# FATMA ALIYE'S WOMEN CHARACTERS IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

## Kamusal Alanda Fatma Aliye'nin Kadın Karakterleri

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**ABSTRACT**

The concept of "public sphere", which has been one of the main discussion topics of the academy since the 1980s, derives its basis from Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of Publicity*, published in 1962. The bourgeoisie, whose influence has increased in European society, creates a public community in places such as halls, cafes, and clubs where it had critically discussed in the 18th century, and the influence of this community has spread to the public with the increase in the publishing of magazines and newspapers. The liberal public sphere, where people engage in cultural exchanges, was interrupted and collapsed by the revolutions that started at the end of the 19th century and the wars that continued afterward. There was limited public space in the Ottoman society that started with coffee houses (kahvehane) and reading houses (kıraathane) and continued with increasing publishing activities during the Meşrutiyet period. By actively participating in publishing activities, Ottoman women opened a new way in this public space and strengthened their positions. In this study, which considers the novels of Fatma Aliye, the first Ottoman female writer, chronologically, from the woman who is restricted to the house and has a secondary position against the male power (*Hayal ve Hakikat*), to the woman who becomes increasingly prominent in the public sphere and has her autonomous voice (*Muhadarat*, *Refet*, *Udi*) will be studied.

**Keywords:** Jürgen Habermas, public space, Fatma Aliye, feminist literature, Turkish literature.

**ÖZ**

1980'lerden itibaren akademinin temel tartışma konularında biri olan "kamusal alan" kavramı, temelini Jürgen Habermas'ın 1962 yılında yayımladığı *Kamusallığın Yapısal Dönüşümü* adlı eserinden almaktadır. Avrupa toplumunda etkisi artan burjuvazi 18. yüzyılda eleştirel tartışmalar yürüttüğü salon, kafe, kulüp gibi mekânlarda kamusal bir topluluk oluşturur ve bu topluluğun etkisi dergi ve gazetelerin üretiminin artması ile halka doğru yayılır. İnsanların kültürel alışverişlerde bulunduğu bu liberal

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kamusal alan, 19. yüzyılın sonunda başlayan devrimler ve daha sonrasında devam eden savaşlar ile kesintiye uğrar ve liberal kamusal alan çöker. Osmanlı toplumunda da kahvehaneler ve kıraathaneler ile başlayan, daha sonra Meşrutiyet döneminde artan yayın faaliyetleriyle devam eden kısıtlı bir kamusal alan bulunmaktadır. Osmanlı kadınları yayın faaliyetlerine aktif olarak katılarak kadının kamusal alandaki rolünü güçlendirirler. İlk Osmanlı kadın yazarı Fatma Aliye'nin romanlarının incelendiği bu çalışmada kronolojik olarak ev içerisine hapsolan ve erkek iktidarı karşısında ikincil konumda olan kadından (*Hayal ve Hakikat*) kamusal alanda gittikçe öne çıkan ve kendi özerk sesine sahip olmaya çalışan kadına doğru (*Muhadarat*, *Refet*, *Udi*) bir geçişi incelenecektir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Jürgen Habermas, kamusal alan, Fatma Aliye, feminist edebiyat, Türk edebiyatı.

### Introduction

Habermas defines the public sphere as the sphere of life in which private individuals' reason around a common issue that concerns them discuss with rational means, and form the public opinion on that issue as a result of this discussion. According to Habermas, the transition from private to public space begins with the family leaving the living room. Although the issue of family and women is not included in the concept (Sennet, 2002) of the public sphere by Habermas itself, it cannot be denied that women have a role in the emergence of the public sphere in contemporary debates which is also factual for the Ottoman public sphere. In this article, it will be discussed the role of women in the Ottoman public sphere through the novels of Fatma Aliye, the first Ottoman female writer. Through her novels, I will focus on Ottoman women's rise and participation in the public sphere in the early 20th century.

### Jürgen Habermas & Emergence of "Public Sphere"

Jürgen Habermas explains the emergence, transformation, and dissolution of the public sphere in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) with a historical-sociological approach. Habermas' work "is limited to the structure and function of the liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere, to its emergence and transformation." (1991: 18). The public is a legal concept and means open to everyone. "A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body." (1989: 136). Accordingly, the public sphere is separate from the private spheres of the individual who is an element in it. Habermas goes back to their etymological roots before attempt-

ing to explain the distinction between public and private spheres historically:

> … the German word *privat*, which was borrowed from the Latin *privatus*, can be found only after the middle of sixteenth century, having the same meaning as was assumed by the English "private" and the French *prive*. It meant as much as "not holding public office or official position", or *ohne öffentliches Amt*, or *sans emplois que l'engage les affaires publiques*. "Private" designated the exclusion from the sphere of the state apparatus; for "public" referred to the state that in the meantime had developed, under absolutism, into an entity having an objective existence over against the person of the ruler. The Public (*das Publikum*, *le public*) was the "public authority" (*öffentliche Gewalt*) in contrast to everything "private" (*Privatwessen*). The servants of the state were *öffentliche Personen*, public persons, or *personnes publiques*; they were incumbent in some official positions, their official business was "public" (*öffentliches Amt*, *service public*), and government buildings and institutions were called "public". On the other hand, there were private individuals, private offices, private business, and private homes… (1991: 11).

Habermas, who historically reviews the distinction between public and private spheres starting in the 17th century, also discursively theorizes the concept of "public sphere". In his view, the distinction between public and private spheres begins with the emergence of Greek city-states in Antiquity. While public life was continuing in the marketplaces called Agora, in the areas where city-state problems were discussed, in the city courts, in the waging war, and in places where athletic games were played; private life continued in the houses called Oikos. The criterion that assesses the status of citizens in city-states was their host status (Oikodespotes). In city-states managed by the patrimonial slave economy, on the one hand, most of the works were regulated by the head of the house, and within the city-state, free citizens were struggling for fame. On the other hand, the inner-house (Oikos) was closed to the outside (1991: 3).

In the Middle Ages, the distinction between public and private in Antiquity disappeared. The Public's definition was made with Res Publica's concept (open to everyone) reached through Roman law (Habermas, 1991: 4). The feudal lords that emerged during this period became the representative Public's owners by taking the state's public power. The feudal lord's

power is different from the power that gave "the house-lord (Oikedes-potes) status" in Antiquity's private space. In this system, the ruler has all the public power and the people have no function other than being subject. There is no status in which a person can be differentiated as an individual in the public sphere. The public and private spheres that emerged in Antiquity formed an inseparable whole in the Middle Ages because they both originated from the same homogeneous power structure, and the duality in Antiquity disappeared in the feudal period (Timur, 2017: 38). Habermas calls "representative" in this form of power, the status of the ruler is neither public nor private; it is neutral. The representation introduced here is different from the representation model seen in modern times; it represents power itself. Representation is only in the ruling strata and not in the lower strata. Representation is displayed concretely and symbolically (coats of arms, signatures, hairstyles, hats, behavior, and speech) by the owner of power; the Public only watches without being involved in this representation. According to Habermas, performing the rituals in Churches in Latin, not in a language that the Public understands, is one of the most important examples of excluding the people from the representative power and the Church continues this representation even today (Habermas, 1991: 9).

**The Rise and Fall of Public Sphere**

With the Renaissance that started in the 15th century, the feudal order was dissolved, and the aristocracy's territorial representation declined. The new court life diversifying around cultured nobility led to new changes in Florence, Paris, and London. The new type of "court man" that emerged in this period (cortegiano in Italy, gentlemen in Britain, honnête homme in France) formed a new high society (Habermas, 1991: 9). With the reduction of the representative Public in the palace, the separation between the state and society becomes an "exceptional law". Thus; the separation of public and private spheres begins in the modern sense (1991: 11). Despite this, the representative public sphere continued itself until the 17th century. The apex of this representative system is observed in the period of absolute monarchies. Habermas shows the Palace of Versailles in France in the 17th century as an example of representation where the Public and private sphere coexist:

> The bourgeois is distinguished from the courtly mentality by the fact that in the bourgeois home, even the ballroom is still homey, whereas in the palace, even the living quarters are still festive. Furthermore, beginning with the Versailles, the royal bedroom de-

velops into its second center. If one finds here the bed set up like a stage, placed on the platform, a throne for lying down, separated by a barrier from the area for the spectator, this is so because, in fact, this room is the scene of the daily ceremonies of lever and coucher, where what is most intimate is raised to public importance (1991: 10).

The monarch's power was seen as the state itself, represented and glorified in the era of absolute monarchies. The court aristocracy discontinues representing feudal power. In this transition period between the 15th and 17th centuries, the new bureaucracy and military class that emerged within the state and the Public and private distinction that disappeared in the Middle Ages were revived. Within the absolutist state, there was a dualization in the monarchy structure, and the palace-state polarization was experienced with the organization of the army, bureaucracy, and justice apparatus. After the Reformation process, the Church's authority decreased with the religious emancipation, and religion became a particular field. Bureaucratic and military institutions became independent, separating themselves from the (feudal) prince's private sphere. The nobility became a body of public authority, parliament, and legal institutions. Merchants began to develop in a bourgeois society separate from the state (Habermas, 1989: 138).

Habermas, stating the formation of the bourgeois Public between the late Middle Ages and the 18th century, analyzes the new situation in developing the capitalist mode of production. Formerly when the royal or aristocracy was strong, the aristocracy was provided public affairs, but after the 18th century, the aristocracy lost this power. With the development of finance and commercial capitalism, the exchange of goods increased rapidly. In the capitalist system, where access to accurate information is vital for commercial investments, information circulation has also accelerated, and cities have become centers of trade and news. The establishment of the stock exchange and the postal and press institutionalization took place in the same period (1991: 17). In the mercantile economy, the institutionalization of the bureaucracy in the national framework, apart from the state represented by the monarch personally, created a new public power. Habermas points out this with the following quote from Schumpeter that the old forms of that harnessed the whole person into systems of supraindividual purpose had died and that each family's economy had become the center of its existence, that in addition to that a private sphere was born

as a distinguishable entity in contrast to the Public (1991: 19). When the market economy was dominant, the first newspapers containing all kinds of information but named "political newspaper" were published. After the 18th century, journalism ceased to be an activity that only served to publish advertisements and attained new functions:

> Newspapers changed from mere institutions for news publication into bearers and leaders of public opinion—weapons of party politics. This transformed the newspaper business. A new element emerged between the gathering and publication of news: the editorial staff. The newspaper publisher meant that he changed from a vendor of recent news to a dealer in public opinion (1989: 139-140).

The transformation experienced with capitalism provides the development of the literary Public, a public political forum. Bourgeois individuals studying in the 17th century in England and the 18th century in the Continent formed "literary publics" based on a critical reading, free discussion, and egalitarian relations in philosophy, literature, and art outside the dominant state and church understanding. The literary Public, formerly belonging to the palace and the nobility, becomes areas where the Public can participate. "The town was the life center of civil society not only economically; in cultural-political contrast to the court, it designated especially an early public sphere in the world of letters whose institutions were coffee houses, the salons, and the Tischgesellschaften (table societies)" (1991: 30). In these areas, which are far from administrative power and political control, people discuss legal issues outside the government within practical problems. Governments, which perceive the press as a threat and apply censorship, will soon use it for the administration. The elimination of the institution of censorship marked a new stage in developing the public sphere (1991: 58). As the government used this tool to announce orders and regulations, the government's interlocutors became truly "public". At first, the newspapers that gave information such as the visits of the rulers to other countries, official statements of the palace, ceremonies, appointments of high-level bureaucrats gave place to the "sovereign ordinances in the subjects' best interest" subject in the new order (Habermas, 1991: 22).

The balance established between public and private spheres in the 18th century deteriorated over time. When the 19th century ends and the 20th century begins, the liberal public sphere collapses relatively. As a result of revolutions that broke out one after another, people leave the public sphere

and return to their homes. These events coincide with the emergence of nation-states. According to Sennet, the 19th century is when the public sphere is in crisis (Sennet, 2002: 18). As a result of the governments' mercantilist policies, the states get richer, and the bourgeoisie works with the state to maintain its advantages. The press and media no longer act as intermediaries in public sphere debates and manage social consensus and support consumption (Habermas, 1991: 12).

**The Family and Women in the Bourgeois Public Sphere**

The bourgeoisie, which filled the theaters, museums, and concert halls that Habermas called the "great people," demonstrates its superiority since the 1750s. This community, which is the subject of bourgeois tragedies and psychological novels as a literary form in magazines, tries to create a "subjectivity" and "intimacy" space. According to Habermas, these private persons' rational-political public debate occurs in a "patriarchal conjugal family" (1991: 43). As a pre-bourgeois family, the extended family did not fit the distinction between "public" and "private." (1991: 44).

In contrast, the conjugal family, a space of intimacy, allows for the separation of the Public and the private. This family brings a unique architectural understanding. Since the 18th century, this type of home has become a standard in Europe, where the living rooms have reduced, and the small and personal rooms where other members of the family can live privately. In these new bourgeois houses, individual rooms become the spaces of subjectivity, and in these areas, individuals are allowed to have psychological introspection, and their economic-political autonomy becomes possible.

Actors in Habermas' public sphere are also those in the private sphere. They can also be individuals within the family, economic actors who own property, and educated people involved in social debates. Private individuals, not public officials, created the public sphere as part of the private sphere. This community, which coexists independently of any obligation imposed by the state, is a private individual involved in rational-critical discussions in the family's private sphere. In this regard, "they bore double identity as a property owner (bourgeoise) and a human being (homme)" (Ku, 2000: 217-218). The public space is built on this private space created by the family.

Habermas' theory states that the family has a functional feature in forming the core of the public sphere and including the private sphere out-

side the Public. According to Calhoun, "the family was reconstituted as an intimate sphere that grounded both the evaluative affirmation of ordinary life and economic activity alluded to above and the participation of its patriarchal head in the public sphere." (1992: 10). Habermas, who assigns an essential role to the family in the public sphere, does not give women any role in the public sphere. In his theory, the woman finds a place only as a reader in the literary Public:

> The circles of persons who made up the two forms of Public were not even wholly congruent. Women and dependents were factually and legally excluded from the political public sphere, whereas female readers and the prentices and servants often took a more active part in the literary public sphere than private property owners and family heads themselves. Yet in the educated classes the one form of the public sphere was considered to be identical with the other; in the self-understanding of public opinion, the public sphere appeared as one and indivisible (1991: 56)

The most excluded element in Habermas' theory is women. In places where the bourgeoisie is visible in the public sphere, only men are present, which has led to Habermas's theory's criticism. According to Joan B. Landes, "Habermas overlooks the strong association of women's discourse and their interests with 'particularity', and conversely the alignment of masculine speech with truth, objectivity, and reason." (1998: 142-143). Habermas assumes that all interlocutors could equally participate in the public sphere by bracketing differences of race, ethnicity, class, or gender (Fraser, 1998: 117). According to Seyla Benhabib, Habermas's theory is "gender blind" and theories have ignored the issue of "difference", the difference in male versus female subjects' experiences in all domains of life (1998: 87).

**Public Sphere and Women in the Late Ottoman Period**

In Habermas's theory, the public sphere was formed by a specific community, the bourgeoisie, but the social classes were less rigid and more transitional in the Ottoman Empire. Coffeehouses and reading rooms (*kıraathane*) are among the most important public places where people come together in Ottoman society. As a Venetian bailo illustrates,

> All these people are quite base, of low costume and very little industry, such that for the most part they spend their time sunk in idleness. Thus, they continually sit about, and for entertainment they are in the habit of drinking, in Public, in shops and the

streets—a black liquid, boiling [as hot] as they can stand it, which is extracted from a seed they call Caveè…, and is said to have the property of keeping a man awake (Hattox, 1988: 221).

Before the press-based public opinion occurs, coffeehouses, an Ottoman public space, were places where the bourgeoisie and people of all classes could come together, unlike those in Europe. In the European public sphere, coffeehouses were the place for the first literary Public to emerge. "The heirs of the humanistic-aristocratic society, in their encounter with the bourgeois intellectuals built a bridge between the remains of a collapsing form of publicity and the precursor of a new one: the bourgeois public sphere" (Habermas, 1991: 30). Although Ottoman coffeehouses are places of more random gatherings and socialization and do not cause public opinion like in Europe, they still take on political functions (Hattox, 1988). In the Ottoman state and social structure based on the distinction between the rulers (beraya) and ruled (reaya, tebaa) (Akşin, 1977: 37), coffee houses posed a threat in terms of bringing these classes together. Besides, coffeehouses, mostly kept by janissaries, can be places where anti-establishment activities can occur.

For this reason, coffeehouses were frequently inspected and closed in Ottoman history and were considered dangerous places for the palace (Kafadar, 2009: 93-94). Although there were coffeehouses and reading rooms (kıraathane)in the Ottoman Empire since the 16th century, public spaces have emerged in the 19th century, as Habermas discussed. Although these places create a communication network, they are very slow and ineffective. In the 19th century, public spheres similar to their European counterparts appeared for various reasons. The first of these is the opening of modern European-style schools and the increasing number of people in these schools. Secondly, the Ottoman Empire needed a practical, modern, and fast communication network due to the wars it fought to protect its structure's integrity, composed of ethnic minorities. Finally, this needed communication network caused the state to take responsibility towards the citizen, and the state tried to inform the Ottoman public first through the press produced by the state and then by private entrepreneurs (Georgeon, 1999: 70-71).

*Takvim-i Vakayi*, the first official newspaper of the Ottoman press established as a result of political developments, was published in 1831. The first newspapers that were established independently of the state in 1860 were *Tercüman-ı Ahval*, and in 1862 *Tasvir-i Efkar* was published. Later,

with *Muhbir* newspaper published in 1866, independent public opinion from the state was formed in the Ottoman press. In these years, the state's policies were discussed independently from the state with the articles seen in *Tasvir-i Efkar* and *Muhbir*, and the policies of the state were criticized with harsh criticism. With the seeing of other newspapers one after another in a short time, a genuinely independent public opinion was formed in the Ottoman Empire, and a mass where the state's policies were discussed and criticized began to appear. At this point, I would also like to point out a critical difference in the formation of European and Ottoman public spaces that while public spaces in Europe existed independently from the state and later passed to the control of the state, the organs that constituted the Ottoman public opinion were produced directly by the state and later became independent from the state.

The Ottoman literary public is established with the development of the press. The first theater texts, the first articles, the first translations made from European literature, the first novels and stories are published in Ottoman newspapers (Özön, 1985: 111-139). The newly formed press organs, on the one hand, convey social and political news to the Public; on the other hand, intellectuals produce texts in various literary forms to raise awareness of the Ottoman public. "In both genres, a certain ambivalence between fact and fiction prevailed, mostly since most early novel writers were also journalists" (Bachleitner, 2019: 22). Jürgen Habermas points out that news and prose have become similar as a result of the transformation of the public sphere, and states that novels and sensational news are gradually turning into consumer goods:

> In the end, the news generally assumes some sort of guise and is made to resemble a narrative from its format down to stylistic detail (news stories); the rigorous distinction between fact and fiction is ever more frequently abandoned. News and reports and even editorial opinions are dressed up with all the accouterments of entertainment literature, whereas on the other hand, the belletrist contributions aim for the strictly "realistic" reduplication of reality "as it is" on the level of cliches and thus, in turn, erase the line between fiction and report (1991: 170).

By serializing their novels in newspapers, the first Ottoman writers accelerated their consumption and saw them as a tool to transform public opinion. According to Ahmet Mithat Efendi, the most productive author of

the period, "the purpose of the stories is to give way for morality and spirituality, which is the most significant part of the philosophy" (2000: 97).

In the pre-modern period, in the Ottoman as in Europe, women's lives appear with patriarchal norms both in the countryside and in the city. The woman is far from the public sphere and has a private sphere within the family. Women gain visibility in the public sphere with the new educational institutions opened due to bureaucratization and legalization processes after the Tanzimat reform (Toprak, 2016: 85). After the Meşrutiyet, women's visibility increases both in the public sphere and in the literary public sphere. As the issues of women and their place in social life became increasingly popular in the Ottoman literary public, male writers frequently commented on this popular topic. Some male writers support them by writing texts that problematize the place of women in public life. Male authors who write on women's issues consider it valuable for women to be visible in social life when rebuilding social order and preventing domestic waste (Akagündüz, 2015: 137).

Women's visibility in the public sphere also causes the formation of women's literary Public. In the period of innovation and reform of the 19th century, women also form a public opinion in the political and literary Public with the magazines and newspapers they publish. In 1868, *Terakki* was a newspaper publishing in favor of women, and a year later, *Terakki-i Muhadarat*, the first women's magazine, was published in 1869. *Şüküfezar*, published in 1886, is the first magazine whose owner is a woman and that only women are among the writers. Female authors in this magazine also used only their names. In addition to these, *Mürüvvet*, *Parça Bohçası*, *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* are other periodicals in the Ottoman women's press (Çakır, 2011: 61-69).

The main issue in periodicals is to remove the restrictions stemming from the traditional lifestyle of Ottoman women and to increase their freedoms. According to women writers such as Mükerrem Belkıs, who regarded women's movements as the beginning phase of a great revolution, "With the emancipation of women, not only women were given rights, but also the shape of the whole social life was changing." (Çakır, 2011: 180). During this period, it is aimed to change the lives of women permanently. Women strive for women's socialization and active participation in social life as the first step to equality with men. It is aimed to develop and liberate women through education (Özcan Demir, 1999: 109).

### Female Characters in the Public Sphere in Fatma Aliye's Novels

As I discussed above, women's activities in the public sphere are not included in Habermas's texts. Women writers like Fatma Aliye take place at the periphery of the Ottoman literary canon rather than the center. The role of her father, statesman, and lawyer Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, in the 19th century literary public place of this important female figure, is remarkable. Habermas describes the living rooms as the modern bourgeois house's public space and says that the public-private division begins inside the modern bourgeois house (1991: 45). In the traditional Ottoman house, there is a distinction between harem (a sacred, inviolable place) and selamlık (courtyard of men), and while the harem is the private area of the house, selamlık is the public spaces where people (actually only men) come together and discuss. Fatma Aliye, thanks to the advantage of growing up in a wealthy and modern family, spent most of her time in the public space of the house, met with male servants, listened to the lessons her brother took, and listened to the discussions in her father's councils (Esen, 2012: 111). Fatma Aliye was not in the center, but the periphery in these areas and the educators who came to the house were mostly for her brother. Despite this, Fatma Aliye took advantage of these opportunities and educated herself intellectually.

Fatma Aliye, who was able to read French texts because of her excellent education, translated George Ohnet's novel *Volonté* (1888) from French under the name of *Meram*. Fatma Aliye's participation in the literary Public is again through a man. Ahmet Mithat liked this translation very much and became a mediator for its publication (Kızıltan, 1993: 18). Ahmet Mithat, the prominent author of the Ottoman literature, who gave an essential place to the issue of women in his novels. In *Felsefe-i Zenan* (1872), tells about the world of two women who have the same education but make different choices. Zekiye and Akile are two educated sisters. Two sisters interested in science, read books constantly and never think of getting married, have different lives over time. Zekiye decides to leave this happy life and get married. This decision ruins her life. Akile, who never married and continues to spend all her time with her books, lives peacefully (Ahmet Mithat, 1998). Ahmet Mithat emphasizes the idea of educating women and achieving their financial freedom in this novel.

The first literary work written by Fatma Aliye herself is also thanks to Ahmet Mithat that the two authors write the novel *Hayal ve Hakikat* (The Dream and The Truth) together (Fatma Aliye & Ahmet Mithat, 2002). In

*Hayal ve Hakikat*, which consists of two parts, Fatma Aliye writes the first part called "Vedat", which a female narrator tells, and Ahmet Mithat writes the second part, "Vefa," with a male narrator. In the letters written by the female character Vedat, the character cannot express herself fully, the sentences are incomplete, and an emotional and melancholic narrative. On the contrary, in the letters of the male character, the expressions are explicit; the character is too rational and unemotional. The last part of the novel after the letters is a scientific article titled "Hysteria", written by Ahmet Mithat. In this section, the author affirms the male character, states that Vefa is right and identifies the female character Vedat's condition as hysteria, and gives some scientific information about this disease. While the female narrator/writer's narration is corrected by the male character in the novel, the male narrator–writer (Ahmet Mithat) is not examined and corrected by another narrator (Esen, 2014: 79).

This novel offers a powerful argument in determining the role of the first Ottoman female novelist Fatma Aliye and women in the public sphere. First of all, Fatma Aliye uses the pseudonym "A Woman" in her first translation work *Volonte* and her first novel *Hayal ve Hakikat*, which shows us that the woman did not have enough power Ottoman literary public yet, which she could not clearly state her identity. Another valuable point is that male and female narrators in the novel come together in the same literary Public at a communicative level, through letters. According to Habermas, the 18th century is an age of letters, and the modern subject creates his individuality by writing letters. With the modern postal system, the letter functions to regulate the relationship between the press and the citizen and provide communication between family, friends, and men and women (1991: 54-55). There are also letters in *Hayal ve Hakikat*, but these letters are not of the kind that functions as interpersonal communication. In Ottoman society, where Islamic rules determined social life, communication via letters was a necessity rather than a choice. In the Ottoman social life, men and women cannot share in the same environment. Men and women can see each other in close relatives' meetings, in disguise. If they cannot use these methods, the most appropriate form of communication is to write a letter. In these letters, we see the narrative of the male narrator's authoritarian intention from the very beginning rather than two individuals' intellectual arguments. The literary life of Fatma Aliye also begins with her letters with Ahmet Mithat, whom Fatma Aliye sees as her "literary father". The domination of men over women in *Hayal ve Hakikat* is also seen in the letters be-

tween Fatma Aliye and Ahmet Mithat. In these letters, Ahmet Mithat constantly gives directions to Fatma Aliye about how she should write and the content of her writings (Ahmet Mithat, 2011). In this respect, Fatma Aliye, as an inexperienced woman writer in need of support, cannot surely go beyond the boundaries that Ahmet Mithat drew for her in her first novel. The female narrator is drawn as a melancholic and hysterical male narrator as rational and analytical. In this respect, these letters are quite contrasting to those seen in the modern public space. Finally, we should also look at this novel in terms of a male writer's position who coexists with a female writer in the literary Public. In the chapters of *Hayal ve Hakikat* written by himself, Ahmet Mithat identifies the female character's interest in reading rather than getting married as "hysteria" (Gürbilek, 2007: 40). It is also meaningful that Ahmet Mithat wrote and defended the opposite thoughts in *Felsefe-i Zenan*, which he wrote about twenty years before *Hayal ve Hakikat* that the married woman is unhappy and the woman who continues her education finds happiness.

Fatma Aliye has not yet found a place for herself in the public sphere both with her personality and the characters she has created; however, as we progress chronologically, Fatma Aliye will become productive in the literary public female characters her novels will become stronger. Fatma Aliye's first novel, in which she uses her name as an author, was *Muhadarat* (1892). In this novel, Fatma Aliye, who creates an entirely different female character from Vedat in *Hayal ve Hakikat*, tells the life of Fazıla, a young girl. Fatma Aliye was thirty-three years old when she wrote *Muhadarat* and is an influential figure in the Ottoman women's movement known for her articles defending women's rights (Esen, 2012: 92). In the introduction, the narrator describes Fazıla as follows: "Her beauty and sweetness shine on her face, her beautiful forehead shows the strength of her mind and intelligence." (Fatma Aliye, 2014: 22). This strong female character of Fatma Aliye is now at the forefront not only with her beauty but also with her mind and intelligence. Thus, Fatma Aliye creates a female character that shows her values against patriarchal discourse for the first time.

An ideal woman, Fazıla is a smart, moral, and intelligent woman who speaks French, can play piano, read books. In the novels produced by men during the Tanzimat period, book reader-female characters are typical, but these are characters who were inspired by *Madam Bovary*, who dream and desire an aristocratic life with the influence of the novels and stories she read, move away from reality and are disappointed at the end (Uç, 2006:

60). Unlike these Bovarist characters, Fazıla receives the right message and chooses the right path in the novels she reads, but another female character, Fevkiye, makes mistakes by acting according to Bovarism (2014: 96). In the novel set in a mansion, it is not possible to directly talk about the woman's place in the public sphere. Some instruments are used for Fazıla to take part in the public sphere with her autonomous voice. One of them is that Fazıla is as interested in writing as reading. Writing letters and diaries is one of the most important signifiers of the modern literary Public and helps appear in the public sphere with personal views. Fazıla's writing of her feelings and thoughts also makes her powerful as an individual in the public sphere.

However, the female character in *Muhadarat* is still not a character entirely in the public sphere. Female characters who are well educated and obey their husband/father at home are the dominant thought of the period. Fazıla is also a very obedient character, and this characteristic is affirmed in the novel. Fazıla, who is in love with Mukaddem, gets engaged to him but is forced to leave him due to her stepmother's tricks. The decision of separation belongs to her father, not herself, and Fazıla obeys her father unconditionally. Fazıla's marriage to Remzi, a rude and uncouth man, is also the result of her father's request. In this decision, Fazıla does not resist her father. As a result of her education, she loves Remzi, who is a bad guy. Fazıla loves Remzi as if she is performing a task because her education tells her to develop this behavior and give her love and affection to her husband. At this point, Fazıla's behavior is entirely shaped by will and knowledge beyond human feelings. The female character, portrayed as intelligent and clever in the novel, still lives under male-dominated rules.

In *Hayal ve Hakikat*, discussed above, characters showed that women behaved with emotions and men with their minds. *Muhadarat* can be seen as the first opposition to these stereotypes. In the novel, Fazıla does not succumb to her feelings even if she leaves Mukaddem, whom she is in love with, and plays the role of the wife by approaching her husband Remzi in an entirely rational way. She quits reading novels and playing the piano because her husband does not want to. The male character, on the other hand, experiences an emotional crisis and pain after leaving Fazıla.

When she realizes that he cannot continue this marriage after a while, she attempts suicide but cannot do so because of her belief. Fazıla cannot quickly choose to divorce either, but after hearing that her husband is cheating on her, she disguises herself as a maid (cariye) and starts working in a mansion. Although it is a matter of working in a public sphere, this situ-

ation has arisen out of necessity, and it is possible by the character entering into another identity, not with her own identity. In this novel, the female character cannot make radical choices such as divorce or living alone. Fazıla's inability to make bold decisions parallels the fact that Fatma Aliye has just found her place in the literary Public. Fatma Aliye, trying to exist as a woman writer in the Ottoman society, where women did not find a place in the public sphere, expresses women's firm stance in a weak tone in this first novel published under her name.

The strong woman point of view, indirectly characterized in *Muhadarat*, is told in a louder voice in the novels *Refet* (1896) and *Udi* (1897) published by Fatma Aliye one after another. Among Fatma Aliye's novels, Refet is the strongest of the female characters. In the novel, many themes highlighted in Ottoman women's movements, such as polygamy, women's subsistence, and education's importance, are used together. Refet's mother, Binnaz, moved from Istanbul to the provinces and became the second wife of Hayati Efendi. After her husband's death, she returns to Istanbul due to the pressure she faced from other wives and starts to live with her daughter Refet. The woman's ability to live without any man to protect her is a remarkable feature of the novel. Binnaz starts to work by washing neighbors' laundry and cleaning their homes to cover her daughter's school expenses. Binnaz starts to work by washing neighbors' laundry and cleaning their homes to cover her daughter's school expenses. Refet, on the other hand, enrolls in the Teachers' School (*Darü'l-Muallimat*) and continues her education there. In the novel, which tells about the life struggle of mother and daughter together, being the ideal woman is based on Refet's decision to become a teacher. When Refet realizes her dreams and graduates from school, her mother dies.

Among the female characters of Fatma Aliye, one of the essential features that distinguish Refet from others is that she comes from the poor class. Besides, Refet, like other female characters, does not have beauty. She is "very cold-tempered, proud and stubborn" (Fatma Aliye, 2012a: 43). The influence of her experiences from her childhood on this character is strong. Refet puts her mind to education and work since childhood and wants to "work, earn, be full of education and science" (Fatma Aliye, 2012a: 54). Getting an education and having a job is not a choice but a necessity for her. She explains this necessity in the novel by saying, "But poor people like us become teachers. The rich do not read to be a teacher. They go there to get information" (Fatma Aliye, 2012a: 148).

In the novel, Refet does not fall in love or get close to any man. There is no place for men in her life. Also, she is never marked with her feminine beauty. At the end of the novel, she refuses her relative, Mucib, who wants to marry her. Refet, who refused to be a biological mother, became a teacher and started her teaching duty in order to "mother the children of the country" (Fatma Aliye, 2012a: 100). It is worth thinking about Fatma Aliye's drawing the character of Refet in this way. The female character, who refuses to start a family and therefore to be in the private area of the house, persistently continues her education and prefers to be in the public sphere. If Refet had married, we would see the conflict between her role in the private sphere and the public sphere. Fatma Aliye avoids showing this conflict by portraying the female character from the lower class with stubborn, proud, and masculine behavior. Instead, it equips the female character with highly masculine traits, making it belong only to the public sphere as the nation's mother.

Her novel *Udi*, like *Refet*, tells about an ideal woman. Bedia has been passionate about art and has theoretical education and learning to play the oud. While Refet does not marry for her passion for education, while Bedia is interested in music and married. Fatma Aliye Hanım's novel Udî tells the story of an oud artist named Bedia surviving thanks to her musical education after leaving her husband because of being cheated. Bedia, who lives in a mansion, is a young girl whom her family always loves. She is not an instrumentalist, but by taking musical training from her family, she learns to play the oud and gather at the mansion with her friends and play the oud to them. When he gets older, he falls in love with Mail and marries him. Although his marriage with Mail was pleasant, Mail gradually started not coming home and was not interested in Bedia due to alcohol addiction. One day, Bedia learns that it was because of the Mail cheating on her. One day she confronts Helvila, her husband's mistress, and leaves the Mail. Bedia, who leaves the house with her oud, starts to make a living by working as a musician.

This novel by Fatma Aliye takes place in a mansion just like *Muhadarat*. Bedia is described as a stronger female character than Fazıla. While Fazıla is dependent on her husband and father for her personal life decisions, Bedia takes critical personal decisions such as marriage and divorce herself. One of the main distinguishing features of *Udi* is that the woman makes her own decisions; the other is that the woman takes part in the working life. The conflict in the novel is based on two separate women. Bedia represents

the woman who works with her honor, while Helula represents the woman who makes a living with immorality. Nowhere in the novel is Bedia depicted with her physical features and beauty. Her most essential characteristics are that she is a proud, honest, and hardworking woman. On the other hand, instead of earning money with her honor, Helvila prefers to have wealth with the gifts she receives from rich men by dealing with them. Therefore, it is portrayed in the novel sensually and ridiculously (Fatma Aliye, 2012c: 19).

In *Udi*, like *Muhadarat*, the mind/emotion roles given to men and women are different from those in novels written by men. In this novel, Fatma Aliye describes women as characters who act with her mind and men as emotions. In the novel, Bedia realizes that she was deceived by seeing the gold bracelets that her husband gave her on Helvila's arm (Fatma Aliye, 2012c: 49). After this scene in the novel, we follow Bedia's inner conflict. Bedia, on the one hand, loves her husband; on the other hand, she cannot forgive this betrayal of her husband. "She does not want to be in a situation where she will hate herself" (Fatma Aliye, 2012c: 77). When she chooses between her self-esteem and love for her husband, she uses her mind, not her feelings, and decides to leave her husband.

Bedia goes to her brother Şemi with the intention of divorce. She immediately filed for divorce to Mail; she never even thought of giving her husband a chance. Taking her decision through her mind, Bedia now joins the public sphere and, as a woman alone, earns money by working like Refet. Bedia now takes on the male working role in social life. She, who begins to teach others how to play the oud, personifies her oud in a scene as she calls to the oud:

> My loyal friend who never leaves me, who never escapes from my palm! My dear companion who always befriended me! You alone did not leave me, you alone did not pass me by, you did not betray me! you have been my source of pleasure and joy; now you are my *source to earn money*! You are my *breadwinner*. My sweetheart, my dear, *you are my man!*" (Fatma Aliye, 2012c: 102).

As seen, the task of earning money and being a breadwinner belongs to the man, and when the male disappears, the narrator gives these qualities to oud. Another female character making money in the novel is Helvila. Helvila is not like Bedia because she earns money with dishonesty and indecency. Helvila is a Jewish woman, so it is impossible to show these characters as Muslim in Ottoman-era novels, so they are chosen from non-

Muslims. Bedia and Helvila meet twice in the novel. In the first encounter, Bedia learns that her husband is cheating on her with Helvila and her life is turned upside down. While this encounter affects Bedia negatively, it positively affects Helvila. In the second encounter, Helvila quit prostitution, became a chaste woman and survived (Fatma Aliye, 2012c: 95). Thus, Fatma Aliye describes the second female character as a woman who uses her mind and is not caught up in her emotions and passions. Conversely, Mail completely loses his mind and becomes addicted to alcohol. Hence, in Fatma Aliye's novels, female characters represent mental and male characters represent emotion.

*Udi* and *Refet* are noteworthy as they show that women are beginning to enter public spaces. Both Refet and Bedia are educated characters. Educational institutions were one of the dominant public spaces in the late Ottoman period, and their graduates were influential in forming public opinion. Refet was educated in one of these institutions in the novel and, in Ottoman society, she rejected the dominant roles of women as wife and motherhood and devoted herself to educating other people. Bedia, on the other hand, receives music education from outside instructors, not in a public institution, but the public area of the house, and contributes to the home economy by becoming a musician. Although the novels' emphasis that women "work like a man" indicates that the active role still belongs to men in this period, female characters do not give up their favorite profession despite all kinds of obstacles and pressures.

Another book by Fatma Aliye, *Levayih–i Hayat* (1898), is a novel consisting of eleven letters written by five related women, Mehabe, Fehâme, Sabahat, Nebahat and İtimad. We have already said that Habermas called the period in which the bourgeois public sphere was formed the "age of letters" (1991: 54). In this novel, women somehow open their ideas about social issues to the Public through letters and feel their individuality. Also, as a result of these letters, they create a public opinion between them and the reader. As Emel Kefeli states:

> It is meaningful that Fatma Aliye uses the letter, which is the most proper type for the flow of daily life and features such as "description of the soul" as a narrative technique in the *Levayih–i Hayat*. The letters allow the author to simultaneously discuss the marriage from different perspectives and analyze the female mind. A formal relation can be established between the meanings such as honesty, sincerity, the transfer of feelings in the letter word, the

closeness and secrecy in the letter presented in the envelope, and the emotions that women suppress and have to hide. In the context of the novel theory, the novels written in letter style are one of the best techniques that can reveal the inner world of a woman and her inner conflict in becoming an individual. A woman who has to keep quiet/endure due to her traditional behavioral education feels the need to share her problems. Thanks to this sharing, readers look at the woman-marriage relationship from different perspectives simultaneously through letters described as the woman's inner voice and the means of opening out and finding the opportunity to judge this relationship objectively (Kefeli, 2005: 195).

In the novel, issues such as unhappiness and happiness in marriage, harmony between spouses, the ugliness of illegitimate love, the importance of education, the problems faced by women forced to marry against their own will, the concepts of love and affection, and the infidelity of the husband are discussed. At the time this novel was written, Fatma Aliye increased her authority in the literary public. In her letters to Ahmet Mithat, we can see her improved authority in her opposition to Ahmet Mithat's ideas and openly express her thoughts. Ahmet Mithat says that he disapproves of Fatma Aliye making men in disgraceful situations in her novel *Levayih-i Hayat*. In response, Fatma Aliye does not stay quiet on the topic and opposes gender inequality by saying that disgrace is not only for women but also for men to fall into bad situations (Ahmet Mithat, 2011: 172). The dislike of Ahmet Mithat, Fatma Aliye's novels such as *Refet*, *Levayih-i Hayat*, *Udi* causes resentment between the two novelists. Despite this, Fatma Aliye's novels continue to be published. In this case, we can concede that Fatma Aliye gained a strong position in the Ottoman literary public.

There are three idealized female characters in *Levayih-i Hayat*: Mehabe, Fehame, and Sabahat. These three women who grew up in the same house were educated, knowledgeable and cultured. The most remarkable point in the letters these ideal women send to each other is that they mainly discussed the relationship between men and women. In these discussions, women are characters who do not accept society's traditional norms but question them. Sabahat and Fehame do not choose their husbands and marry men chosen by their families, talk about their unhappy marriages. However, there is a difference between the social statuses of the two women. Sabahat is the daughter of an upper-class family and has money to

support herself. Fehame is an orphan and a poor woman. Fehame's husband is an alcohol addict, a violent, rude and uncouth man. Although Fehame complains about him, she cannot do anything. Although Sabahat is not satisfied with her husband, she has the power to oppose him. In a letter, Sabahat tells Fehame that "she cannot tolerate her husband anymore and is not as *self-sacrificing* as she" (Fehame) (Fatma Aliye, 2012b: 27). Sacrifice and loyalty to the family are the essential characteristics for traditional women (Sancar, 2004: 208). In this novel, the reason why Fehame continues to marry is shown as his sacrifice. However, in his reply to this letter, Fehame says that this is not due to sacrifice. The reason for continuing the marriage is desperation and obligation (Fatma Aliye, 2012b: 31). Fehame is dependent on her husband because she is a poor woman who cannot earn her own money. A woman who cannot exist in the public sphere due to economic reasons is confined to the private sphere and cannot freely decide in her personal life. For this reason, the decision of Bedia to divorce and Refet not to marry in previous novels cannot be made by Fehame in this novel.

The issue of women's education is discussed in *Levayih-i Hayat.* The education that the woman receives plays a vital role in the public sphere. Educational institutions are virtual in public space starting from the early modern period. It is also crucial to the education of women in Ottoman modernization. The Tanzimat Period's novels, especially those of male writers, emphasize that a woman must be educated to be a good wife and a good mother. The female characters in *Levayih-i Hayat* criticize this approach. In the novel, women trained to be good wives and good mothers have unhappy marriages (Gençtürk Demircioğlu, 2010: 106). Nebahat, in her letter to İtimad, criticized this issue and stated that education should be for women's personal development (Fatma Aliye, 2012b: 76). Thus, women who improve themselves will be able to choose a husband suitable for marrying.

### Conclusion

The new liberal public sphere that emerged in post-Enlightenment Europe created living spaces such as cafes, halls, theaters, and communicative spaces such as the press, where social issues were rationally discussed. In his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas discusses the liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere between the 17th and mid-20th centuries, providing a historical and sociological explanation for this concept. One of the most critical elements that Habermas lacks is the active role of women in the public sphere. Contemporary social scien-

tists criticize Habermas and thinkers like him who refrain from discussing women's role in social issues and work on it. This study also discusses the position of women in general, Ottoman-Turkish women in particular, and author Fatma Aliye, the first Ottoman woman who is a specific example of it, in the public sphere. Fatma Aliye first appeared in the Ottoman literary public through Ahmet Mithat, whom she regarded as her "literary father". A male-dominated voice is authoritative in *Hayal ve Hakikat*, written together by two novelists. In this novel, where the female character does not appear in the public sphere, where she experiences depression and hysteria in her inner world, the woman is in the object and passive position. With the rise of Fatma Aliye's authority in the literary public, the rise of the female characters in the novels to the ideal-subject position is also parallel. In Fatma Aliye's *Muhadarat*, *Refet*, *Udi* and *Levayih-i Hayat,* discussed in this article, female characters turn into more self-reliance woman who tries to oppose men's domination and decides with their reasons. In these novels addressed to Ottoman female readers, Fatma Aliye tried to open a new path for them by showing women who took place in the public sphere and struggled with the problems they encountered.

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