmi or Mümtaz at night, even advancing her flirtations with them. In short she considered, like most of the young girls, that all of these were modernism or Americanism.²¹⁶

On the other hand, Kezban, the heroine, has the attitude of the pre-war generation. This is most presumably the result of her education by a member of that generation. What is this attitude? “For instance her face was turning red because of a little criticism, a complaint, or a compliment. She did not do swim with everyone. She was not doing sports except tennis and rowing, did not dance madly, but did need to keep as much distance as possible in her relations with men.”²¹⁷

Representing them as such, the author does not take side between them. Rather she narrates transitive types of both generations. Mualla in *Sonsuz Gece* is an example of that type in the pre-war generation. She is dutiful, having the

²¹⁵ Ibid., p.21.

²¹⁶ Berkand, *Kezban*, p. 80. The original text is as follows: “*Vivet serbest konuşuyor, her mevzudan herkesin içinde bahsetmekte bir mahzur görmüyor, çok tabi tavırlarla arkasından bornozunu fırlatıp mayosile kalıyor ve kendini denize atıyor, canının istediği erkekle dans ediyor, bunun için ilk adımı atmakta beis görmüyor, geceleyin yalnız Mümtazla veyahut yalnız Nemci ile sandala binip gezmeyi, hatta onlarla yaptığı flörtü biraz ileriye götürmeyi çok normal sayıyor, velhasıl bütün bunları diğer birçok genç kızlar gibi modernlik, Amerikalılık farz ediyordu.*”

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 80. The original text is as follows: “*...Mesela en ufak bir tenkit, bir şikayet, bir iltifat sözile kızartıyordu. Herkesin içinde denize giremiyor, delicesine dans etmiyor ve erkeklerle olan münasebetlerinde mümkün olduğu kadar aralarına bir mesafe koymak mecburiyetini duyuyordu.*”

responsibility of her orphan relative who is attending the department of law at the university. Being loyal to her first lover, who dumped her to marry a wealthier woman, she refuses all marriage proposals and works to earn her living. Indeed she presents a more modern look than the woman in the previous century. Working in a foreign company as a translator, Mualla seems to have challenged the traditional social role attributed to the woman of nineteenth century. However, her uneasiness about being traditional compared to the next generation is underlined in the novel. In one scene when Bedia, her orphan relative, wants to have a party in their garden, Mualla refuses because their financial conditions are not suitable. Moreover, it seems indecent to Mualla that two women living alone have a party. Bedia criticizes her for having old-fashioned opinions that belong to the previous century. In the end Mualla is persuaded but can't join the party since she has to finish a translation for a deadline. Although having opposed Bedia's careless attitude, Mualla wishes to be at the garden instead of working upstairs during the party: "Oh, what would it be if I were one of those simple-spirited girls who could mingle with everyone. What makes me different from the others?"²¹⁸

What makes the post-war generation so different is the fact that they are more open to what is "modern" in a world undergoing significant social changes. They were born into the modern social relations that the pre-war generation strived to get used to. Mualla appreciates that the post-war generation takes life as it is while her generation is "fluttering under sickly deep and crushing feelings."²¹⁹ However, at the same time, she is happy to be of a generation which Bedia criticizes

²¹⁸ Berkand, Sonsuz Gece, p. 25. The original text I as follows: "*Ah, ne olurdu, ben de daldan dala konan, herkesle eğlenebilen sade ruhlu bir kız olsaydım! Benim başkalarından farkım ne?*"

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

as being overly-idealistic²²⁰ or loving like the romances in the novels.²²¹ Indeed Mualla seeks a connection with the next generation while reserving her ties with the previous one. Hence she becomes a transitive figure rather than a pure representative of her generation. In that sense the borders between generations blur. Unlike the canonic novels, the generations lose their positions as categories that dismantle each other in the process of modernity.²²² Rather this transitivity implies continuity in the social change that is rolling over the generations while reserving and eliminating naturally the characteristics of them.

The examples of transitive types exist mostly in the post-war generation. The women of the post-war seem more at ease with modernity since they were born into that environment. Having friendly relations with men at parties, even flirting is more normal to that generation. They do not feel the uneasiness of the pre-war women in that sense. Actually they criticize the lyric and idealist world of the previous generation. However, being the heroines of romances they hardly escape from this world. Semra of *Saadet Güneşi* refuses to be a sentimental woman of the nineteenth century although she keeps a diary like one of them. Indeed she is a typical girl of the post-war generation who writes only to waste time. However, after falling in love, her diary turns into that of a nineteenth century woman penning her confused feelings, hesitations and sufferings. She starts to admire her aunt, Lamia, who is a typical pre-war woman although she criticized her at the beginning of the novel

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 32.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 42

²²² The generational conflict is a popular theme for narrating the modernity's destructive effects in the canonic novels. The decadence of the new generation due to modernity leads to the collapse of the family. Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's *Kiralık Konak* (1922) is probably the most famous example of this narrative. The novel presents three conflicting generations in a mansion of İstanbul at the beginning of the century. Each generation is represented by a typical character that is one-dimensional. Seniha, the grandchild, is no doubt is a decadent figure, whereas Naim, the grandfather, is wise but inactive. The generations are defined clearly and separated with strict borders.

taking sides with her other aunt, Fazilet, who presents the image of a post-war woman. Thenceforth she oscillates between the attitudes of the two generations without choosing either of them: “There was a storm in my mind. It was impossible to approve of my aunt Fazilet on most of the points, but I was still thinking about the unfortunate life of my elder aunt and can’t stop appreciating her sensitive courage.”²²³ This tension along with the transitivity between the generations becomes the dynamo of the plot.

Likewise, in *O ve Kızı*, the heroine finds herself waiting for her lover like “a sentimental girl.”²²⁴ The heroine of *Bir Genç Kızın Romanı* is in love with one of her customers in the bookstore who comes once in six months, like “sentimental and fanciful girls in the novels.”²²⁵ Although they insist on remaining modern girls, they have partly changed into a pre-war woman. In that sense the typical is unable to remain typical throughout the novel. The author herself initially betrays the categories she has built.

Arrangements of the New and the Old: Mixed Identities in Karakurt’s Novels.

In Turkish literature it has been long argued that modernity is given precedence over characterization in the novels. The canonic authors preferred to portray a “dandy” character to draw the attention to the undesired results of

²²³ Berkand, Saadet Güneşi, p. 136. The original text is as follows: “*Beynimin içinde bir fırtına vardı. Fazilet Teyzeme birçok noktada hak vermemek imkanı yoktu amma ben yine zavallı büyük teyzemin talihsiz ömrünü düşünüyor, onun gösterdiği manevi cesarete hayranlık ile bakmaktan kendimi alamıyordum.*”

²²⁴ Muazzez Tahsin Berkand, *O ve Kızı*, 5th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap ve Aka, 1976 [1940]), p. 65.

²²⁵ Muazzez Tahsin Berkand, *Bir Genç Kızın Romanı*, 5th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılap ve Aka, 1964 [1943]), p. 84.

modernity. The fictive type of dandy is a decadent figure who is influenced by over-modernization. This character is either criticized by the author or counterbalanced with another positive character who is “truly” modern in the story. This repeating configuration seems to have set in concrete and a contrasting typology of characters in terms of being modern. In this part, I will try to show how this typology of characters is distorted by the mixed identities of Karakurt’s characters.

One of the best places to see this distortion is *Ölünceye Kadar*. The novel narrates the love of a law professor and a nineteen-year-old girl. However, the plot is dominated by the unfortunate situation into which the professor’s sister has fallen. Cheating on her fiancé, Bülent is deceived by a rake into having sexual relation and becomes pregnant soon after. This is unbelievable for her brother, Bedri, who is loyal to his moral principles. He has cared for the morality of his sister as much as her education. Nevertheless, she has disappointed him by acting immorally. What must be done is an abortion. After the illegal medical operation, Bülent becomes sick. While running a high temperature, she spells out the name of the man who deceived her. It is İhsan, a friend of Bedri from the university. Bedri goes to İhsan’s home and asks İhsan to marry his sister. İhsan is unwilling to marry, especially with a woman like Bülent who is not wealthy. Moreover he rejects the claim that he deceived Bülent and defends, saying “Can a twenty five year old woman be deceived? It would not have happened if she did not want it to. She desired it as much as I did.”²²⁶ In the end of the conversation, Bedri shoots İhsan with the gun that he brought with him.

In this plot, the author presents more incoherent characters compared to those in the canonical novels. The reader is in difficulty to label Karakurt’s

²²⁶ Karakurt, *Ölünceye Kadar*, p. 165. The original text is as follows: “Yirmi beş yaşında bir kız kandırılır mı hiç, istemeseydi olmazdı. Benim kadar o da istedi.”

characters as modern or traditional in terms of the canonic literature. Bedri is a law professor, which is supposedly a good occupation of the modern life. In his lectures, he teaches morality before the law. It is ironic because generally speaking, modernity seeks to replace morality with law. What is more, Bedri commits murder in the name of sexual honor. Such a crime would hardly be expected from a law professor in a canonical novel. The same ambiguity is valid for the character of Bülent. She is not a decadent figure in the plot, although her action is immoral. On the contrary, she is well-behaved, educated and has good manners. She is supposed to be able to resist İhsan's immoral demands, but unfortunately she is unable to. "Neither learning nor virtue nor family ties, nothing, even sacredness" flashes before her eyes because the most efficient impression on a person's fate is his/her basic emotions. Any girl can be deceived in that sense disregarding her education or morality. It need not necessarily be a decadent figure to be immoral, or reading reversely, the immoral action does not bring decadence all the time.

The ambiguity in characterization is not only for heroes or heroines. The villain also presents a mixed identity. İhsan, who is responsible for this immorality, is an engineer, which is another popular occupation of modernity. Hence, rather than being a "dandy," he seems to be "truly" modern. Yet he is still the immoral character of the plot. Furthermore, he does not appear as a counterbalancing figure to Bedri. Indeed, the reader is left uninformed about him. Physically, he exists only in one scene in the novel. İhsan's attitude is apparently criticized by the author but seemingly this attitude is not attached to a stereotype. The author considers only the immorality of İhsan. What the reader can see is that he is immoral. Nevertheless this immorality probably derives only from his personality because the author need not pay attention to the other features of this fictional character.

The counterbalancing character of Bedri might be his close friend Ziya with whom Bedri goes to the Princes Islands for a vacation. Ziya is a rake and flirts with any beautiful woman he comes across. It does not matter to him whether they are married or not. Bedri continually criticizes this immoral attitude of Ziya. Yet these criticisms seem friendly and their friendship persists. Although Ziya is more or less like İhsan in his attitude, the author portrays the former in a softer tone. In one scene, while talking with Bülent and her fiancé who visit them on the island, Ziya complains about the moral characteristics of Bedri: “He is not a professor in İstanbul University, a preacher in the mosque of Süleymaniye.”²²⁷ Bedri replies: “Shut up, you dissolute. You do nothing here but deceive wives and daughters of people.”²²⁸ All of them laugh at this joke.²²⁹ The profligate behavior of Ziya is presented as harmless and joyful whereas that of İhsan causes serious troubles. Obviously there is a division between them, but the border is left unclear.

In *İlk ve Son*, this time, Karakurt rhetorically undermines the typological approach to the characters. The reader, with the hero, would see how generalizations that build prejudices are untrustworthy. Mecdi, the hero, studied agriculture in university in America with the help of a state scholarship. Nevertheless, he is unable to work in a state office due to his indulgence with freedom. Rather he settles as a manager on a farm which has been forgotten upon the death of the owner. One day unknowingly he rescues Necla, the daughter of the owner. At that time she learns along with reader what Mecdi thinks about his employer. According to him, she is a

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 98. The original text is as follows: “*Adam İstanbul Üniveritesi’nde professor değil, Süleymaniye camiinde vaiz.*”

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 98. The original text is as follows: “*Haydi sus, sus ahlaksız seni!...Elalemin karısını, kızını kandırmaktan başka bir şey yaptığın yok burada.*”

²²⁹ The canonical authors avoid using “jokes” while narrating the contradiction between the ideal modern type and the degenerated type since this would lead to the annoying of the tension between two.

degenerated woman who gallivants with dandies and has sexual relation with any men she wants.²³⁰ While he is working hard to cultivate the unfertile soil to enrich his employer, she would probably sleep in her featherbed.²³¹ The dichotomy between the poor and the rich is apparent. It locates the poor as decent and industrious, and the rich as degenerated and lazy. However later in the novel, destroying the image produced by the dichotomy, it appears that Necla is not that type of woman. “If there is any little part of me to be valuable, it derives not from the wealth inherited from my father but from myself, my heart and my culture.”²³² What is undermined is not only Mecdi’s prejudice but also the image of the reader about the typology which she seems to represent at the beginning of the novel.

Indeed, the rhetoric concerning the decadent image of Necla is not very strong from the beginning. Rather than presenting a coherent image of a decadent woman, the author awakens the reader’s suspicion about the validity of his rhetoric. The conversation between Mecdi and the Necla’s assistant is meaningful in that aspect. After Mecdi rescues her, Necla comes to her mansion and the next day she calls Mecdi through the intermediation of his assistant, Eşref. Being angry at having been summoned by his spoilt employer, Mecdi comes. While waiting for the meeting he speaks with Eşref disdaining that the life in the mansion is for the kings.

-Maitre d’hotels [butlers], ladies-in-waiting, girls, favorites!...Especially this term, maitre d’hotel. Oooo...I am shuddering!...

The old man [Eşref] stays unconcerned and keeps his cold-bloodedness:
- You must be sure that this term maitre d’hotel is not used for showing that we are alafanga or civilized, Mr. Mecdi. Our maitre d’hotel is from

²³⁰ Karakurt, *İlk ve Son*, p. 46.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 85. The original text is as follows: “..eğer kıymet izafe edilecek bir küçücük tarafım mevcut ise, onu babamdan bana kalan servetten değil, kendimden, içimden ve kültürümden alıyorum.”

Switzerland. He does not know Turkish. Everyone calls him maitre d'hotel, so it became a habit. Otherwise...

- And even your servants come from Switzerland, right Mr. Eşref?

The man replies again without getting angry:

- Yes, Mr. Mecdi, they come from Switzerland. But not all of them, only a few. Nevertheless, without delay, I have to say that as seen usually, sometimes some strange-looking things do really meet a demand. To understand this, it is needed to be within in the work. ²³³

Mecdi defines his employer as a degenerated figure on all occasions, constructing a discourse about degeneration. In the phrase above, he continues this discourse. However, this time he confronts Eşref, who argues that what Mecdi sees as degenerated may not be actually degenerated. In that sense the author undermines the ongoing discourse in the text advocating the degenerated one. This attitude is explicitly different from the one that exists in the canonical novels where the degenerated is rigidly portrayed negatively. The stand of the latter before the “degenerated” is more certain and stronger. Hence, while the canonical novels are based on the contradiction between the ideal modern type and the degenerated type, Karakurt's narrative distorts this contradiction. At least, he warns the reader that the discourse may not be always true.

²³³ Ibid., p. 57. The original text is as follows: “- *Metrdoteller, nedimeler, kızlar, gözdeler!...Hele bu metrdotel tabiri.. Ooo, tüylerim ürperiyor!...*”

İhtiyar lakaydisini bozmamıştır. Gene aynı soğukkanlılığını muhafaza ediyor:

- *Bu metrdotel tabirini bir kibarlık, bir alafrangalık olsun diye kullanmadığıma emin olabilirsiniz Mecdi Bey. Metrdotelimiz İsviçrelidir. Türkçe bilmez. Herkes onu metrdotel diye çağırıyor da ağzımız alışmış...Yoksa...*

- *Demek uşaklarınızı bile İsviçre'den getiriyorsunuz öyle mi Eşref Bey?”*

Adam gene kızmayarak cevap verir:

- *Evet Mecdi bey İsviçre'den getiriyoruz. Fakat hepsini değil, bazılarını...Lakin şunu derhal söyleyeyim ki garip gibi görünen şeylerin bazen mühim bir ihtiyaç olduğu çok defa vakidir. Bunu anlamak ve bu hususu kavrayabilmek için, işin içinde olmak lazımdır.”*

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to achieve two main aims. The first was to analyze the popular romances of Berkand, Nadir and Karakurt in a different context which was more related to the global trend promoted by the interwar modernity. This global trend was the rising interest in popular romances which narrated the new norms of the social relations between men and women. The second aim, interrelated with the first one, was to unearth the perception of modernity that the popular romances of Karakurt, Nadir and Berkand include. This was the experience of modernity shared by the other societies of the interwar period.

Taking modernity as the experience of a set of social transformations, this thesis argued that the interwar modernity was experienced, more or less, in all societies, in a similar manner. This modernity was probably most visible in the social transformation of gender roles – particularly that of women- and gender relations. However, there was an ambiguity about the definition of the new social norms and values along with the patterns of male-female relations. At that point it is meaningful that the romance novel, an old genre that particularly narrates the men-women relation, raised its popularity. It seems that the popular romance novels,

describing modern social relations between men and women, contributed to the construction of the new values guiding domestic and private life.

This global trend presumably explains the rise of popular romances in the Republican period in Turkey. Indeed, since the late Ottoman period, society shared the same temporality with other parts of the world, experiencing a nearly common social transformation. This transformation can be best traced through women's changing social roles. Particularly the women in İstanbul had already enjoyed some political and social rights by the end of the nineteenth century. However, this social transformation that was proceeding naturally parallel to the modernity in other parts of the world was dismantled by the Kemalist regime. While the top-down modernization of the regime on the one hand opened the doors of modernity, which had been experienced by the upper strata of society for some time, to the lower classes; on the other hand it tried to set itself as the only modernization model in the cultural sphere ignoring the social transformation per se which had continued from the late Ottoman period.

Although the signs of this dismantling process started to appear in the 1930s, it actually became certain after the decade. This tendency could be traced to the canon formation. The novels that are perceived as canonical today narrate modernity in conformity with Kemalist modernization whereas these popular romances, labeled non-canonical, carry clues of the ongoing social transformation that shared the same temporality with the other interwar societies. However, the distinction between the canonical and the non-canonical was not so clear in the period when these popular romances were written. Even in the 1940s, it seems the canon formation was not completed yet that the popular romances studied in this thesis were still appreciated and listed beside the ones that are called canonical today.

These popular romances were not perceived in the early Republican period as they are perceived today. From today's perspective lenses they are seen, without hesitation, as the pure products of mass culture. However, the conditions of publishing, writing and reading indicate that the context was unable to support such a mass culture yet. The reading public along with the publishing sector was destroyed by the Alphabet reform of 1928. The distribution system of publishing was insufficient due to ineffective transportation. Moreover, the publishing sector was not powerful to assert pressure on authors who, hence, were relatively free in their writing. It is undeniable that these novelists were writing partly for the tastes of the masses but they were, at the same time, partly free from the pressures of the mass culture which compels authors to repeat the same patterns, destroying their personal styles.

These popular romances were read by the urban middle class, which is usually seen as the dynamo of modernity. What keeps the members of the middle class together is the intention to adopt the "modern" social norms and values while, at the same time, seeking to define what "modern" is. The middle class in Turkey appeared first during the late Ottoman period while the empire was temporally sharing, more or less, common social transformations with the other parts of the world. The members of this class belonged to the upper strata of society for the most part. While they were losing their fortunes along with their social statue after the Great War, they converged with the lower classes whose intentions to become "modern" were legitimized by the Kemalist reforms. This converged group made up the middle class of the early Republican period.

The popular romances of Nadir, Berkand and Karakurt narrate the life of this middle class. They portray role models, in a sense, for the members of the middle

class that could be adoptable by the reader who was trying to define new patterns for the social relations. Hence, it is meaningful that these novels were said to be exposing the lived stories. It seems that these popular romances appeared as guidelines, in a sense, in the construction of the new norms of social relation between women and men.

However, while portraying the new patterns of the gender roles and relations, these popular romance novelists avoided imposing a single solution on the question of how the new forms of the social conduct would be. Rather than approving fixed gender roles or a course of relations, these novels present various choices and favor one of them without dismantling the others. They allow the reader choice. Unlike the canonical novels, hence, these popular romances do not assert an authority over the audience. With this ambiguous attitude, the romance novelists are likely to think loudly over a question which they are not sure about the answer.

In this thesis I tried to uncover representations of the experience of modernity in the popular romances of the early Republican period by looking at how the new and the old, which is the basic dichotomy of the modernity, is narrated. Unlike the canonical novels, the popular romances studied in this thesis blur the distinction between the new and the old. There is transitivity between the two categories. Any element of fiction is able to carry the characteristic of the new and the old simultaneously. In that sense the promotion of the new in these novels does not necessarily replace the old. The new and the old also do not combine into an inorganic synthesis as they do in some canonical novels. What is narrated is, rather, a co-existence between the old and the new or a set of natural arrangements of them.

In Kerime Nadir's novels, for instance, *alafiranga* and *alaturka* music is represented as they do not replace each other in contrary to the Kemalist

modernization discourse which looks for a hybrid form between the western music and the folk music, or to the modernity discourse in canonical novels which seems to exclude *alafranga* music in order to protect *alaturka* one. In Berkand's novels, on the other hand, the representations of the old and the new can be traced over the generational gap. However, Berkand does not set strict borders between the two generations, showing that there is transitivity between them. This attitude contrasts with the one in canonical novels which narrate that the new inevitably destroy the old. Indeed the categories that represent the new and the old are not as strict as they are in the canonical ones. This can be best seen in Karakurt's novels which distort the degenerated character type in the canonical novels, "dandy". The reader is unable to classify Karakurt's characters as truly modern or dandy since his protagonists carry characteristics of the both.

This attitude in the popular romances studied in this thesis indicates the existence of the perception of a modernity which signals an intrinsic social change rather than a top-down modernization of the Kemalist project. This perception seems to be a reflection of the modernity that was experienced at the level of everydayness sharing the same temporality with the other interwar societies that experienced similar social transformations. This modernity proceeded spontaneously with the efforts of the urban middle class, the members of which were eager to adopt the "modern" patterns of social conduct while simultaneously trying to define what these "modern" patterns were. The popular romances of the early republican period seem to have been produced and consumed as a part of this two-sided effort.

Reading these popular romances is a challenge in the struggle to understand a period accurately, particularly for people, like me, who were born in the 1980s, into a world that was changing, without a doubt, more rapidly than the one in 1930s

or 1940s. This thesis is the product of such an intention of avoiding to remember these novels only with a sweet nostalgia or mourning for them as cute but literary inefficient narratives. It is, rather, an attempt to regain the respect for these novels some of which I personally find more tasteful and literary successful than the canonical ones, and an introduction to change our point of view not only of these popular romances, but also of the early republican period in which they were created.

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