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From The Perspective of Women Writers: Representations of Modern Girls in 1920s and 1930s Turkey and Japan

Kadın Yazarların Perspektifinden: 1920'ler ve 1930'lar Türkiye ve Japonyası'nda Modern Kız Temsilleri

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Abstract: In the 1920s, Modern Girls emerged in both Turkey and Japan, drawing attention with their Westernized appearance and liberal lifestyles. They became popular subjects among authors and media outlets. However, portrayals of Modern Girls by male authors and in the media predominantly relied on stereotypes, such as fashion icons, femme fatales, materialistic party girls, and so on. Studies on the Japanese Modern Girl focus on media portrayals to define the figure, while Turkish Modern Girls in literature have been viewed as a neglected topic. Most scholarly works use newspaper articles or advertisements as primary sources, often mentioning the Modern Girls' descriptions in literary texts only briefly. My paper challenges the limited representations of Modern Girls by exploring themes of desire and self-representation in women's writing. I analyze the portrayals of Modern Girl characters in the selected works of Japanese authors Uno Chiyo (1897-1996) and Nomizo Naoko (1897-1987), as well as in works by Turkish authors Suat Derviş (1905-1972) and Güzide Sabri (1886–1946) to demonstrate that Modern Girls' definitions extend far beyond the representations offered by male authors and mainstream media. My project supports the idea that examining the experiences of Modern Girls in Turkish and Japanese contexts offers valuable perspectives on the impact of Westernization on women's lives in non-Western societies. It presents an innovative approach to understanding the Modern Girl figure by drawing comparisons between these two cultures.

Öz: 1920'lerde Modern Kızlar hem Türkiye'de hem de Japonya'da Batılı görünümleri ve liberal yaşam tarzlarıyla dikkat çekmekteydi. Bu figürler, yazarlar ve medya organları arasında popülerdi. Ancak, erkek yazarlar ve medyada Modern Kızların tasvirleri ağırlıklı olarak moda ikonları, femme fatale, maddiyatçı parti kızları gibi klişelere dayanmaktadır. Japonya'daki Modern Kız üzerine yapılan çalışmalar, figürü tanımlamak için genellikle medya tasvirlerine odaklanırken, Türkiye'de edebiyatta Modern Kızlar, ihmal edilen bir konu olmaya devam etmektedir. Çoğu akademik çalışma, ana kaynak olarak gazete makaleleri veya reklamları kullanmakta ve edebi metinlerdeki Modern Kız tanımlarına genellikle yalnızca kısaca değinmektedir. Bu makale, kadın yazarların eserlerinde arzu ve öz temsil temalarını inceleyerek, Modern Kızların sınırlı temsillerine meydan okumaktadır. Japon yazarlar Uno Chiyo (1897-1996) ve Nomizo Naoko (1897-1987), ayrıca Türk yazarlar Suat Derviş (1905-1972) ve Güzide Sabri'nin (1886–1946) seçili eserlerindeki Modern Kız karakterlerinin tasvirlerini analiz ederek, Modern Kızların tanımlarının erkek yazarlar ve ana akım medyanın sunduğu temsillerin ötesine uzandığını göstermeyi amaçlıyorum. Bu araştırma, Türkiye ve Japonya bağlamında Modern Kızların deneyimlerini incelemenin, Batılılaşmanın Batı dışı toplumlarda kadınların yaşamları üzerindeki etkisi hakkında değerli perspektifler sunduğu fikrini desteklemektedir. İki kültür arasında karşılaştırmalar yaparak Modern Kız figürünü anlamaya yönelik yenilikçi bir yaklaşım sunmaktadır.

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Introduction

The figure of the Modern Girl emerged worldwide in the 1920s, a period characterized by the rise of consumerism and commodity culture. As a key element in this culture, the image of Modern Girls was extensively commercialized, positioning them as desirable objects to sell products. With their youthful, slender, almost "boyish" but also feminine qualities, Modern Girls redefined the established beauty standards.[2] They were known for using certain commodities (cosmetics and fashionable clothing), challenging gender roles, pursuing romantic love, and being sexually liberal.

An anthology of Modern Girl stories provides a comprehensive overview of Japanese Modern Girls (*modan gaaru* or *moga* in short), listing their key characteristics as short hair, fashion inspired by Paris and New York, modern kimono, a passion for sports, and interests in music, cinema, and art.[3] Suzuki explains that they embodied freedom and intelligence, choosing their partners and engaging in romantic relationships based on their preferences. The Meiji ideology of *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) appeared in the late nineteenth century as a part of national task to build a modern state which put even more importance on domestic roles that are attributed to women. Modern Girls, who challenged this ideology with their lifestyles, often faced harsh criticism from social critics and intellectuals of the time. Even some members of the New Woman group looked down upon Modern Girls.[4] Poet Yosano Akiko remarked: "These girls in their Western dress and short haircuts just copy whatever comes from abroad"[5]. Initially viewed as fashion icons, or the products of consumerism, Japanese Modern Girls became associated with loose morals during the *ero guro nansensu*[6]「エログロナンセンス」(erotic grotesque nonsense) movement. The Japanese media began to portray them in a more negative light, emphasizing their supposed immorality (see Fig. 1).

Unlike their Japanese counterparts, defining Turkish Modern Girls poses a challenge as the term 'modern kız' (modern girl) is rarely used in scholarly work. They are more frequently referred to as *alafranga* girls, or flappers.[7] As Coşkun states, between 1877 and 1923, four types of women could be seen in Turkish literature: traditional, Westernized (liberal lifestyle, still tied to traditions), *alafranga* (copies Western style, a consumerist, and a rebel) and foreign (typically a mistress/temptress) women.[8] The *alafranga* type fits the stereotypical definitions of Modern Girl, whereas the Westernized type evokes the image of New Woman. The ideal republican woman was urban, modern and secular, and was expected to fulfill her maternal duties akin to the Meiji Government's "good wife, wise mother"

[2] Jane Nicholas, *The Modern Girl: Feminine Modernities, the Body, and Commodities in the 1920s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015). Nicholas also refers to the concept of 'visual consumption' in her book, stating that one of the markers of modernity was visuality and for women, it meant displaying the self more than before. In the 1920s, cultural expectations dictated that women should look beautiful in a certain way to be deemed modern; they were expected to be desirable.

[3] Suzuki Sadami, *Modan gaaru no yūwaku* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1989), 1.

[4] In some cultures (i.e., German) the terms "Modern Girl" and "New Woman" were used interchangeably. However, in most cultures, including Japanese, New Woman represented a feminist group that emerged in the 1910s, often described as the "the mother of the Modern Girl," whereas her "daughter" pursued romance and fashion. Alys Eve Weinbaum et al., eds., *The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 9. Many scholars associate New Women with political activism, whereas Modern Girls are linked with consumption. Although there is a clearly drawn line between them in historical texts as well as scholarly work, it should be noted that some Modern Girls were also engaged with political activism, and New Women identified with some qualities that were associated with Modern Girls.

[5] Barbara Sato, *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media, and Women in Interwar Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 56.

[6] An artistic and literary movement that emerged in the 1920s and reached its peak in the 1930s. It promoted eroticism, cross-dressing, sexual freedom, queer sexuality and 'strange' fantasies, usually including gore. See Alisa Freedman, *Tokyo in Transit: Japanese Culture on the Rails and Road* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011). Cafés were associated with *ero guro* culture, leading to the eroticization of café waitresses (a Modern Girl type).

[7] The term "Turkish flappers" comes up in Zafer Toprak's book as a fashion phenomenon. Toprak mostly comments on how these "flappers" dressed (they were among the first women not to wear hijab) and cut their hair. See Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Yeni Hayat: İnkılap ve Travma 1908-1928*. Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2017).

However, "modern" and "girl" do not come together in most scholarly books or articles. The 'girl' figure is not as popular as the figure of the New Woman among Turkish scholars. An important research that explores the concepts of age and "girl" (kız) in the republican era belongs to Peruccio. See Kara A. Peruccio, "Not a Girl, Not Yet a Woman: Nezihe Muhiddin and Age in Turkey, 1923–35," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2023): 15-36.

[8] Betül Coşkun, "Türk Modernleşmesini Kadın Romanları Üzerinden Okumak: Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 5, no. 4 (2010): 930-964.

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ideology. In literary works and media alike, modern/new women were described as patriotic, motherly, and educated figures. .Modern Girls, particularly Turkish Modern Girls deviated from the newly emerged Turkish state's concept of the modern woman and were often depicted as having a superficial interest in the West and materialistic tendencies (see Fig. 2).

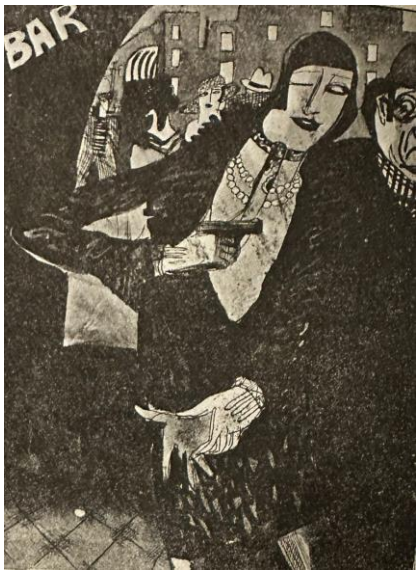

Fig. 1 (left): A Japanese Modern Girl 'seducing' a man by threatening him with a pistol.[9] Fig. 2 (right) features a Turkish Modern Girl and a Modern Boy. The rest of the page contains their dialogue, highlighting the Modern Girl's consumerist side.[10]

Recent years have seen growing scholarly interest in Modern Girls, yet their representations by women authors remain underexplored. Studies on Japanese Modern Girls focus on media portrayals, often generalizing the characteristics of the figure without investigating individual cases, with Japanese history and gender studies scholars such as Barbara Satō and Vera Mackie emphasizing Modern Girls' portrayal as consumerist figures shaped by capitalism.[11] On the other hand, Miriam Silverberg offers an alternative approach, arguing that the Modern Girl was not only a symbol of consumerism but also a politically engaged figure who challenged "good wife, wise mother" ideology in Japan.[12] Analyzing Modern Girl types in films and women's magazines, Silverberg argues that although the Modern Girl "movement" was not organized, Modern Girls were political and militant activists who embodied resistance to patriarchal norms. Mark Driscoll's chapter on Modern Girls builds on Silverberg's work, connecting Modern Girls to the *ero guro nansensu* movement in Japanese literature. However, like Satō and Mackie, Driscoll's analysis prioritizes male-authored works and does not address how women authors portrayed Modern Girls.

Similarly, there has been increased interest in the Turkish modern women (not particularly girls) as historical figures, yet scholarly work exploring their literary representations remains limited with a few notable exceptions.[13]

[9] *Tokyo pakku* (Tokyo Puck, 1929). Many other cartoons like this one depicted Modern Girls' sexuality as 'threatening'. Another one in *Gendai* (Modern Times, 1927) magazine criticizes Modern Girls for destroying traditions of femininity.

[10] *Akbaba*, August 16, 1923, no. 73, 3, translated and included in Yasemin Gencer, "Today in 1920s Turkey: A Textual-Visual Translation Series and Experimental Database (List I, Posts 1-50: August 2016-January 2017)."

[11] See Barbara Satō, *The New Japanese Woman* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) and Vera C. Mackie, "New Women, Modern Girls and the Shifting Semiotics of Gender in Early Twentieth Century Japan," *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* 32 (2013): 1–13. Using examples from 1920s-1930s popular magazines, Satō discusses the bias against Modern Girls and how they were compared unfavorably to the New Woman figure. Mackie turns to media representations, highlighting biased depictions in newspapers, where the Modern Girls were often criticized or scandalized.

[12] See note 5 and Elise K. Tipton, "Pink Collar Work: The Café Waitress in Early Twentieth-Century Japan," *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context*, no. 7 (April 2002). Freedman explores *basu gaaru* (bus girl) in her research, whereas Tipton points to the difficulties (sexual harassment, objectification) of being a *jokyū* (café waitress).

[13] See Ayşegül Yaraman, "İstanbul Örnekleriyle Kadınlık Durumunun Dönüşümü ve Kadın Romancılar", in *Cumhuriyet İstanbul'unda Kadın* (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 2021), 351-387.Yaraman stands out by discussing *asrî* (modern) women in literature, highlighting their economic independence, Western education, and attire. Her work explores the roles of Turkish women's magazines in promoting women's novels

Historians such as Zafer Toprak have shown how historical narratives and popular magazines shaped the image of the Turkish modern woman, yet neglected literary works that depict Modern Girls' experiences.[14] İnci Enginün's work on women's magazines, for example, provides crucial context, but does not delve deeply into how women authors subverted media portrayals or challenged cultural norms within their novels.[15] Studies focusing on Japanese or Turkish Modern Girls rarely mention how these women perceived themselves or how women authors portrayed Modern Girls in their texts. Toyoda Kaori, for instance, turns to literary texts to explore Modern Girls' identities, but mainly focuses on male-authored portrayals.[16]Literary critic and essayist Saitō Minako explores Modern Girls through the lens of what she refers to as "desire-based history." While Saitō emphasizes the agency of Modern Girls, such as their desire to work, her analysis does not primarily rely on women-authored literary texts. Instead, she examines broader cultural trends and historical narratives.[17] Fewer studies have turned to women-authored texts in relation to Modern Girls. Among the Modern Japanese literature scholars who have done so is Kawasaki Kenko. In her chapter on Osaki Midori, Kawasaki refers to the Modern Girl as a transformative figure, shifting from the traditional concept of the "girl" to one influenced by women's liberation, socialist ideas, and urban culture. She explores how these influences are embedded in the protagonist, Machiko, in Osaki's *Dainana kankai hōkō* (Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense, 1931). Although the chapter is not primarily focused on Modern Girls, it highlights their role in the changing cultural landscape of early twentieth century Japan.[18]

Existing research on Modern Girls, particularly in the Turkish case, often overlooks lesser-known women authors of the early twentieth century. The analysis of feminist movements in the Turkish context tends to focus predominantly on prominent figures like Halide Edib.[19] Pelin Batu points out that first-wave feminists have largely been forgotten, except for Edib, stressing the need to reconsider contributions from lesser-known women authors.[20] As in the case of Güzide Sabri, much of the limited research on lesser-known women authors' works remain autobiographical, underscoring the need for comprehensive literary studies that reassess her contributions and those of other overlooked authors.[21]

As demonstrated by these examples, Modern Girls are often analyzed within a context where they are typically positioned as objects of desire, such as in 1920s and 1930s advertisements and male-authored works. This oversight raises a seemingly simple yet under-investigated question for this research: What did Modern Girls desire?

Academic and critic Rita Felski point out that the male gaze in literature overshadows other aspects of women's lives, such as motherhood, love and friendship between women:

> …we are accustomed to finding broader resonances in male bodies, to glimpsing the sublime in stories of heroic struggle and drawing existential metaphor out of images of male solitude. We are less used to endowing female bodies with this kind of authority and reading female lives as rich in general resonances.[22]

Felski supports the idea that it is significant to read into women's experiences to get a fuller understanding of how women faced social challenges during the period they lived in. Women's writing becomes an important tool for women challenge the stereotypical portrayals. Hélène Cixous, who coined the term *écriture féminine* (women's writing) argues that writing is a way for women to express and explore their desires, thereby breaking free from

and includes examples from Halide Edib's works.

[14] Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Yeni Hayat: İnkılap ve Travma 1908-1928* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2017).

[15] İnci Enginün, "Mücadele Dönemi Edebiyatında Türk Kadını," in *Cumhuriyet İstanbul'unda Kadın*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 2021), 273-319.

[16] Toyoda Kaori, "Modanizumu bungaku ni miru modan gāru," *Bunka Gakuen Daigaku Kiyō. Jinbun Shakai Kagaku Kenkyū* 22 (January 31, 2014): 101–114.

[17] Saitō Minako, *Modan gāru ron* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, Bunshun Bunko, 2003).

[18] Kawasaki Kenko, "Tensei suru 'Ono Machiko,'" in *Osaki Midori: Sakyū no kanata e*, (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2010), 211–329.

[19] See note 13.

[20] Pelin Batu, "Türkiye'de Kadın Haklarının Tarihçesi," [The History of Women's Rights in Turkey], in *Cumhuriyet İstanbul'unda Kadın*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 2021), 111-167.

[21] See Nihat Sami Banarlı, *Resimli Tu̇rk Edebiyatı Tarihi II* (Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1983). Bilge Ercilasun, *Edebiyat Tarihi ve Tenkit* (Dergâh Yayınları, 2013). Erol Üyepazarcı, *Unutulanlar, Hiç Bilinmeyenler ve Bilinmek İstenmeyenler* (Istanbul: Oğlak Yayınları, 2019). The same applies to Nezihe Muhiddin, whose political identity has been studied more extensively than her work as an author.

[22] Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, 17.

patriarchal constraints.[23] In Cixous' terms, the systematic, law-abiding, stable masculine libidinal economy reduces women to bodies, repressing their voice, bleaching the language of the unconscious; "to submit to the classical social and psychoanalytical narratives of what it means to be a feminine woman is to enter into an alienated relationship with one's own desires."[24] She argues that rather than submitting to and internalizing what male-authored narratives are saying about the feminine subject, women should write about their desires to create their subjectivity so that the silenced can find a voice. Women's writing becomes an economy of passions, a dialogue between the self and the "other" (represents everything that has been marginalized or excluded by patriarchal structures) providing a pathway for women to escape the confines of patriarchal identities.[25] Through exploring this "otherness", the female subject escapes the danger of pursuing an identity that identifies with the patriarchal system.

In line with these approaches, I examine the themes of love, freedom, autonomy, and self-expression in the selected literary works of two Japanese and two Turkish women authors: *Aru hitori no onna no hanashi* (The Story of a Lonely Woman, 1971)[26] by Uno Chiyo (1897-1996), *Kadın Aşksız Yaşamaz* (A Woman Doesn't Live Without Love, 1935) by Suat Derviş (1905-1972), *Jojū shinri* (The Psychology of a Female Beast, 1930) by Nomizo Naoko (1897-1987), and *Hicran Gecesi* (The Night of Parting, serialized 1936; book 1937) by Güzide Sabri (1886–1946). These authors wrote in different genres and styles and came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, which allows me to showcase the diversity of Modern Girl portrayals. Uno's novel is autofictional, and Derviş's book also contains autofictional elements, whereas those of Nomizo and Sabri are fictional. Each work reflects society's reactions to the Modern Girl figure and Modern Girls' shared experiences and desires that extend beyond the sexual.[27]

This project offers a novel perspective on the figure of the Modern Girl by comparing Turkish and Japanese cultures and contributes to comparative studies. Japanese Modern Girls have been compared to Chinese, Korean, and Western Modern Girls, including the American flapper and the German *Jungfrau*, yet they have never been discussed in conjunction with another country like Turkey. As Esenbel suggests, "Turkey-Japan comparative studies invite our attention, for it opens a window onto an alternative, ambivalent arena of international relations between these so-called 'Non-Western regions' in modern history."[28] By pointing to the importance of comparative studies between two cultures, Esenbel raises another significant issue: there is always the perceived need for cultural comparisons to depart from a Western model. Comparative literature, too, is associated with comparisons between Western countries, or at least one of the countries in question is Western. Comparative studies invite more variety. Expanding the scope to include comparisons between non-Western countries like Turkey and Japan provides valuable insights into the effects of Westernization on these regions. Examining Turkish and Japanese Modern Girls reveals how Western influences intersect with their cultural contexts and impact women's lives.

Uno Chiyo and *Aru hitori no onna no hanashi* (或る一人の女の話)

Uno Chiyo was born in 1897 in Iwakuni. According to her biographer Rebecca Copeland, Uno applied powder to her face every day and wore flashy, purple *hakama* while living in her hometown.[29] Makeup and clothes played a

[23] Hélène Cixous, *Coming to Writing and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

[24] Abigail Bray and Julian Wolfreys, *Hélène Cixous: Writing and Sexual Difference* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003), 57.

[25] Helene Cixous, *Coming to Writing and Other Essays* (London: Harvard University Press, 1991)
Unlike men's speech or narratives which are disconnected from body and passions and discriminative against the other, *écriture féminine* (feminine writing) circumvents binary structures (man/woman, subject/object, rationality/desire, civilisation/nature and so on) and creates new modes of relation between self and the other.

[26] Although Uno's *Aru hitori no onna no hanashi* was published in 1971, it recounts her experiences during the 1920s and 1930s. As Uno identified as a Modern Girl, her fictional autobiography provides significant insights into the real-life experiences of Modern Girls.

[27] It should also be noted that there are few or no English translations of these authors' works. Translations in this paper belong to me. Only two of Uno's major works have been translated into English (*Aru hitori no onna no hanashi* was translated into English by Rebecca Copeland and *Iro Zange* by Phyllis Birnbaum), whereas Nomizo is known to English speakers through Tomoko Aoyama's articles. See Tomoko Aoyama, "Nomizo Naoko: The 'Eternal Girl' Crosses Boundaries," *Asian Studies Review* 30, no. 2 (June 2006): 109-122; Tomoko Aoyama, "Nomizo Naoko and Women's Art Against Violence," *Japan Forum* 25, no. 3 (September 2013): 331-345. Most Turkish authors of the twentieth century, including Derviş and Sabri, have not been translated into English. Therefore, one of this study's objectives is to introduce the untranslated works of these women to a wider audience.

[28] Selçuk Esenbel, "Japan's Global Claim to Asia and the World of Islam: Transnational Nationalism and World Power, 1900-1945," *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 4 (2004): 1141.

[29] Rebecca L. Copeland, *The Sound of the Wind: The Life and Works of Uno Chiyo* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992).

significant role in her life. Uno wanted to move to Tokyo or Kyoto to study, but due to economic difficulties, she stayed in Iwakuni and worked as an elementary school teacher. She eventually moved to Tokyo after marrying her cousin. During her time there, Uno worked several part-time jobs. She married three times and had several lovers throughout her life, which contributed to her reputation for causing scandals in 1920s and 1930s Japan. While living with her second husband Ozaki Shirō, she cut her hair, making her one of Japan's first "flappers"[30].

Uno's experiences in Tokyo and her relationships inspired many of her novels, which are often considered personal, seldom addressing broader social issues. Among such works is her *Aru hitori no onna no hanashi*, which is a retelling of Uno's life story, following Kazue from birth to her encounter with one of her lovers, painter Tanabe. In the book, there are detailed accounts of Kazue's various relationships, the hardships she faces as a working woman, and her evolving career as a writer.[31]

Typically, male-authored Modern Girl stories often reflect the authors' own desires, as seen with the popular subject of *jokyū* (café waitresses). According to Barbara Satō eroticization of Modern Girls were caused by the society's panic over the "decline" in morality linked to young people "exploring their sexuality."[32] *Jokyū* characters in the works of male authors such as Hirotsu Kazuo[33], Takeda Rintarō and Nagai Kafū are "sometimes exaggerated", and "trivialized for pure entertainment," lacking in-depth descriptions of their emotions.[34] For example, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's character Naomi in *Chijin no Ai* (A Fool's Love, 1925) is depicted as a materialistic and flirtatious party girl with Western looks. The protagonist Jōji is attracted to Naomi due her looks, which reminds him of Mary Pickford. However, while Naomi's relationships with other men seem to defy convention, they primarily serve to intensify Jōji's obsession with her. Similarly, Hori Tatsuo's "Bukiyo na tenshi" (The Clumsy Angel, 1929) revolves around the narrator's infatuation with a café waitress, with little attention to her feelings.

In contrast, Uno's *Aru hitori no onna no hanashi* portrays Kazue as a hardworking woman. She maintains her economic independence, working multiple jobs, even financially supporting her husband at times. Working as a waitress in hotels and Western-style restaurants, she barely has time to take care of herself, leading others to see her as a ragged doll—an object of both pity and desire:

> …because Kazue always wore tattered clothes, these establishments often hesitated to hire her. When they did, she became an object of both pity and desire in the eyes of the owners and customers. Once, someone told her, 'Good job. Come over tonight after you finish here,' and handed her an address. Kazue, looking like a ragged doll, fled…[35]

As a young woman trying to survive in Tokyo, Kazue offers a first-hand perspective that diverges from the often superficial portrayals of waitresses by male authors. Uno's account provides a detailed description of the stress faced by a working woman, particularly caused by objectification.

Kazue also finds herself in romantic relationships that typecast her as an object, reflecting societal bias against Modern Girls: "Throughout her life, there had been many instances where she could be considered the victim. In such times, Kazue never once held a grudge against a man."[36] However, she does not give up following her desires

[30] Chieko Irie Mulhern, *Japanese Women Writers: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 441.

[31] Although the main focus of the story is Kazue's relationships, Uno provides important details about Kazue's passion for writing. She becomes so engrossed in her writing that she neglects her household chores and rarely leaves her desk until her story is completed. She even leaves her husband to go to a magazine company in Tokyo. There she meets her new love interest, the writer Nozaki Shichirō, through whom she gets involved with intellectual cycles, motivating her to write more. Uno Chiyo, *Aru hitori no onna no hanashi* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1989), Kindle edition.

[32] Satō, 66.

[33] Hirotsu wrote two stories about *jokyū*: "Jokyū: Sayoko no maki" (Tokyo: Chūokōronsha, 1931) and "Jokyū Kimiyo" (Tokyo: Chūokōronsha, 1932).

[34] Madoka Kusakabe, "Sata Ineko and Hirabayashi Taiko: The Café and *Jokyū* as a Stage for Social Criticism" (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2011), 2. The term *jokyū* refers to the female servers in cafés, who interacted with the intellectual class. They also represented a profession that many urban middle-class women turned to for quick income due to the economic downturn and displacement caused by the Great Kantō earthquake (1923). Modern girls working as *jokyū* were popular subjects among authors of the 1930s. Some of these women had to provide erotic services due to financial difficulties caused by economic crises and low wages.

[35] Uno Chiyo, *Aru hitori no onna no hanashi* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1989), Kindle edition, 1143.

[36] Chiyo, *Aru hitori no onna no hanashi,* 1743. In another instance, Kazue is sexually harassed but refuses to see herself as a victim. She blames herself after the incident. "I must be crazy," she says. "I slept with a man with no intention of marrying him." (653) Her appearance and her liberal lifestyle, especially her involvement in romantic relationships without the commitment of marriage, lead to her being stigmatized as a "loose

even when she is disappointed or exposed to harsh criticism. Shortly after her first marriage, Kazue starts to pursue another kind of love: love of writing. Although she never stops yearning to love and to be loved by others, her desire to write shapes her life choices. When she was a young woman working several jobs in Tokyo, Uno aspired to become a celebrity. Uno's desires extended beyond the confines of domestic life, initially aiming for an acting career, but not having succeeded in that pursuit, she turned to writing. According to Copeland, who translated some of Uno's works and wrote about her life, writers were celebrities and fiction "carried with it the taint of scandal" [37]. Uno admired one of these 'scandalous' writers, named Tamura Toshiko (1884-1945) and her lifestyle. Her interest in writing was piqued during her employment at a high-class, Western style restaurant the Enrakuken, where she had the opportunity to interact with authors and editors, including Takita Choin, the editor of *Chūō Kōron* who played an important role in launching Uno's career.[38]

While Uno does not provide an extensive account of her writing process, she depicts pursuing a writing career as a significant turning point in Kazue's life. At first, Kazue sees writing only as a means of making money; she does not think of herself as a talented writer. However, her perspective changes when she discovers that her short story has been published in a newspaper. This news fills her with joy, and she becomes consumed by her new job, dedicating day and night to it. Kazue becomes so engrossed in her writing that she neglects her household chores and rarely leaves her desk until her story is completed. After Kazue sends it to a magazine and does not hear from them, she leaves her husband Jōji behind to go to Tokyo. "As soon as Kazue arrived in Tokyo, she went to the magazine company. It was in front of the Western-style restaurant where she had worked. She climbed the stairs without hesitation."[39] For her, writing becomes a source of income and a form of self-expression, like Uno who managed to "turn her failed romances into literary successes."[40]

Copeland explains that in Uno's time "it was almost a given that a woman writer would be either scandalously oversexed or else a bookish prude."[41] Women authors were expected to write in certain styles. In 1908, an article titled "Joryū sakka ron" (An Essay on Women) was published in *Shinchō*, which aimed to define women's roles (as an editor, author or critic) in literature, but they were expected to "write like women"「女らしく」(onna-rashiku) and address "the domestic detail of feminine spheres"[42]. Uno challenged this notion by taking an active part in public space and adopting the confession form to tell her stories about what happened outside the boundaries of the domestic space, as exemplified by *Aru hitori no onna no hanashi*.

Suat Derviş and *Kadın Aşksız Yaşamaz*

Unlike Uno, Suat Derviş came from a wealthy family of intellectuals. Born in Istanbul, she was home-schooled and later traveled to Berlin to receive higher education. After her father died in 1932, Derviş returned to Istanbul. She worked as a reporter and translator both in Turkey and Europe. Derviş remained a forgotten name among readers until the Turkish publisher Ithaki started republishing her works in 2015. Although Derviş's early works focus on middle or upper-class women and their love affairs - including gothic elements - her later novels tell the stories of working women, such as factory workers and sex workers.[43] This change was influenced by her career as a reporter, and she started to write more realistic novels after conducting numerous interviews with workers in the 1930s.

Many studies on Suat Derviş evaluate her works through the lens of her political identity. For instance, according to Nazan Aksoy, although Derviş was a politically engaged woman, her writing does not adequately reflect her

woman" by some men. The novel is full of examples in which she tries to rationalize the mistreatment she experiences.

[37] Rebecca Copeland, *The Sound of the Wind: The Life and Works of Uno Chiyo* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 17. Tamura left her husband to fly to Canada with a married man in 1916. According to Copeland, this shocked the public, but her young women readers admired her.

[38] Copeland, *The Sound of the Wind: The Life and Works of Uno Chiyo*, 18-20.

[39] Uno, *Aru hitori no onna no hanashi*, 1286.

[40] Copeland, *The Sound of the Wind*, 48.

[41] Rebecca L. Copeland, "The Made-Up Author: Writer as Woman in the Works of Uno Chiyo," *The Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 29, no. 1 (April 1995): 8.

[42] Copeland, "The Made-Up Author: Writer as Woman in the Works of Uno Chiyo," 7.

[43] *Bu Roman Olan Şeylerin Romanıdır* (1937) and *Fosforlu Cevriye* (1948) are among such works.

political activism as she often wrote in popular genre.[44] Generally, the romance genre is not regarded as highly as other genres in most scholarly work.[45] However, despite being love stories, Derviş's earlier works provide an important perspective on young urban women. These works are progressive in their depictions of sexuality, and the themes of love and loneliness. One such novel, *Kadın Aşksız Yaşamaz* was described as "ahead of its time for its bold depiction of a working woman's desires and sexuality."[46]

Kadın Aşksız Yaşamaz is one of Derviş's earlier works, inspired by her real-life experiences in 1930s Istanbul. The story follows Cavide, an independent woman working as a translator, as she explores various romantic options in search of love. Early in the book, Cavide visits a café with her co-worker Fahri, who persistently tries to win her over and watches her every move, much to her annoyance. However, her gaze wanders to other men in the café, including a foreigner. On another occasion, she goes to a Western-style bar with her boss.

While Cavide leads a liberal lifestyle, male characters repeatedly comment on Cavide's life as a single woman, reflecting societal expectations. Upon learning she is not engaged, her boss, a married man looks at her eyes, lips, neck, and waist before commenting: "It is inconceivable. You are a beautiful young woman; you should get married, so that you won't feel lonely. There is no greater happiness in life than marrying someone you love."[47] This statement not only objectifies Cavide by reducing her worth to her physical appearance but also underscores the societal belief that a woman's happiness and fulfillment are inherently tied to marriage.

Working women became more visible in Turkey after 1914. Until the Second Constitutional Era, women were mostly employed as teachers or servants, but starting in the 1920s, they began to find broader opportunities in various sectors.[48] However, prejudice remained pervasive. The Turkish press in the 1920s often focused on issues such as marriage, education, work, fashion, and etiquette. While women's participation in the workforce was economically necessary, it was still considered unnatural, with societal expectations that they prioritize household duties; "a woman's involvement in the workforce was endorsed by society and in turn, was expected to preserve her chastity above all else."[49]

Throughout the novella, Derviş highlights the hardships a young, single woman faces in the workplace, where she is perceived as sexually transgressive for seemingly failing to preserve chastity—largely because she spends time with male colleagues and her boss outside of work hours.

The rumors Fahri spreads out of jealousy about her relationship with their boss force Cavide to leave her job. She is wrongly perceived as their boss's mistress. Naciye, a typist and Cavide's co-worker, accuses her: "You've been in the boss's car, and you've had a private dinner with him at Boğaziçi. Someone saw it and told me."[50] Later, she gossips with another colleague about Cavide:

> "The boss goes to her house every day."
>
> "That sinner of a woman acts as if she is a nun. I can't stand two-faced people like her…"[51]

Cavide struggles to maintain her professional integrity in a work environment that reduces her to mere gossip and sexualized assumptions. She thinks to herself: "It is indeed difficult for a man to make a living, but women experience horrible things. Do men ever have to deal with things like this?"[52]

Despite initially challenging norms surrounding love through her involvement with various men, Cavide starts

[44] Nazan Aksoy, "Suat Derviş Muhalif bir Yazar mıdır?" *Birikim*, no. 298 (February 2014): 83-90.
[45] Uno's writing was also often regarded as "the smaller world of personal heartbreak." Birnbaum explains that while other women writers of her generation focused on social issues such as the excesses of militarism, Uno centered her work on struggles of the heart. Phyllis Birnbaum, *Modern Girls, Shining Stars, the Skies of Tokyo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 166.
[46] Serdar Soydan, "Suat Derviş ve Eserleri Hakkında," in *Suat Derviş, Emine* (Istanbul: Ithaki, 2019), 388.
[47] Suat Derviş, "Kadın Aşksız Yaşamaz," in *Emine* (Istanbul: Ithaki, 2019), 326. The novella was serialized in a magazine titled *Perşembe* between 22 August-19 December 1935).
[48] Coşkun, "Türk Modernleşmesini Kadın Romanları Üzerinden Okumak: Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e," 930-964.
[49] Türe, *Facts and Fantasies: Images of Istanbul Women in the 1920s* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 224.
[50] Derviş, "Kadın Aşksız Yaşamaz," 339.
[51] Derviş, 346–47.
[52] Derviş, 344.

to romanticize the concept of marriage. After confessing her love to her childhood friend, she reflects on the nature of love:

> What is love? Love is the meaning of life. Love is life. If not for love, nothing would exist in this world. Love is the desire to create. To create is to imitate the Divine. To imitate the Divine is to desire to be immortal. A lover is someone who had a taste of this immortality.[53]

Although she mentions "the desire to create", this desire does not encompass creative endeavors, such as writing, but loving someone. Her prospective husband symbolizes a sanctuary for her, for which she is willing to forego her career. The desire for freedom is replaced by the need to feel safe. After losing her job, Cavide marries her childhood friend. One characteristic that sets Cavide apart from other women characters in early modern Turkish literature is her ability to choose her partner on her own terms, that could still be interpreted as a form of free love. It is also representative of the new approaches to marriage in the Republican Turkey, which allowed people from middle and upper-class to marry the person of their choice.[54] On the other hand, Derviş's novel exemplifies a pattern frequently found in early twentieth-century Turkish literature, where women are presented with two options: either becoming the mistress or the loyal wife.[55] Initially labeled as a "mistress" by gosipping colleagues, Cavide gives up work to become the dutiful wife, echoing the pervasive narrative of women being expected to relinquish personal or professional aspirations in favor of traditional roles dictated by society.

Nomizo Naoko and *Jojū shinri* (女獣心理)

Nomizo, born in Himeji, was a distinguished Japanese author and scholar. She graduated from Dōshisha University in 1921 with a degree in English, then moved to Tokyo to further her studies in Western philosophy at Tōyō University. She became a lecturer at Tōyō University in 1951 and spent the last thirty years of her life in a hotel room. Her works reflect her deep knowledge of Western culture and literature, evidenced by her early readings of texts such as The Old Testament, Greek mythology, and Goethe's *Faust*. She epitomized several aspects of the Modern Girl figure, breaking away from the norms of her time through both her literary creations and her lifestyle.[56] Many of Nomizo's characters resonate with her experiences, especially her deep interest in Western art and literature.

Soya (nicknamed Leda), the orphan heroine of *Jojū shinri*, is a strong, independent artist.[57] At the beginning of the novel, the narrator Shinna Toride (or Rui/Louis) meets his fiancée and cousin Sunako (Shako) and her friend Soya in Ginza. To him, Soya appears unremarkable and androgynous at first, contrasting with the more traditionally feminine character Sunako:

> She was the kind of person you might overlook even if you met her for a second time. There was nothing particularly remarkable about her appearance, as she wore a plain, monochromatic Western-style outfit and had short hair. Perhaps standing next to my cousin in her brightly colored kimono made her presence seem even less noticeable. She had a faint and somewhat pale complexion, which was almost too pale, making her appear sickly. She had more of a boyish charm than feminine grace.[58]

The narrator's depiction of Soya points to a departure from the traditional image of femininity. Her androgyny marks her independence and non-conformity. Soya's short hair and modern clothes, typical of a Modern Girl, symbolize a blend of necessity and defiance against gender roles. For Soya, short hair is a practical choice that helps her blend in with other working men than a fashion statement. Cutting her hair is a way of adapting to her challenging circumstances. Because of her appearance and behavior, which often transcend gender lines, Soya is frequently mislabeled as a 'fallen woman' by characters like Sunako's mother. As Aoyama points out, Soya's refusal to adhere to conventional gender norms is labelled as sexual transgression.[59]

[53] Derviş, 375.
[54] Türe, *Facts and Fantasies,* 224.
[55] See Günseli Sönmez İşçi, *Yıldızları Seyreden Kadın: Suat Derviş Edebiyatı* (Istanbul: Ithaki, 2015), 61.
[56] Mori Mayumi, *Danpatsu no modan gāru: 42-nin no Taishō kaijoden* (Tokyo: Bunshun Bunko, 2010).
[57] Edition used: Nomizo Naoko, *Jojū shinri* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, Bungei Bunko, 2001). Also note that in *Jojū shinri*, most characters have more than one name. Soya's nickname is derived from the Greek myth of "Leda and the Swan."
[58] Naoko, *Jojū shinri*, 10.
[59] Tomoko Aoyama, "Nomizo Naoko: The 'Eternal Girl' Crosses Boundaries," *Asian Studies Review* 30, no. 2 (June 2006), 111.

Takemura notes that women working in factories or stores for economic reasons were often considered sexually depraved in the early twentieth century. [60] Regardless of their jobs, women working outside the home were frequently viewed as sexual beings at risk of falling into prostitution, a situation reflected in Soya's experiences. She and her fellow art school graduates work decorating café interiors in Ginza, a popular spot for Modern Girls and Boys. In the 1920s and 1930s, young men dressed in modern clothes would hire girls (known as *sutikku gâru*「スティックガール」(Stick Girls) for companionship, though sometimes these relationships involved more than mere company. Despite not being an official red-light district, Ginza became associated with prostitution due to these practices. One day, Soya is wrongfully arrested while walking home from work, mistaken for a prostitute. In another instance, a group of proletarians accuse Soya of being a bourgeois woman:

> One time, after finishing a job at the cafe, Soya and another coworker, both heading in the same direction, decided to walk home together since the trains hadn't started running yet. They walked along the tracks, and after about four kilometers, a group of self-proclaimed "proletarians" suddenly jumped out from a nearby garage and surrounded them. First, they greeted Soya with a burning punch to her side.
>
> They accused her of being a bourgeois woman. "Last night, you spent the night driving, dancing, at the hotel, wasting thousands of yen on pleasure. And now, this morning, you're strolling around at dawn with two young men? Let's put an end to that!" they sneered.[61]

"What is he talking about?" Soya thinks to herself during those moments. "I only make 1.80 yen a week. What on earth do bourgeois and proletarians have to do with me? I don't understand." Her liberal lifestyle, as a woman working in late hours among other men cause negative reactions. She is perceived as a morally degraded Modern Girl, having fun in Ginza while the truth is far from it.

As Terada notes, Nomizo's way of describing Tokyo, shatters the illusion of the city's glamorous nightlife and highlights the judgements faced my people who are regarded "marginal."[62] Modern Girls were often portrayed as party girls in media and put into the same category as Taxi Girls. A newspaper article from 1929 reads: "Taxi Girls are becoming a social issue….[They] pick up men and disappear into the darkness, assisted by *moga*."[63]

Soya's experiences as a working woman highlight the broader societal prejudices that emerged as women began to liberate themselves from "correct sexuality" in modern Japan.[64] As Aoyama explains, Soya as an artist is regarded as "a dangerous threat to the majority of people, across classes and genders, in the novel. In their attempt to deal with the threatening power of her creativity, they replace it – quite unconsciously – with another kind of threat….immoral and excessively sexual being, an accusation that has no foundation."[65] Soya is objectified by most male characters, and mislabeled by men and women alike. The narrator later discovers that some people refer to Soya as "Mademoiselle Leda," that became synonymous with "lady of the night." Shako's mother shares her recollection of first seeing Soya three years prior, expressing her conflicted impressions:

> Much later, I heard the full story from someone else. At that time, she was being called "Mademoiselle Leda," and it was nothing but humiliating, pitiful rumors. It was so bad that I was skeptical at first, thinking it couldn't possibly be true. But when I saw Soya for the first time, after Shako brought her to our house, I gradually began to believe those rumors. That girl I first saw beside the rose bushes—could that really be her? (…) The life she must have led during that time seemed to validate all the disgraceful rumors I had heard.

Mochizuki, a forensic scientist and writer, explains the reasons concerning the gossips surrounding her and her former patron Suwa, which led to this label. Suwa's name, akin to "swan," references the Greek myth where Leda

[60] Takemura Kazuko, "Heterosekushizumu no keifu," in *Ai ni tsuite: Aidentiti to yokubō no seijigaku* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2002), 55.
[61] Nomizo, *Jojū shinri*, 30.
[62] Takemura Kazuko, "Heterosekushizumu no keifu," in *Ai ni tsuite: Aidentiti to yokubō no seijigaku* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2002), 201.
[63] *Yomiuri Shinbun*, May 6, 1929, in Yūki Kobari, *Yūkaku, hanayagi-kai: dansu hōru, kafe no kindaishi* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2022).
[64] Takemura, "Heterosekushizumu no keifu," 45. In Takemura's terms, "correct sexuality" is a domesticity that reproduces a class that is hegemonic in society, based on the premise of lifelong, monogamous marriage. Takemura notes that prior to the emergence of capitalism, gender divisions and their associated spheres created a clear separation between men's and women's sexual desires. However, these boundaries began to blur further in the early twentieth century as women started to liberate themselves from the imposed notions of 'correct' sexuality and gender roles.
[65] Aoyama, "Nomizo Naoko: The 'Eternal Girl' Crosses Boundaries," 112.

was raped by Zeus in the form of a swan. In the novel, Suwa makes an advance towards Soya, but it is her who is blamed for seducing him. The scene retold by Mochizuki, depicting the reaction of Suwa's wife: "The dress had been violently ripped—Leda must have resisted with all her strength. But the Countess saw the evidence: Leda's ingratitude, her betrayal, and her husband's unfaithfulness."[66] Despite her innocence, public perception turns against Soya, painting her as a fallen woman who sold her body. Some even compare her to Alexandre Dumas' *La Dame aux Camélias* (*The Lady of the Camellias*). These examples illustrate how Soya, as a Modern Girl, is unjustly transformed into a symbol of moral transgression because her independence, creativity, and defiance of traditional norms.

Despite these judgments, Soya finds refuge and autonomy in her art. Her passion for art becomes a form of self-love and expression, something unreachable by others. Mizuhara notes that while creating art, Soya rises to a higher place unreachable by others by loving herself.[67] Shako's dialogue with Shinna regarding Soya using herself as the model for her art project illustrates this: "It seems that she loves herself too much, like Narcissus by the spring. Perhaps that's why she doesn't get close to anyone." To which Shinna answers: "Artists exhibit such peculiar tendencies. That's why we can't understand them."[68]

Soya's graduation project depicting "Leda and the Swan" embodies the deep connection between self and creation. She uses herself as the model for Leda, earning her the nickname "Leda". Soya/Leda (both the creator and the victim; caught between agency and submission) is inseparable from her art: "I came to believe that the two Ledas were never separate. Just like in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the painted Leda was becoming the real Leda—it was gradually becoming clearer to me."[69] Shako's reflection on Soya's creative process further emphasizes her dedication to her art. Soya's desire to create demonstrates that the desires of Modern Girls extend beyond the sexual (as seen when she is branded a "fallen woman" by other characters) or consumerist (as when the proletarians attack her) and encompass a deep engagement with creative expression.[70]

Güzide Sabri and *Hicran Gecesi*

Güzide Sabri, born in Istanbul in 1886, penned her first novel *Münevver* at the age of sixteen. Despite her popularity in the 1920s and 1930s, she slipped into obscurity until Dorlion started to republish her works in 2022. Sabri is known for tragic love stories, many of which were adapted into films. Her characters are intellectual women with a love for the Western arts but often confined to domestic life. Güzide Sabri wrote under the names "Güzide" and "Güzide Osman", not using her husband's (Ahmet Sabri) surname as requested by him.[71] Among the magazines her works were published are *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, *Kadın* and *Kadınlar Dünyası*.

The pattern of the "good" girl versus "bad" girl is a recurring theme in Sabri's works. The "bad" girls, such as Mualla in the novel *Nedret* (1922), are often described as "fancy puppets" or "dangerous women." This contrasts with the presence of a "good" girl character, serving to highlight a moral dichotomy. These "bad" girls either face punishment or undergo a transformation influenced by the "good" girl characters. For instance, Mualla, initially portrayed as frivolous and feisty, eventually adopts a more docile demeanor under Nedret's influence. The first passage that describes Mualla as a "superficial" Westernized girl is as follows:

Mualla was the daughter of a good family. She was raised by foreign nannies; thus she was deprived of national sentiments. She was one of those who spent most of their time in shops at Beyoğlu, chasing fashion. Mualla took pride in this, believing that all

[66] Nomizo, *Jojū shinri*, 70.
[67] Mizuhara Shion, "Junsui na ren'ai higeki," in *Jojū shinri*, by Nomizo Naoko (Tokyo: Kōdansha, Bungei Bunko, 2001), 236–248.
[68] Nomizo, *Jojū shinri*, 18.
[69] Nomizo, 24-25.
[70] Soya kills Suwa and herself in the end, a scene that calls for a more extensive interpretation than this paper allows. In sum, this act symbolizes Soya's final break from society and its prejudices, where art and destruction become intertwined. In their final dialogue, Suwa expresses that he will divorce his wife and marry her. Soya kills him, rejecting the prospect of any conventional relationship. After killing Suwa, she compares him to an Apollo statue. The roles of the desirer and the object of desire are swapped.
[71] Şahika Karaca, *"Güzide Sabri Aygün: Hayatı, Sanatı ve Türk Edebiyatındaki Yeri Üzerine Bir İnceleme ve Araştırma"* (PhD diss., Erciyes Üniversitesi, 2004). Ahmet Sabri was opposed to Güzide Sabri's writing. After they got married, she stopped writing for a long time, which explains the gap between the publication dates of her two connected novels, *Ölmüş Bir Kadının Evrak-ı Metrukesi (1905)* and *Nedret*.

the virtues of humanity consisted solely of dressing well and looking good.[72]

Nedret, described as "an old sould in a young body" unsettles Mualla, who complains: "She wants me to be like her."[73] Nevertheless, she changes after falling in love with a man. The text reads: "It was as if she had changed and started becoming a good girl. Becoming more like Nedret was a sweet consolation for her. Mualla wished to be appreciated by others like Nedret."[74]

In *Hicran Gecesi*, the "bad" girl does not undergo a transformation, but meets a tragic end. The protagonist Serap and her friend Ilhan, who is also the niece of Serap's adoptive father, are opposites of one another like Mualla and Nedret. Throughout the novel, Serap is described as a "mysterious beauty": She is "so beautiful and charming as to captivate a man" and has "bewitching eyes."[75] Even the husband exoticizes her: "What a marvelous creature you are….What a fierce and mysterious beauty has been bestowed upon you."[76] Celal, her lover, refers to her as a "mysterious creature."

Serap is also an orphan with Western tastes, travels to Europe, hosts Western-style parties, and wears Western clothes.[77] In the novel, Serap is branded a "fallen woman" from the very start. Rumors about her being an orphan follow her everywhere, leading to the collapse of two engagements and tarnishing her reputation, ultimately turning her into "a resentful woman whose heart was stomped on." Even her decision to marry an older man is framed as an act of "revenge." On her wedding night, a young man offers his explanation for why Serap is marrying Fazıl Şükrü:

> All of these are sacrifices made to deceive herself, to distract, to appear happy to others, and to take revenge on the fiancé who left her. The desire to become the real hero of the events in films and novels has become the most fundamental longing in the hearts of young girls. Serap is one of these heroes... Poor Fazıl Şükrü, unaware that he is the most pitiable man in the world.[78]

Serap is perceived by others, especially men, as a Madame-Bovary-like figure, marrying an older man but falling in love with a younger one, Celal. The following remarks exemplify their prejudices against Serap: "She had ruined a man as rational as Fazıl Şükrü" and "Fazıl Şükrü, who had fallen victim to the misfortune of being enslaved by a young woman at his age..."[79] All the blame is put upon Serap; from the male characters' point of view, Serap is either a young temptress or a beautiful mirage.[80]

While Serap is portrayed as dangerous and reckless, Ilhan represents selflessness and moral integrity. İlhan, also an orphan is described as: "Modest", "selfless", and "a girl with a heart of gold." According to Celal, she is "a self-sacrificing machine, constantly working for the comfort of others."[81] Ilhan gets a happy ending, whereas Serap dies in a car accident.

Fazıl Bey's daughter, Emel, also serves as a foil to Serap. Educated in Europe, Emel represents the "ideal" New Woman, with her Western education, loyalty to family, and traditional values. Unlike Serap, Emel is not snobbish: "This girl, who had spent a long time in Europe was nothing like a snob."[82] Emel mocks her stepmother, refers to her as "kibar bir kokoş" (a refined, overdressed woman) and "süslü bir kukla" (an ornate puppet).[83] According to Betül Coşkun, the second term is used often in Güzide's works to criticize *alafranga* girls. Similar terms were used by other women authors to distinguish between the "ideal" modern woman and the "frivolous" *alafranga* girl. As Coşkun notes, "Female novelists create snobbish women who 'should not exist' in society to promote the ideal modern

[72] Güzide Sabri, *Nedret* (Istanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2021), 33.
[73] Sabri, *Nedret*, 59.
[74] Sabri, 145.
[75] Sabri, 25-27.
[76] Sabri, 33.
[77] Güzide Sabri, *Hicran Gecesi* (Istanbul: Dorlion, 2022).
[78] Sabri, *Hicran Gecesi*, 6.
[79] Sabri, 35.
[80] "Serap" in Turkish means mirage/illusion. In the text, there are several references to this, such as: "Believe me, there is no love today, only passion, pleasure, entertainment—these are what have taken the place of love.... Remember, happiness is a mirage." (63)
[81] Sabri, *Hicran Gecesi*, 129.
[82] Sabri, 75.
[83] Sabri, 76-78.

woman type…. In Fatma Âliye's novels, they are the 'frivolous woman'; in Halide Edip's, the 'decorative doll' in Güzide Sabri's, the 'modern puppet.' They often feature in novels as stock characters, sometimes with a critical tone, sometimes humorously."[84] In this sense, Mualla and Serap function as "bad examples" of modern women. As seen in previous examples, they are criticized for not conforming to the ideal of the republican woman like Nedret, Ihsan or Emel. What differs Mualla and Nedret, however, is that Mualla is single whereas Serap is a married woman, which makes her desires more "dangerous."

Throughout the narrative, Serap's desire is depicted as both alluring and destructive. Scenes of passion and risk-taking reflect her willingness to defy conventions for the sake of love:

> Maybe I'm mad, maybe I'm ill; I don't know, for I'm in love with a heartless stone. How strange life is—amidst so many young and handsome men surrounding me, in all this vast existence, how wretched I am... I fall into the calamity of loving this hard, coarse-souled, arrogant man. And what kind of love is it, do you know, İlhan? A love that becomes as wild and brave as a hyena in the face of chasms and fires—a love that reaches unto death.…"[85]

Serap is an active pursuer of love, braver than Celal. In her last meeting with Celal, before he gets married to İlhan, Serap says: "Despite everything, I never even thought of being apart from you for a minute, Celal. I am brave, love gives me great strength. Let's run away from here, let's go live together in a far corner of the West. I'm not poor; I have enough wealth to take care of both of us."[86] On the other hand, Celal remains unsympathetic to her pleas and goes as far to call their affair a murder. The married woman in love is condemned even by the lover.

In another scene, Serap faints, unable to bear the weight of her impossible love. The excess of desire is portrayed as an illness of the mind, with Serap's actions and choices ultimately leading to her downfall. The tragic ending, marked by Serap's death serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of unrestrained desire, resembling the 1920s stories with national discourse. As Türe explains:

> According to the idealized, nationalistic discourse, the girls' claim over their own bodies and their premarital or extramarital sexual relationships are signs of degeneration. To save them from this situation, or to prevent them from being influenced by these thoughts, social control is essential.[87]

In such stories it is the mother, neighbors or other characters that impose social control, which is observed in characters' reactions to contrasting images of modern women found in Sabri's works. For instance, after marrying İlhan, Celal writes to his friend Kenan: "Instead of a girl who plays the piano exceptionally, paints like a painter, and rides horses more than the most famous cavalryman, seek a wife who can be the lady of the salon and the woman of the house."[88] This emphasizes the role of the republican wife as defined by nationalist discourse. As Türe notes, this prototype is challenged by women in literature who "do not repress their sexuality", but "prioritize sexuality over everything else."[89] Through her uncontrollable sexuality, Serap disrupts this ideal.

It should be noted that Sabri's *Hicran Gecesi* also serves as a criticism of loveless marriages. An old man loving a young woman is described as "comical" in the novel; initially Fazıl hesitates to propose to Serap as he assumes she will make fun of him. Serap's mother tells her "not to accept the proposal if its for his money."[90] Türe interprets commonly explored theme of young women marrying older rich men in early twentieth century Turkish literature as "passion for luxury": in such stories, the desire for wealth and luxury competes with the idea of love.[91] Women aim to marry rich men for a comfortable life but are drawn to younger men during marriage. Sabri, however, departs from this trope; Serap Serap marries Fazıl not for money, but because of the rumors surrounding her origin (orphan) and reputation. Nevertheless, desire for love outweighs rational marriage in Serap's case. The contrast between the republican New Woman and the *alafranga* girl becomes evident in the women characters' choices regarding love in

[84] Coşkun, "Türk Modernleşmesini Kadın Romanları Üzerinden Okumak: Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e," 935.
[85] Sabri, *Hicran Gecesi*, 47.
[86] Sabri, 137.
[87] Türe, *Facts and Fantasies,* 201.
[88] Sabri, *Hicran Gecesi,* 162.
[89] Türe, *Facts and Fantasies,* 207.
[90] Sabri, *Hicran Gecesi,* 32.
[91] Türe, *Facts and Fantasies,* 173.

Sabri's works.

Evaluation of Key Themes and Findings

The selected works reveal common themes of autonomy, creativity, and the struggle against social norms, while also highlighting cultural differences in the portrayal of Modern Girls. These themes emerge within the broader context of both countries' efforts to modernize and Westernize, particularly concerning the transformation of gender relations and the role of women in society.

According to Binnaz Toprak, one of the differences between Japanese and Turkish modernity was that "Japan's transition to modernity via the economic route met with much less resistance than Turkey's model of cultural change."[92] In the Tanzimat era (1839-76), Ottoman Turkey "resented" Westernization. Unlike the Japanese modernization, in Turkey religion was the source of resistance. Despite their differences, the emancipation of women was one of the most important objectifications of modernization in both countries. Toprak adds: "Gender relations were the basis of the Republican project of modernity", whereas in Japan "patriarchy had less to do with religion but rested on the traditional family, or *ie*, system"[93].

Moreover, Japan's modernism in the Taishō era (1912-26) was less state-led compared to the Meiji era (1868-1912)[94] whereas Turkey's modernization in the 1920s resembled the Meiji era with significant state influence. This situation affected the position of women: According to Yaprak Zihnioğlu " the Kemalist government, although it regarded the issue of women's rights as a 'symbol of the modernization/Westernization program,' wanted to implement its women's rights project within the boundaries it set."[95] Within these boundaries women's roles and desires were still confined to the domestic: prior to Republican era, in the traditional/religious patriarchal order, women were seen above all as "sexual objects," and there was fear that they might damage the "honor of the family and community (congregation)", whereas during the Republican period, although women were now permitted to enter the public sphere, the old fears concerning women still persisted.[96]

As Toprak explains, in Turkey, the Republican leadership viewed the Ottoman Empire's failure to modernize as largely due to the influence of Islam and the *ulema* (Muslim scholars trained in Islamic law), believing that embracing Western civilization was the key to Turkey's inclusion among "civilized" nations. A key aspect of this Westernization was the transformation of gender relations, with women becoming publicly visible and participating alongside men in the public sphere, a stark contrast to the traditionally segregated roles of men and women in Muslim societies. [97] The term "modern femininity" encompassed women who are "educated professional", "involved in the activities of clubs and societies", "a good wife, a good mother, and a smart follower of fashion."[98]

Suat Derviş's and Güzide Sabri's works exemplify the struggles caused by the nation's focus on the "good wife" role within this framework of modern femininity. In Derviş's narratives, characters like Cavide embody the independent, working woman—a translator enjoying the freedoms granted to women during modernization. However, Cavide is ultimately "pushed into" marriage due to hardships she faces in the workplace, highlighting the limited options available to women and the expectation that marriage is the ultimate goal. Derviş's portrayal exposes the contradictions in the Republican vision of modernity, where women's public participation is encouraged but their autonomy is curtailed by traditional expectations. Similarly, Sabri's female characters, though often educated and with Western tastes, typically do not work and are expected to fulfill domestic roles as good wives and mothers. The *alafranga* girls in her works, with their unrestrained sexuality, are portrayed as threats to social norms. Characters like Serap in *Hicran Gecesi* face tragic ends for deviating from the ideal of the republican woman. These narratives

[92] Binnaz Toprak, "Economic Development versus Cultural Transformation: Projects of Modernity in Japan and Turkey," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 35 (2006).

[93] Toprak, "Economic Development versus Cultural Transformation: Projects of Modernity in Japan and Turkey, 109.

[94] Elise K. Tipton and John Clark, eds., *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 7.

[95] Yaprak Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkılap: Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği* (İstanbul: Metis, 2022), 149.

[96] Fatmagül Berktay, "Cumhuriyet'in 75 Yıllık Serüvenine Kadınlar Açısından Bakmak," in *75. Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 1998), 1–11.

[97] Toprak, "Economic Development versus Cultural Transformation: Projects of Modernity in Japan and Turkey."

[98] Betül Karagöz, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ne Kalan Bir Mesele: Kadınların Konumu," *Karadeniz*, no. 29 (2016), 40.

reinforce the idea that while modernization allows for certain advancements for women, those who deviate from prescribed roles face social condemnation.

In Japan, between 1890 and 1911, state policies reinforced a limited view of women's roles, emphasizing their contributions through domestic duties and household management. In the 1920s, there was a shift in the discourse on girls' education, which now included the idea that "it is desirable for women to have jobs." This was the time when the number of *shokugyō fujin*「職業婦人」(career women) increased rapidly The Meiji ideology of "good wife, wise mother" still influenced education at girls' schools by imposing specific conditions on women who aspired to become *shokugyō fujin*. Pursuing a career was acceptable as long as it did not interfere with household chores or child-rearing and did not compromise their femininity.[99]

Barbara Satō defines the 1920s as a turning point regarding the construction of female identity that emerged with the consumer society. She references painter Kimura Shōhachi (1893-1958), who noted, "The foundation was laid in Taishō. There followed development and growth beyond description." He observed that compared to the Meiji period, "the things that underwent a dramatic restructuring were the physical appearance of the city (Tokyo), and women's manners and customs."[100] According to Kimura, the Great Kantō earthquake—occurring midway through the Taishō period—brought changes "no one could have imagined," accelerating the transformation of both the cityscape and social norms, especially those relating to women.[101] The Taishō era, with its democratic currents, opened the door for greater social and economic participation for women. Compared to the Meiji era, women had "a greater chance for economic (and thus, potentially, sexual) independence," but most of the new jobs available to women were so undercompensated that even paying rent on a single woman's wages was a major obstacle."[102]

Uno Chiyo's character Kazue in *Aru hitori no onna no hanashi* exemplifies the struggles faced by Modern Girls during this transformative period. Kazue achieves economic and sexual independence by working multiple jobs and pursuing a writing career. However, she also encounters significant challenges. Her determination to live independently and follow her desires places her outside traditional norms, inviting judgment and misunderstanding. Kazue's experiences highlight the pressures faced by women who stepped beyond conventional roles, and the complexities of pursuing autonomy in a rapidly modernizing society. Similarly, Nomizo Naoko's character Soya in *Jojū shinri* represents the struggle to make ends meet while confronting prejudices. Soya works late hours in Ginza, a district associated with modernity and nightlife, which leads to her being mislabeled as a "fallen woman." Her androgynous appearance and dedication to her art challenge gender norms, causing others to objectify and misjudge her. Being outside the home and conventional expectations becomes an invitation to social criticism. Soya's experiences reflect the difficulties faced by women who sought economic independence and personal fulfillment amid constraints.

Set in the 1920s and 1930s, a period of these significant social and cultural changes regarding Japanese and Turkish women, the selected works illustrate the experiences of young women contending with the challenges of modern urban life. In the 1920s and 1930s, both Japan and Turkey saw the emergence of entertainment venues as integral parts of urban life.[103] These modern spaces, such as cafes, bars, and music halls, became centers for social interaction and cultural exchange, highlighting the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the era. Cavide hangs out at a Western-style café and bar. Serap attends balls, which were regarded as key events where men and women mingled in a social setting, symbolizing the new social order of the Republic.[104] Kazue works as a waitress (among other jobs) in Tokyo.

[99] Saitō Minako, *Modan gāru ron* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, Bunshun Bunko, 2003).
[100] Kimura Shōhachi, *Zuihitsu josei sandai* (Tokyo: Kawade shobō, 1956), 86, quoted in Barbara Satō, *The New Japanese Woman* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 33.
[101] Shōhachi, *Zuihitsu josei sandai, 33*.
[102] William O. Gardner, *Advertising Tower: Japanese Modernism and Modernity in the 1920s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center Publications Program, 2006), 148.
[103] For more on Istanbul cosmopolitanism see Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Yeni Hayat: İnkılap ve Travma, 1908-1928* (Istanbul: Doğan Egmont, 2017). With the arrival of White Russian émigrés to Istanbul, escaping the Bolshevik Revolution, the city became a melting pot of cultures, with Russian customs and fashions influencing the local population. This included the establishment of cabarets and nightclubs where Russian women often performed, as well as the adoption of Western-style beach culture, which was a novelty in Istanbul at the time.
[104] Filiz Yıldız, *1930'lu Yılların Gazetelerinde Modern Türk Kadını İmgesi* (Konya: Nüve Kültür Merkezi Yayınları, 2020).

Nomizo's Soya is a young woman taking on taxing jobs in Ginza. Each character's experiences underscore their adaptability to city life that came with struggles. Depictions of Tokyo in Nomizo's and Istanbul in Derviş's texts reflect the loneliness of urban women. While Derviş's *Kadın Aşksız Yaşamaz* describes Istanbul as "uncanny" and "full of possibilities." On top of her treatment by co-workers, Cavide feels even more lonely because of the atmosphere of the city. On the other hand, Nomizo's portrayal of modern Tokyo, as Kobari suggests, shatters the illusion of its glamorous nightlife, emphasizing the judgments faced by marginalized individuals.[105]

One of the common patterns in the selected texts is the portrayal of Modern Girls as orphans (with the exception of Cavide, who still has her mother), which I interpret as a deliberate choice by the authors. Kandiyoti suggests that in early twentieth century Turkish literature, orphanhood symbolizes the characters' detachment from traditional values and their struggle to integrate into society. She further explains that unlike Western novels, where characters often rise from poverty to wealth, Turkish novels of this period present orphans as disconnected from their roots, vulnerable, and alienated.[106] By focusing on characters without traditional family ties, the selected works highlight the independence and freedom of Modern Girls to challenge social norms. The orphan motif suggests that the absence of familial constraints allows these characters to develop their unconventional ways.

It is not only the absence of familial constraints that enables these characters to defy societal expectations; their actions and choices, including practicing free love, reflect and contribute to the social transformations of their time. In both cultures, Modern Girls were known for their involvement in unconventional relationships. The adoption of new lifestyles encouraged women to actively engage in public spaces, leading to increased interactions with others. This newfound freedom enabled women to experience love more openly, as exemplified by Kazue and Cavide. As Fatma Türe explains Turkish modernization meant women becoming publicly visible and participating alongside men in the public sphere: "…especially in the fields of education and civil law after the revolution of 1908, again though limited, can nevertheless be claimed to have provided the urban women with a freer, more visible life compared to that of their mothers."[107]

However, in the Turkish context, love sometimes came with limitations. Numerous examples of "moral stories"[108] that discourage Westernized lifestyles and women engaging in unconventional relationships can be found in early twentieth Turkish literature. Love is often constrained by traditional norms, and female characters who pursue forbidden passions invariably meet tragic fates.[109] With its tragic ending, Sabri's *Hicran Gecesi* follows the same pattern found in these moral stories. By contrast, the Japanese selected works are devoid of moral messages. This difference suggests that the nationalist discourse in Turkey had an impact on literature, particularly how women's autonomy was framed by women authors like Sabri, who fit the definition of the New/Republican Woman, rather than the Modern Girl. The dichotomy between the "good" girl and the "bad" girl is evident in works by Sabri and Nomizo, where idealized representations of the modern woman (Ilhan, Sunako) contrast with those who deviate from societal norms (Serap, Soya). However, although Nomizo's work concludes with Soya's death, it is devoid of the moral messages commonly found in Sabri's novel. Many characters assume the stereotypical "bad" girl in Soya because she does not conform to gender roles. Serap is considered one because she prioritizes her desires over marriage. Both Soya and Serap represent figures who defy gendered expectations, but the ways they are labeled and

[105] Kobari Yūki, *Yūkaku, hanayagi-kai: dansu hōru, kafe no kindaishi* (Kawade shobō shinsha, 2022).

[106] Deniz Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar: Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler*, trans. Aksu Bora, Feyziye Sayılan, Şirin Tekeli, Hüseyin Tapınç, and Ferhunde Özbay (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2019).

[107] Türe, *Facts and Fantasies*, 53.

[108] Examples of young women being torn between East and West are prevalent in Turkish literature, an example being Peyami Safa's *Fatih-Harbiye* (1931). In the novel Neriman, a young woman is caught between two worlds. Living in the conservative neighborhood of Fatih, she is in a relationship with her childhood friend Şinasi, who embodies Eastern traditions and values. Neriman, however, is drawn to Macit, a modern man who embraces Western music and lifestyle. Influenced by Macit, she becomes fascinated with Western culture and expresses a desire to attend a ball. Her indecision is resolved when she hears a tragic story from a woman whose daughter fell in love with a Russian man. The daughter lived in poor conditions with him, left him for a wealthy man, but ultimately could not find happiness and committed suicide. This encounter prompts Neriman to choose Şinasi.

[109] See 1901 novel Aşk-ı Memnu (Forbidden Love) by the male author Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil: Like Serap, having married an older man, Bihter falls in love with her husband's nephew and after their affair ends, commits suicide. Although Bihter conforms to gender roles in many aspects, transgressing the boundaries of marriage is not rewarded in the novel. Aside from her tragic death, she is depicted as a lonely woman throughout the story, with other female characters showing disdain for her and even her mother treating her coldly.

judged reveal cultural distinctions. Soya's nonconformity is met with misunderstanding and rejection, yet it is not explicitly framed as immoral within the narrative, while Serap's desires are portrayed as dangerous transgressions, resulting in severe moral repercussions. This difference illustrates how patriarchal control over women's bodies and desires manifests differently in Japanese and Turkish contexts, with nationalist discourse in Turkey intensifying the moral judgment surrounding women's autonomy.

In the selected texts, Modern Girl characters grapple with judgments and challenges that are caused by not conforming to gender norms. As a result, they are mislabeled and misunderstood by other characters. Despite the challenges they face, both Turkish and Japanese Modern Girl characters, as depicted by women authors, pursue their desires. Love (often in the form of creativity) becomes a conduit for self-exploration, allowing allows these characters to redefine their identities and assert their autonomy within a restrictive cultural framework.

Conclusion

This analysis has revealed that Japanese and Turkish women authors present complex, multifaceted portrayals of Modern Girls, challenging the superficial and often morally reductive depictions by male authors and media of the time. In Japanese literature, while Modern Girls were frequently reduced to consumerist or sexualized figures by male authors like Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, Uno Chiyo's *Aru hitori no onna no hanashi* depicts Kazue as a working woman whose desire for autonomy and creativity defies these limited portrayals. Kazue's experiences as a café waitress and aspiring writer reflect the gendered challenges of modern urban life, where women were expected to balance newfound independence with negative reactions from the society. This is also observed in Nomizo Naoko's *Jojū shinri*, which portrays Soya's artistic passion and her rejection of gender roles, culminating in her isolation and mislabeling.

In the Turkish context, Suat Derviş's *Kadın Aşksız Yaşamaz* and Güzide Sabri's *Hicran Gecesi* illustrate the tensions between the Kemalist reforms that encouraged women's public visibility and the continuing pressure for women to conform to domestic ideals. Cavide, in Derviş's novel, grapples with the paradox of being an independent working woman in 1930s Istanbul while facing judgements over her romantic life. Her struggle reflects the broader societal expectation that women remain modest and prioritize marriage, even as they enter the workforce. Sabri's *Hicran Gecesi* contrasts characters like Serap, who defies the conventions of marriage and sexual modesty, with Ilhan, who conforms to the nationalist ideal of the loyal, self-sacrificing wife. The tragic fate of Serap exemplifies the moral consequences often imposed on women who sought to live outside societal norms in the context of early Republican Turkey.

These findings highlight how women authors in both Japan and Turkey portrayed the Modern Girl figure, emphasizing their desires for autonomy, creativity, and love while exposing the limitations imposed by patriarchal structures. These narratives challenge the one-dimensional depictions often found in male-authored works and provide insight into the ways Modern Girls navigated the contradictions of modernization. Through their literary works, Uno, Nomizo, Derviş, and Sabri foreground the complexities of being a Modern Girl in two culturally distinct societies undergoing rapid change, where women's desires for self-expression often collided with traditional expectations. This research thus underscores the significance of women's writing as a means of articulating female desires and experiences, challenging patriarchal constraints, and contributing to the discourse on modernity and gender.

Extended Abstract

In the 1920s, Modern Girls emerged as a global phenomenon, capturing public attention in countries like Turkey and Japan due to their Westernized appearance and liberal lifestyles. These women, often depicted with bobbed hair, fashionable clothing, and a carefree attitude, became symbols of modernity and were featured in literature and media. However, the portrayals of Modern Girls, especially by male authors and in the media, were predominantly characterized by stereotypes, reducing them to fashion icons, femme fatales, or materialistic party girls. These limited representations failed to capture the complexities of their identities and experiences.

In Japan, studies on Modern Girls, or *modan gaaru* 「モダンガール」 (abbreviated as *moga*「モガ」), have primarily

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focused on media portrayals, which emphasized superficial aspects, or perceived moral decay, without delving into the deeper personal and social struggles these women faced. Conversely, the representation of Turkish Modern Girls, often referred to as "alafranga" and "flappers," has been a neglected topic in literary studies. Most scholarly works on Turkish Modern Girls rely on newspaper articles or advertisements as primary sources, rarely mentioning literary portrayals.

This paper challenges these limited representations by exploring themes of desire and self-representation in the works of Japanese and Turkish women authors. Through a comparative literary analysis, I examine the portrayals of Modern Girl characters in the early 20th century. By focusing on themes of desire, agency, and resistance to societal norms, this analysis explores how these authors depict the complexities of Modern Girl figures within their respective socio-cultural contexts. Rather than focusing on narrative or stylistic techniques, the analysis highlights the socio-political tensions in Japan and Turkey during their modernization periods, using the characters and their experiences as lenses to understand broader societal concerns about women's roles. The selected texts reveal how Modern Girls challenge patriarchal expectations through their pursuit of independence, creative expression, and romantic desire, while simultaneously being constrained by the dominant cultural narratives of their time.

By analyzing the literary portrayals of Modern Girl characters, I demonstrate that their identities extend far beyond the stereotypical depictions offered by male authors and mainstream media. The works of Japanese authors Uno Chiyo (1897–1996) and Nomizo Naoko (1897–1987), along with Turkish authors Suat Derviş (1905–1972) and Güzide Sabri (1886–1946), present more complex portrayals of Modern Girls, highlighting their desires, struggles, and resistance to gender norms. For instance, Uno, through her Modern Girl character Kazue, reveals the struggles of a working woman subjected to objectification while pursuing her desire to write, whereas Derviş explores similar issues faced by her character Cavide in the workplace. Nomizo's portrayal of Soya as an independent, androgynous artist exposes the prejudices faced by Modern Girls who refuse to conform to gender roles. Similarly, Serap in Sabri's novel, by defying the marriage system, poses a threat to societal values and, as a result, faces tragedy. These characters assert their agency through the pursuit of their desires, albeit within certain limitations.

Uno Chiyo's *Aru hitori no onna no hanashi* (The Story of a Lonely Woman, 1971) offers an autobiographical account of Uno's youth. The protagonist Kazue represents a departure from the portrayal of café waitresses by male authors, who often depicted such women as objects of desire. Instead, Uno presents Kazue as a hardworking woman facing the harsh realities of urban life. Uno's work challenges how the café waitress figure was frequently trivialized by male authors as mere objects of desire.

Similarly, Suat Derviş's *Kadın Aşksız Yaşamaz* (A Woman Doesn't Live Without Love, 1935) Cavide's independence as a working woman in 1930s Istanbul aligns with the Kemalist reforms that promoted women's participation in public life, yet her romantic desires, coupled with societal expectations for marriage, reveal the inherent contradictions of the era's gender ideology. Cavide's experiences expose the double bind of modern women, who were encouraged to enter the workforce yet still pressured to conform to traditional roles within marriage, reflecting the limitations of modernization in Turkey.

Nomizo Naoko's *Jojū shinri* (The Psychology of a Female Beast, 1930) Soya's androgyny and creative passion challenge the Meiji-era ideals of women as "good wives, wise mothers" and reflect the Taishō-period exploration of women's independence. Nomizo's Tokyo shatters the idealized portrayal of the modern urban woman as liberated, revealing the underlying class and gender-based judgments. Soya's arrest for being mistaken as a prostitute underscore how Modern Girls, despite their public visibility, were often perceived as morally transgressive within Japan's patriarchal system.

Güzide Sabri's *Hicran Gecesi* (The Night of Parting, serialized 1936; book 1937) the contrast between Serap's tragic end and Ilhan's virtuous role reflects the nationalist discourse of the Republican Turkey, where women's sexuality was controlled. Sabri critiques the social expectation that women conform to the ideal Republican wife—loyal, self-sacrificing, and desexualized. Serap's "dangerous" desires and eventual downfall highlight the tension between the pursuit of love and the moral constraints placed upon women, which were often used to regulate and police women's behavior as part of nation-building efforts.

The paper thus situates the desires of Modern Girls within the broader socio-political landscapes of Japan and Turkey, both of which were undergoing significant transformations in the early 20th century. In Japan, the shift from the Meiji to the Taishō period involved rapid modernization efforts. These changes impacted gender roles, as traditional values around women's domesticity (the "good wife, wise mother" ideal) were juxtaposed against the new opportunities for women in the workforce and public life. Despite the visibility and autonomy gained by figures like the Modern Girl, their public presence was often perceived as morally transgressive, as seen in Soya's arrest in *Jojū shinri*. This reflects the tension between women's growing independence and lingering patriarchal norms, with Modern Girls embodying both the promise of liberation and the threat to established social order. Uno's Kazue, similarly, navigates the same societal judgments as she works multiple jobs in a rapidly modernizing Tokyo, facing objectification and systemic bias against working women.

Similarly, in Turkey, the Kemalist reforms following the establishment of the Republic emphasized the role of women in shaping the nation. Women were encouraged to participate in public life, yet this new role came with expectations of conforming to the ideals of the "ideal Republican woman"—loyal, self-sacrificing, and desexualized. Characters like Cavide in *Kadın Aşksız Yaşamaz* and Serap in *Hicran Gecesi* illustrate the contradiction inherent in these reforms. While they seek autonomy and personal fulfillment, their desires are often curbed by societal pressures to marry or maintain traditional gender roles. Sabri's work especially critiques this dynamic, showing how women who deviate from societal norms, like Serap, are punished or reined back into conformity.

By comparing these literary portrayals, the paper connects the concept of "desire" to larger historical currents. In both contexts, women's desires—whether for independence, love, or self-expression—are shaped by modernization but remain constrained by deeply entrenched social structures. The paper highlights how literature provides a space to explore these tensions and reveal the complexities of women's experiences in Japan and Turkey during this period of change.

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