The House Unbound:
Reconfiguring Domestic Boundaries in Urbanizing Southeast Turkey

Bridget Purcell

"In order to make it possible to think through, and live, [sexual] difference, we must reconsider the whole problematic of space and time" – Luce Irigaray

If you had visited Urfa in the mid-1990s, you would not have seen any women on the street, nor in the shops, buses, restaurants and cafes that they occupy so visibly now. In any case, this was a common refrain in 2010, when I first arrived in the city. From my perspective at that time, it was difficult to imagine: Urfa's urban space, as I knew it, was so suffused by gendered relations—from the architecture of buildings to the experience of walking down the street—that the city without women was almost unthinkable. Yet I was prompted to think it, and often: hadn't I noticed, for instance, that "new city" shops and restaurants have separate sections for women built into their architecture, whereas "old city" establishments lack designated sections for women? This is because "back then" (*eskiden*) women were simply expected to remain "in the home" (*evde*). As one interlocutor told me, "It used to be that a man would buy ten pairs of shoes, bring them home for his wife to choose one, and return the other nine pairs to the store the next day."

These remarks call to mind those official discourses that mobilize the "place" of women in Urfa—their presence or absence in the "public sphere"—as an index of the city's modernization. With GAP, the progress of Urfa women (or lack thereof) has been a major point of concern. The status of women is a major preoccupation of developmental discourses, a factor that confirms "backwardness" and justifies government intervention (Abu-Lughod 1998, Escobar 1995, Ahmed 1992). In Turkey, "gender-differentiated statistics" often serve as "'evidence' that the southeast remains 'backwards' and 'underdeveloped'"(Harris 2008: 1704). Studies of Urfa often cite statistics related to women's low rates of literacy and knowledge of Turkish, low rates of property ownership and formal employment, and high rates of natality. While changes in gender norms are often regarded as particularly slow and problematic, the studies report limited improvement over time (e.g., Terzi 2010, Gökçe et al. 2010).

In official studies of (/by) GAP, the progress of women (however modest) is understood largely as an effect of urbanization. Recall that during the GAP years, Urfa families were moving—either from the villages to the city center, or from the stone houses of the historic "old city" to the burgeoning apartment blocks of the "new city." Whereas in villages women are considered to be under the sway of "patriarchal traditions" that "exclude them from public life" (Kudat et al 2000: 209; see too Moravidi 1990), in the city women are perceived as more free: "Migration is the most important of the many factors that dilute [traditional gender norms] and create countervailing forces, since migrants know little of the local traditions and tribal relations" (251). The hypothesis is that, as women move from the village to the city, or from the "old city" to the "new city," they are also emerging from a domestic interior to the public sphere outside; from traditional to modern accommodations; from the past into the future. We are thus invited to "visualize temporal movement in terms of the transformation of [space]" (Grosz 2004).

This strategy is a familiar one in Urfa, where changes in physical space are commonly mobilized as evidence of modernization: take, for instance, the banner near the new bus station stating "Urfa has a new bus station," or the placard in the center square which reads, simply, "Nothing will ever be the same again" (*Artık hiçbirşey eskisi gibi olmayacak*). Implied is a constant subject who observes these changes in space from the "outside," from a stable point of view (Colebrook 2001). Without this constant subject, there could be no linear sequencing of objects in space, and no effect of a directed, irreversible time: Nothing will ever be the same again.

As the opening paragraph suggests, the question of gender and space is not solely an official preoccupation: the people of Urfa likewise draw on gendered discourse as a temporal discourse, a way of understanding change over time. To say that "there were no women on the street" twenty years ago is to draw an implicit comparison with today's streets, where women and men appear in roughly equal numbers. (In fact, it is a statement that can only be made in the past tense: it is doubtful that the same people, fifteen years ago, were saying "there are no women here"). Yet the significance of these local accounts is very different from the official ones. For while official discourses rely on a constant subject, "woman," who is extracted from lived spatial

contexts, local accounts insist that to be a woman is always to be a woman *somewhere,* within a specific set of social and material relations. Take the fact of urban migration: local accounts make it clear that women did not simply change *where* they were without changing essentially *who* they were. They show us, rather, that to change one's type of dwelling was to alter the kinds of tasks that organized life, the intertwining of these tasks with those of other people, and thus the very rhythms and patterns of life.

We might therefore start by considering the broader context within which spatial discourse is bound up with discourses of identity, gendered and otherwise, in the context of migration. Consider those elderly men and women who today speak in fond, nostalgic terms of the "old city" of their youth. Their descriptions of "neighborhood culture" (*mahalle kültürü*) are always tied to the lived environment and, in particular, to the interconnectedness (relative to modern apartments) of houses —the openness of the home to neighbors, guests, animals, and others. These men and women mention the drift of familiar voices between courtyards, and the smell of food wafting from home to home. *Koku hakkı,* the "right of smell," describes an informal understanding that, if one's neighbors can smell the food one is cooking, one is obliged to share with those neighbors. A similar sharing takes place with communal feasting of sacrifice meat, and the less formal but no less reliable distribution of leftovers.

They also strongly emphasize the house's openness to non-human elements. This was often to do with climate: "Those houses stayed cool in the summer, warm in the winter. In the winter it snowed. But the walls did not let out the heat. The walls were thick. That's how we grew up. As kids, we'd collect the snow in the courtyard, we melted it" (C.I. 6/17/11).[1] They also commonly mention animals: "In the 60s, we had race-horses in the house. Our house had two sections. It was like a mansion. One part was for animals, the other for people. My father was very fond of animals. He raised horses, donkeys, peacocks, even gazelles. They became domesticated, accustomed to humans. They'd eat candy from his hand…" (H.H. 4/14/11)[2]

---

1 Interview with Cevher Ilhan, 6/17/11.

2 Interview with Hasan Hayirli, 4/14/11.

With the arrival of villagers, the porous boundaries of traditional Urfa homes seem to have become a point of concern among residents—a shift noticeable even within the narration of individuals. Take the exposure of the house to weather elements, a characteristic mentioned fondly in old city accounts, which becomes the precise characteristic that is no longer tolerable:

> People can no longer live in the old houses. [Although I appreciate the houses aesthetically and support their restoration], even I can't live in them. I mean, it's honestly more comfortable to live in an orderly, cozy (*kutu gibi,* literally "box like") apartment with climate control. The old city's winters were difficult. The houses were nice in the summer but unlivable in the winter. We used to live there. In the winter you would sleep in the rooms, and they stayed warm, but—I beg your pardon—if you need to go to the bathroom, where is it? You would have to go down into the cold, the snow, the rain. It's not easy. One can't live in those houses (C.K. 7/6/2011).[3]

We can see how the arrival of villagers prompted a reorganization of the senses (involving visibility, proximity, the olfactory). There emerged among the urban elite new concerns with cleanliness, privacy, and domestic comfort: old houses began to appear unsuitable because they made "private life" too visible, because animals were too proximate to the (now only-human) domestic sphere, and because occupants were too much exposed to the elements.

The preoccupation in these narratives with the question of domestic boundaries indicates that, although these boundaries were shifting and unstable, they were no less significant for that. On the contrary, it seems that the boundary's *in*stability made it a point of particular attention, an "incitement to discourse" (Foucault 1978: 17). During the decades of migration, as the space of social life contracted, boundary questions became a way of differentiating people suddenly side-by-side[4], a way of drawing status contrasts between one's family and others. This differentiation was deeply gendered from the start:

> My father died in 1973. We lived in the old city, in one of the big stone houses with a courtyard. The surrounding edges of the courtyard were lined with rooms for all of the people in the family. My mother wanted to move to an apartment. I did not want to. In the summer, we used to sleep outside

3 Interview with Cihat Kurkcuoglu, 7/6/11.

[4] Relatedly, see Wendy Brown 2010 on the building of walls as expressive of cultural anxiety. She discusses, for instance, the desire among some conservatives to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexican border in the context of anxieties about the presence of Mexican immigrants in the U.S.

> on platforms made of cedar wood. Then my mother said: "My son, we have young girls, people around us can see them. It's a shame for us. Let's move to an apartment." And so in 1975, we moved to Bahçelievler [Urfa's first new city neighborhood] (H.H. 4/14/11).

One's sleeping daughters were presumably no more visible in 1975 than they had been in previous years, but by 1975 that exposure had become shameful. (H.H. recalls it as *the* factor that precipitated the family's move.) In an interesting counterpoint to the official narrative, wherein the confinement of women marks "backwardness," H.H.'s mother views her daughter's confinement as requisite to their status and respectability.[5] This theme will be drawn out over the course of the following ethnographic sections.

While the question of domestic boundaries arose in the context of migration, it remains an important point of concern in Urfa today, where changes in dwelling, class, and gendered relations continue at a rapid pace. Each of the following discussions centers on a type of contemporary dwelling—a mudbrick village house, an apartment in a neighborhood of recent urban migrants, and a new city apartment. In each instance, we will examine how the line dividing inside and outside is drawn, and ask what modes of dress, activity, visibility, and sociality are delineated to each sphere. By asking about *phenomenal* boundaries – that is, the boundary not as "real" but as experienced and constituted (or not) by inhabitants – my aim is to draw space and time *out* of the background, and ask how they might in some ways be *constitutive* of gender. We will find that the refiguration of domestic boundaries in Urfa is deeply implicated in the ongoing refiguration of gendered relations – and that the latter simultaneously implicates class, upward mobility, and even ethnicity.

The Village House: Pero

When Pero got married at age 21, she moved from her father's house to her husband's house – a distance of roughly 200 meters. With her husband Halil, who was also her paternal cousin, she built a new home and established a new life. But it was as though this new life, as mother and homemaker, had been rehearsed: as a girl, Pero had helped to raise her nine younger siblings, in lieu of going to school – a common trajectory for

[5] And also their relative "moderness" with respect to villagers; this point will become clear later.

first-born females. With Halil, she raised three children of her own (a fourth died in infancy). Her two teenage boys, Fatih and Faruk, even physically resembled the younger brothers she had raised, and this was a continual source of doting commentary among relatives. If you were to ask Pero, as I sometimes did, about what *might* have been – for instance, had she remained in school, or married someone else, or had the chance to travel – she would brush off the question as irrelevant, senseless even ("Who doesn't want to travel?"). One could get the idea that Pero had neither choice nor mobility, that the life of a village woman is a seamless unfolding of expected events and relationships.

This, in any case, was the conclusion reached by the teams of social scientists dispatched to southeastern villages by the Ankara Sociological Association, in conjunction with the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP). Armed with surveys and statistics, they set out to discover those factors that subordinate village women, keeping them essentially "stuck" (only 24% are born outside the village where they currently reside) (Kudat and Bayram 244-252)[6]. Among the factors considered are women's inability to speak Turkish, lack of formal education, exclusion from property ownership, and lack of remunerative employment. Together, these factors "add up" to women's exclusion from public life, and mandate intervention on their behalf (Harris 2008). Yet the same factors that place village women in need of intervention also makes them difficult to reach: "[With the GAP Project], male members of the society were able to interact with a large number of new actors over the decades whereas women were confined to their homes" (Gökçe et al. 2010: 242).

I want to pause on the way that "confinement to the home" serves as an emblem of village women's subordination. Consider the following domestic scene, included as an ethnographic excerpt in a sociological study by the World Bank:

> The room in Harran was almost empty, there were only a large *kilim* [carpet] on the floor and several pillows on which you can lean back, rest your arm or sleep. We were chatting with a young

[6] Harris points out how "Kurdish and Arabic speaking women" are particularly singled out in the developmental discourse of southeastern Turkey, and how their being "stuck" is temporal as well as spatial: "It is these (rural, minority, religious, veiled) women that stand in as the multi-ethnic Anatolian village women of Turkey's past, in contrast to the 'modern Turkish woman' (urban, middle class, secular) of Turkey's future" (Harris 2008: 1704).

> man with shiny black eyes about this family and living conditions in the village. A baby was sleeping in the cradle and another one was playing with a plastic car with a missing wheel. The mother, who had a nice face with smiling eyes, was in a long, bright green dress. She moved briskly in and out but did not join the conversation. After a while, I realized that she did not know Turkish and her husband translated into Arabic for her (Nedret Durutan, task team leader, in Kudat and Bayram 2000: 242).

In this scene, the domestic space embodies the exclusion of village women from social life. It takes as axiomatic a juxtaposition between a sub-social domestic interior and a social world "out there." This is a widely held social scientific assumption, as Strathern (1988) points out: "The anthropological compulsion to identify what is crucially 'social'… assumes that the indigenous models promote a split between a society so perceived and elements that might be regarded as asocial, antisocial, subsocial" (76).[7]

This imagination of domestic space as a separate realm may rest, in part, on a common and under-examined understanding of "place" as a container or enclosure (Irigaray 1993, Colebrook 2001, Grosz 2001, Ingold 2011). As Ingold (2011) argues, the notion of place as a container is a product of a particular Anglo-American thought tradition which divides something called "place" (as a specific enclosure) from something called "space" (as a boundless totality); while this distinction is not "immediately given to our experience," it nonetheless pervades social science. Consider Bourdieu's famous study of Berber village homes (1970). The essay begins with a diagram of the house's morphology, noting the paramount and unambiguous significance of the line dividing its interior from the world outside. In Bourdieu's account, the threshold of the house is the master organizing line for a set of binary, homologous oppositions that organize Berber culture: nature/culture; inside/outside; female/male. It is a "magic frontier" that divides, "on the one hand, the privacy of all that is intimate, on the other, the open space of social relations; on the one hand, the life of the senses and of the feelings, on the other, the life of relations between man and man, the life of dialogue and exchange (1970:155).

7 Strathern's account "makes explicit one common implicit practice: extending out from some core study certain problems that become – *in the form* derived from the core study – a general axis of comparative classification" (1988: 45). Strathern challenges the anthropological project which takes the question of relations between "men" and "women" as a universal one – as though the only task were to discover the culturally specific relation between two axiomatic terms. One discovers the character of this relationship in given societies, but the terms themselves remain fixed, unchanged by the specific relation.

Bourdieu's diagram fixes the threshold of the house as a static boundary that holds apart two essentially distinct spheres. He conceives of *movement* as the movement between those two spheres, and emphasizes in particular "the movement toward the outside, by which man affirms himself as man, turning his back upon the house in order to go and face men" (170). The diagram sets up a picture of movement as *transitive*, between place A and place B (Ingold 2011). If, however, we approach space not as static and already given, but through processual ethnographic description, a different sort of movement becomes visible—not a directed movement from point A to point B but a continuous, intransitive movement that is productive of space itself.[8]

Pero became my "host-mother" in Yuvacalı, a small Kurdish village that lies along the road to Diyarbakır, 60 kilometers northeast of Urfa's city center. I stayed in Pero's house for two or three days at a time, for two or three weeks each month, while teaching English to her seventeen-year-old son, Fatih, who hoped to work in tourism. Our communication was difficult at first: like nearly all women in Yuvacalı, Pero had received no formal education in Turkish. She picked up the language from television and music, from her husband Halil and later from her children, but it was still basic and heavily accented (which would have presented no difficulty if my own Turkish had been more fluent). Language barriers aside, Pero was singularly concise with words – she preferred, for instance, to utter an emphatic "*hmph!"* in place of the word "yes," *evet* (her infant niece would eventually pick up this habit of speech, to everyone's delight).

Much of my time was thus spent shadowing Pero, accompanying her through her daily tasks, and relying on bodily participation to reveal to me a "familiarity with the world born of habit, that implicit or sedimentary body of knowledge" of everyday life (Merleau Ponty 277). I helped serve and prepare meals, clean, and manage bedding. In the beginning, of course, my presence only slowed Pero down, as I lacked not only skill but strength, but eventually I could be relied upon to serve tea for guests or cut vegetables (if not for more

[8] The transitive/intransitive distinction is from Ingold (2011): "Imagine a river, flowing along between banks on either side. Suppose that the banks of the river are connected by means of a road-bridge. We could then cross by road from a location on one side to a location on the other. Thus the bridge establishes a transitive connection between the two locations. But the river, running under the bridge in a direction orthogonal to the road, does not connect anything to anything else. Rather, it just flows, without beginning or end, scouring the banks on each side" (Ingold 14).

complicated work like milking sheep or constructing tents from mosquito netting). I worried, of course, that my field-notes from the village consisted primarily of mundane ephemera: recording the day a lamb was born, instructions on how to make a fire. Over time, however, these seemingly isolate activities began to take their place among an ensemble of tasks, which were themselves keyed to other tempos, both human and inhuman, that interwove to give the days their rhythm and shape.

When I recall the time I spent in village homes, there is one morning toward the end of my fieldwork that I remember with absolute clarity, because it seems to galvanize and bring to focus dozens of mornings like it. It was breakfast time, and everything was absolutely familiar: the brightly colored plastic tablecloth spread on the floor; the plates piled high with roasted peppers and eggplant; fresh tomatoes and cucumber; and homemade yogurt and cheese. To an outside observer, a meal like this one would appear haphazard or chaotic, since seemingly everything is in motion: the reaching of arms and passing of food; the multiple and cross-cutting conversations in Kurdish (typical among adults) and Turkish (either with me or with the children); the constant movement of children, up and down from their seats and in and out of the room; the second and third cousins who drop by to assume their place at the table. But for those present (and now for me), everything was in its place: I knew how each item would be consumed, how the tablecloth would be rolled up, how the bread would be collected and stored (never thrown away). I could imagine (as could anyone there) the trajectories of each item before us: when each was sown, reaped, and processed, and how, and by whom (because it is this productive activity that gives shape to days and seasons, synching the lives of individuals and households).

What does this descriptive scene tell us about the space of the house that a map or a diagram does not? Whereas the diagram makes the space of the house static—a container in relation to which bodies move—a descriptive account allows us to grasp how place itself emerges through a flow of continuous activity. In this light, it is strange to even speak of Pero "in the house": this formulation implies that the house contains her, when in fact the house is only a particularly dense meeting point for the various trajectories of her productive activity (see Ingold 2011). With this in mind, we can turn to the house itself – not first as a place that confined

Pero, but a place she was constantly bringing into being.

Halil and Pero built the house in 1974, shortly after they were married. They chose an area of the village where three of Halil's brothers had already made their homes, thus building up a kind of "neighborhood" or fraternal cluster in one corner of the village (brothers tend to dwell in clusters this way, while sisters move away with their husbands when married). Pero and Halil did not need a building permit, because residential land in villages is communally held and widely available, nor did they need a special building material, because this village happens to be on the site of an ancient settlement mound or *tell*, whose constitutive material is adobe. Adobe makes for an especially cohesive and durable building material – but not a permanent one: the walls of the house retain their integrity for about one year, at which point they must be reinforced; otherwise the wind, rain, sun and seasons would cause them to give way. The house's walls are thus never ultimately "built" or finished, but have to continually be remade through human effort.

In any case, it is not clear that the walls themselves constitute the outer limits of the house – for many of what we would consider "domestic" functions lie outside of these four walls. For instance, several meters from the front door, there is an open fire where the daily bread-making and most of the cooking is done (the indoor kitchen is used mainly for storage); twenty meters beyond that is an outhouse and, beyond that, there is a pit where garbage is periodically incinerated. We might call this outer domestic space a "courtyard," except it is not marked off from the rest of the village by a tangible boundary like a fence. Instead, the outer limits of the courtyard must be continually made and remade: At night, while people sleep, this outdoor area is given over to the family's chickens and sheep. When Pero wakes up in the morning, her first task is to sweep the area with a straw broom, brushing away the dust and animal refuse that collected during the night, and reclaiming it for human use. Once again, we can appreciate how boundaries are constituted *through* movement, rather than marking movement's "outer limits" (Ingold 2011: 149).

The boundaries that mark the house off from the outside – and from other houses – are relatively permeable. Rather than being turned in upon itself, the house is connected to a "meshwork" of homes (Ingold

2011). This lattice is formed by the constant visitation of relatives, by children moving in and out of homes and backyards, and by the sound of voices distorted by wind and walls. On one occasion, I was present at a rooftop meal, when we heard someone shout out "Has anyone lost a goat?" In the village, animals belonging to different households are sent out to graze as a collective herd, under the supervision of a village shepherd, and at dusk the animals return to their respective homes. My host (who knew someone whose goat did not return that evening) stood up from the meal and shouted back "It's Haci Ihsans!" They told me that in the days before cell phones, this was a very common mode of communicating in the village.

This "meshwork" is also made up of relations of production and exchange that weave village households together. Consider the case of bulgur wheat, a dietary staple of which each household grows, produces, and stores its own annual supply. Nonetheless, the production of bulgur takes a village: Loosening the chaff, for instance, is a labor-intensive process requiring the work of three grown women and shared technical equipment (an old, giant rock, whose large size and porousness make it ideal for threshing wheat.) Because there is only one rock, and because everyone is threshing wheat during the same week (and at the same time of day – before the sun is too high), the work requires coordination and cooperation. Households are also integrated through the exchange of certain products: some households specialize in particular goods like bee-keeping and honey, or (in Pero's case) yogurt and cheese.

We have seen that the boundaries of a village home, rather than setting up a stable divide between two definitive realms, involve an ongoing process whereby "inside" and "outside" are perpetually redrawn in relation to particular kinds of activity and movement. We can now see empirically whether and in what way this boundary-making is gendered. Pero's daily activities require her to move constantly in and out of the house: the tasks of cooking, washing, and tending to animals constantly expose village women to the gaze of others, undermining the notion that the home's walls instantiate a divide between the interior world of women and the exterior world of men. Indeed, women do not mark the threshold in a way that suggests a gendered transition at all; rather, they observe the threshold of the doorway in the same way as men do, by taking their

shoes on and off. All else remains the same: a loosely-tied headscarf and a long skirt are called for inside as well as out (women do not take off their skirts, even while sleeping).

That women remain publicly presentable inside the home suggests that, just as the outside contains elements of "domestic" life, so too is the inner space pervaded by a sociality which cannot be labeled strictly domestic or private. Nearly every village house shares a basic interior structure: it is made up of two rectangular rooms, separated by a foyer. The rooms are formally identical: each one is carpeted and lined with hard, rectangular cushions, but they are otherwise devoid of furnishings: there are no tables, chairs, beds, or desks that would designate the function of either room in an enduring way. This is an important point of contrast for those of us who are accustomed to inhabiting "finished" spaces (as our homes and apartments are conventionally called). A "finished" dining room is one whose essential elements – table, chairs, etc. – are in place; it is constituted independently of whether or by whom it is occupied at a given time. A village room, by contrast, is never "finished": each of the day's activities – eating, socializing, sleeping – calls for a different array of objects, which are brought into the room and arranged provisionally for the task at hand.

At mealtimes, for instance, a brightly colored plastic tablecloth is spread lengthwise in the center of the room. Its full length is several meters, but it is only extended to accommodate the number of people present for the meal, with the excess length folded underneath. Plates of food are spread along the length of the tablecloth, portioned not for each individual, but so that dishes are evenly distributed along its length. If a meal consists of yogurt, cheese, cucumbers and tomato, the important thing is that each person can reach each one. Everyone drinks from one cup. Silverware is not typically used, and it is common for everyone to share one or two cups, which are filled and refilled with water or *ayran*. The setup is exceptionally responsive – for instance, a newly arrived person is easily accommodated (everyone just shifts down).

The same room is used for sleeping. Again, there is no furniture that divides up the space and pre-designates who sleeps where (e.g., a parents' room with a queen sized bed, a children's room with twin beds, a guest room). The "beds" are thick mats (that women make by hand from sheep's wool). In the daytime the

mats are kept folded and stored in a recess of the wall, and at night they are unfolded and arranged for sleeping. How they are arranged depends on who is present – and guests being so common, there is much variation. It might be, for instance, that the family unit (man-wife, and small children) form one cluster, and non-family guests past a certain age are divided by gender. These divisions sometimes entail a physical boundary (as in the winter, when people are distributed between the two rooms); sometimes it just entails putting as much space as possible between clusters (as in the summer, when everyone sleeps on a flat, rectangular roof with no subdivisions). As is the case with dining arrangements, people do not inhabit an inert or already built space, but rather "contribute through their movements to its ongoing formation" (Ingold 2004: 329). The distribution of people and of objects responds to the task at hand, and on who is present – in short, on the relational context.

Gender is thus instantiated in the house *processually*. Although the two rooms of the village house are conventionally referred to as *haremlik* and *selamlık* – women's and men's spaces – I have never seen anyone in the village refer to them, or use them, as such. But that does not mean that gender is unimportant or is not "marked" spatially. For instance, when one enters a room, one does not enter as any individual who may choose any seat. One enters as a gendered, aged, relatively known or unknown person, whose seating options are delineated by the distribution of social others. As people enter and exit the room, the relational field shifts, and people continually rearrange themselves:

> Over the course of the afternoon, men and women (myself included) tended over time to drift apart, not all at once, but almost imperceptibly, gravitating either to opposite sides of the room, or sometimes into different rooms altogether. For instance, at a certain point all we women found ourselves in the kitchen, chatting, and the men were in the sitting room. I had left my phone in my bag in the sitting room, and entered in order to fetch it. The men, who had been sitting comfortably (legs extended in front of them), immediately tucked their legs underneath themselves. We women, too, performed the same ritual: when any of the men entered the room, we'd promptly fold our legs beneath us (field-note excerpt).

The above description captures some aspects of the micro-dances of proximity, familiarity and distance that characterize gendered relations in the village. The village home is a *responsive* environment, one whose organization is not fixed or intrinsic but is assembled and disassembled according to an ongoing movement of

bodies. Here, space is integral to the construction of gender, and gender to the construction of space.

Although the village is not, it seems, the strictly carceral space described by developers, it is nonetheless true that many women hope to see their daughters (and sons) grow up to live in the city. Pero and Halil, like many parents, seem to view urbanization as a natural component of upward mobility: they imagined that their twelve-year-old daughter, Aylin, would complete primary school and then begin high school, and that advanced education would lead (as was often the case) to a transition from village life to city life. For Aylin, the village would be the place where her parents live, a place for weekends and visits, but not the center of life. This seems to be regarded by all as desirable, largely because village life is seen as physically grueling. When I asked Pero why she regarded urban life as desirable for her daughter, she replied as though the answer were obvious, "She'll get to stay inside."

In this section, I have shown that the house's threshold, rather than an architectural "given," is a variable product of practical activity. *Pace* Bourdieu, it does not hold apart two ontologically distinct spaces, nor is it a figure for binary, reciprocal relations between men and women (as his homology between inside/outside, female/male implies). The domestic sphere is far more than the "inverse" or negative of the public sphere, just as woman is far more than the inverse of man (Irigaray 1993). In the next section, I suggest that the non-"givenness" of the domestic threshold needn't make it less significant; on the contrary, I show how it has become a fraught concern in neighborhoods of village-urban migrants.

The Para-Urban Home: Fatma and her sisters

In the summer of 2011, Fatma and Ahmet were newlyweds – and also newly acquainted, having agreed to marry after a brief meeting (a *görüşme,* or "go-see") in the presence of their parents. A few days later, the two were married, and a few days after that their new home was ready. When I visited, shortly thereafter, the apartment had not yet been lived in, and so its form reflected not the exigencies of daily life and livelihood but rather the couple's imagination of what their lives would look like. In it were things that neither of them ever

had growing up: the bed with its layers of frilly linen, the couches that smelled of new fabric, the appliances they'd not yet figured out how to use. Everything was as they had specified – or almost. The walls of one room were painted two noticeably different shades of pistachio green, so a margin of contrast ran horizontally around the room (the painter had said don't worry, it would be the same color when it dried). The new house was located in Eyyübiye, the same para-urban neighborhood where the two had grown up, and it was thus physically close to their respective family homes. However, as Ahmet had told me with a grin, the new house was at once "both near and far" from their families (*hem yakın, hem de uzak*).

If, for Ahmet, marriage and a new home meant more independence and greater personal freedom, for Fatma this was less clear. Prior to her engagement, she told me, she "hadn't even thought" of getting married. "My family didn't pressure me, plus my life at home [with them] was comfortable (*rahat*)." When I asked why then she chose to marry when she did, she shrugged. The shrug was vague and, to me, suggestive of an unspoken context: At twenty-five, Fatma was at a precarious age. It is the age past which one's prospects for marriage dwindle, and when neighbors may begin to whisper of a woman that she has "stayed at home" (*evde kalmış*). The term *evde kalmış kız*, a "girl who stayed home,"[9] refers to an unmarried woman who lives with her parents, and whose chance to marry is thought to have passed.[10] For instance, Fatma's unmarried older sister Emine, now 29, is understood to have stayed home. The opposite term for a girl who stayed home is not (as might be expected) one who "left" home. Instead, when a person is married, she (or he) is called *evli* ("with home"), and a housewife is called an *ev hanım* (literally "house woman").[11] In marrying, the critical distinction is

9 Given the implication of advanced age, it is significant that the phrase designates a "girl (kız) who has stayed home," rather than a woman (kadın, bayan). The difference between kız and kadın (girl and woman) is virginity. Thus, regardless of age, someone who has stayed home is presumed to be a virgin, and is referred to as a "girl." The girl-woman terminological distinction has been criticized by Turkish feminists and others, who have encouraged the use of the more neutral term "bayan" (woman). Today the kız-kadın distinction is both widely used *and* regarded by many as politically incorrect. Prime Minister Erdoğan, for instance, was heavily criticized by progressives when, at a rally in 2011, he said of a female heckler that he did not know whether she was a girl or a woman (thereby raising the question of her virginity and morality).

10 This is not specific to either the para-urban context or to Urfa; the phrase is used all over Turkey.

11 It should be noted that *ev hanım* lacks the pejorative connotation of the English "housewife" - it is a neutral term. With

not that a woman "leaves home" or is "outside the home," but rather that the home in question shifts from that of the father to that of the conjugal pair.[12]

When I met Fatma, she was poised between *ev hanım* and *evde kalmış* – between being a "housewife" and a "girl who stayed home." That these were Fatma's only two options was not simply because she was a twenty-five-year-old woman, but because she was a twenty-five-year-old woman *at this precise time and place*. For Fatma's youngest sisters – nineteen-year-old twins away at university – twenty-five would be something else entirely. This speaks to the fact that, over the past three decades (and especially for the children of migrants), gendered norms and roles were rapidly changing. In Urfa, where the age-range among siblings can regularly span twenty years, one can often discern generational shifts even within nuclear families. Thus Fatma and her sisters, though born just a few years apart, led lives with vastly different sets of constraints and possibilities. Fatma's three older sisters had never been educated (two were housewives, one stayed home); the two married sisters lived in the neighborhood, and with their children visited their parents almost daily. The two younger sisters, as mentioned, had finished high school and had recently begun university in another city. Fatma was on the precise tipping point. She had not attended high school, but was working gradually toward a diploma through correspondence courses (*açık öğretim*), and she studied Ottoman with the local *Nur* chapter.

It is tempting to write the story of Fatma and her sisters (a story shared by many families) as a progress narrative—to see, from oldest to youngest sisters, a progression from least to most mobile. From that perspective, we might view Fatma as having just missed the cut-off: if she'd been born a few years earlier, she might have shared her sisters fate as an *evde kalmış kız*; a few years later, and she might have gone to university. But if we pause instead on Fatma's present, on the choices open to her within this particular set of contingencies, we can see that it was not that simple. It was not clear *to Fatma* that her situation was better than

---

evde kalmış, the implication is of having been "left behind," and it typically draws sympathy (or cruelty: a Google image search of the term turns up caricatures of "unmarriageable" women).

[12] I owe this way of putting the point to Claire Nicholas.

the former, or worse than the latter.

Fatma, like her husband Ahmet, had grown up in Eyyübiye – an informal, para-urban neighborhood on the southern margin of the city. The quarter had risen up over the past thirty years in order to accommodate urban migration from the rural districts of Harran and Akçakale –Urfa's only two predominantly Arab districts, which lie along the border with Syria. These are among the least socioeconomically developed districts of Urfa (Kudat and Bayram 2000), whose inhabitants remain relatively distinct from the rest of the city: they tend to marry within the tribe and have low rates of Turkish. Among adult women, 82% cannot read or write, and only 16% are primary school graduates (Kudat and Bayram 2000: 252). Furthermore, the dialect of Arabic spoken in these districts, because it is not connected to the written language and only partially connected to a wider Arabic-speaking community in Syria, deviates further from Modern Standard Arabic with each generation.

When, beginning in the 1970s, changes in land tenure and agricultural production disrupted long-standing patterns of land tenure and livelihood in Harran and Akçakale, many families picked up and moved en-masse to the old city – or, rather, to the city's southern margin, where they gradually built up the quarter of Eyyübiye. Eyyübiye is named for the neighborhood's famed shrine of the prophet Job (Arabic: Eyyub). The official, Turkish name of the neighborhood is Eyyüp Peygamber (Prophet Job). Although migration to Eyyübiye began several decades ago, the neighborhood retains to this day an ad-hoc, unfinished quality, with unpaved roads and bare cinder block houses. There are no parks or planted trees, and so there is no shade and nothing to hold down the dust during windstorms. This apparent lack of investment reflects, in part, the fact that each family hopes to only be passing through, that Eyyübiye will be a temporary stop between the village and an apartment in a comparatively upscale new city neighborhood like Bahçelievler or Karaköprü. Yet the concrete homes of Eyyübiye, whose flat roofs are pierced by metal rods pointing up toward the sky, suggest that such mobility is uncommon: as one resident explained, "As each son in a family is married, you just build another floor on top of the building."

Fatma's father had come to Eyyübiye in the 1970s. Mahmut was a stern, hard-working man, whom I met when a then newly-wed Fatma invited me to dinner at his house (where she had lived until very recently). There had been land in Akçakale, Mahmut tells me, but at the time it wasn't worth anything. He had come to the margins of Urfa looking for work, and had been more fortunate than most: with the small electronics store that he'd opened in the bazaar, he earned enough to support his family. His brother, who had opened a toy store around the same time, was now head of the multi-million dollar chain Toru Toys – a point Fatma's father reported with both distance and undeniable pride. "They're rich, we're not rich," he smiled; still, things were good for them in the city. The boys were professionals: two worked for the toy company, one was a teacher, and one a doctor "who lives in Karaköprü"; "even the girls go to school."

Fatma's father's house reflected both the family's origins in Akçakale, and the geographical and social distance they'd traveled. The rooms of this house bore an unmistakable village aesthetic: the walls, painted that shade of green called "pistachio," were decorated sparsely with religious-themed posters and a few artificial flowers, and the windows were covered with gauzy white curtains. Unlike village houses, however, these rooms were furnished and divided into separate functions. I was received, for instance, in a room lined with couches – and yet we all sat on the floor, drinking tea and leaning our backs against the couches as one would lean against a cushion-lined wall in the village. Or again, there were designated bedrooms with air conditioning, but during the summer everyone slept on wool mats on the roof.

The important point is not simply that Eyyübiye houses are "hybrid," with characteristics of both urban and village homes, but that these characteristics register social status. Recall in the opening of this paper, how former old city residents distinguished themselves from recent migrants by their preference for "modern" dwellings—those which are furnished, climate controlled, and have indoor plumbing. The accoutrements of urban life were not just comforts but status markers: thus the couches in Mahmut's house, even if they were rarely put to practical use, nonetheless served a crucial social function, marking the family's distance not only from the village but from other less fortunate families in Eyyübiye, many of whom did not have furniture.

(Take, for instance, Ahmet's family home, which was unfurnished save for his desk, and where activities like mealtimes and sleeping were carried out in the same manner as they might be in the village). When one has become accustomed to eating at a dining table, it becomes embarrassing to eat on the floor "like a villager." There are shifts in sensibility (where, e.g., eating with one's fingers comes to seem rude) and even in physiology (the elite don't squat, and they probably can't).

Furniture also plays a crucial role in setting up enduring distinctions among rooms, designating what is to be done in each space and by whom – with consequences for the gendering of space. To clarify the contrast, recall the absence of designated bedrooms in the village: there, "beds" are woolen mats which can be arranged infinitely, distributed between different rooms, or arranged in various "clusters" according to the relations among those gathered (gender, age, familiarity). The spatial organization is such that gendered sleeping arrangements remain situationally dependent. Furniture, on the other hand, designates the function of space in a more enduring way, often instituting a more permanent divide between gendered domains rather than a situationally dependent one. For instance, in a house which (like Fatma and Ahmet's new home) has a master bedroom, a couple is separated *as* a couple from their children and from guests. The sleeping arrangements for children raise further questions: Do all of the children sleep together? Are they separated by gender? Only after a certain age? These are boundary questions and gender questions, which arise when, in an urban context, spatial differentiation is no longer so situationally dependent.

Like the boundaries among rooms, the home's external boundaries were also in question. In the village, as mentioned, there are relatively permeable boundaries between the house's interior and exterior, and also among different houses. In villages brothers tend to build their homes near to their father's home, building up "neighborhoods" or fraternal clusters within the village which are more or less socially and economically integrated. In para-urban and urban contexts, where the layout of space is typically more fixed (by roads, or other extant buildings), this clustering has to take other forms: one common arrangement, as mentioned, is for male siblings to occupy different floors of their father's building. This was the pattern in Ahmet's family – his

brothers and their wives occupied the upper floors of the home where he grew up. This arrangement both moves toward increasing nuclearization and retains the village atmosphere's relatively permeable boundaries among fraternal groups.

This novel arrangement (vertical fraternal clusters) can be seen as a solution to one of the many new dwelling questions that arise for migrants in urban contexts. What constitutes a family unit? Where should the boundaries of the home be drawn? For those designated non-family, how close is too close? One improvises answers to these questions by observing others, and by being an example oneself; thus everyone is reading everyone else's home. Boundary questions, far more than an anthropological preoccupation, are an important way that families position themselves in relation to one another.

Thus Fatma's mother Ayşe had told me, pointedly, that when her sons were married, she had bought each of them a new home in which to start a new (nuclear) family. *Some* men move into the building of the husband's parents, she explained, albeit in a separate apartment on a different floor. Worse, some men continue to live at home with their parents after marriage, with the bride moving into the family home. Both situations were too close for comfort, in her opinion, and they often led to tension between the new wife and her mother-in-law. Through the kitchen curtains, Ayşe gestured toward the apartment across the street, whose kitchen windows faced their own; sometimes she could hear them arguing. Her feel for the proper degree of visibility, audibility, and proximity vis-à-vis the neighbors indexed new social sensibilities—in turn a mark of her own positioning within the social field. That is why she had insisted on a separate home for Fatma and Ahmet after they were married (Ahmet was the first man in his family to move out of the building where his father lived).

Ayşe's comments about dwelling patterns indexed her anxiety about the social distance between her family and Ahmet's, and what this might mean for her daughter's status and her own. This anxiety revealed itself in other comments, too – as when she told me about the various other men who had sought Fatma's hand, including *three* teachers. Or again, in parting, I said how nice it had been to meet them, and that Ahmet was

fortunate to marry into such a good family. "Of course," I added quickly, "you are also lucky." Without missing a beat, Ayşe asked "Who do you think is luckier?"

Fatma's family considered themselves not simply more elite but more modern, and their ways of marking gender and space were an integral part of that self-understanding. If we revisit Fatma's father's remark, "even the girls go to school," we can see now that the word "even" (*bile*) does not indicate an afterthought but an emphasis. The fact that "even the girls go to school" is a marker of the family's upward mobility, a point of differentiation from families of lower status. It was also a point of differentiation *within* the family; recall that not all of Mahmut's six daughters had been educated – only the two youngest.

Mahmut's comments make it is clear that teleological notions regarding gender, mobility, and modernity are discourses "in the scene." As a matter of experience, however, that *telos* was not unambiguous or evident to Fatma and her sisters. Consider the position of Fatma's sister, Emine, who "stayed at home." Emine could not read or write, but was introduced to me as the *usta*, master, of the house. She could single-handedly run a household – expertly prepare all of the food, look after the animals, milk the sheep, and make dairy products like yogurt and cheese. This is all highly skilled and specialized knowledge, which Fatma too possessed to some extent, but which the younger girls had never learned (they were teased mercilessly for their inability to execute even the simplest tasks, like cutting a cucumber, with any efficiency). Echoing Fatma's stated ambivalence about marriage ("I hadn't even thought of it"), Emine said: Girls often imagine that getting married and moving out of their family's house means freedom." She described her situation as different: "A lot of families pressure girls to get married early, but that wasn't the case for us. Why would I want to get married? My life here is comfortable (*rahat*)."

When Fatma was married, she moved out of the domestic space she had shared with Emine, to a building several blocks away. As a married woman, she ostensibly enjoyed greater mobility than she had at home: the freedom to travel with her husband, to shop alone or to attend classes. Yet her newfound mobility was predicated upon certain types of enclosure—enclosure, for instance, in her new apartment. It entailed the

disruption of those forms of movement and relationality deemed indecorous or déclassé. This new living situation befit her status, and that of her family, and yet she found herself bored and isolated. Her husband, Ahmet, was a professional teacher who worked outside the house, and so she stayed alone for most of the day. She no longer saw the range of social others (e.g., extended family) who had been constantly in and out of her parents' house. She missed the sociality of that place. During her afternoons at her new apartment, she tried to busy herself with studies, and she spoke with her mother on the phone several times a day.

It was during these long afternoons that Fatma and I came to know each other. Largely cut off from her quotidian social life, she was eager to make friends and invite guests to her new home. This surprised Ahmet, who had assumed his marriage would end his friendship with me (he was told that women are jealous). Instead, Fatma related to me in a guileless and direct manner, and with curiosity ("Is it hard living alone?" "Do you love what you do?"). One night, the newlywed couple invited me over for dinner, along with my friend Nazim (who, as a single male, would never have been invited on his own). After dinner, Ahmet left the room to set up a slide-show of photographs for us to watch, and I went after him, thinking I might be of some help. It did not immediately occur to me that I had left Nazim and Fatma alone, and that this might be awkward or inappropriate since they were only newly acquainted. I returned to the room immediately, and was surprised to find Nazim explaining to Fatma why he had never been married (he hadn't found the right person, etc.). As Nazim later explained, Fatma had asked him earnestly why he'd never married, and she had confessed her own reluctance to marry, saying for instance "I hadn't wanted to marry an Arab."

There are several surprising things here. One is Fatma's willingness to reach out like this to a new person, and a man. This raises the question of what forms of sociality become possible in this new context, away from the family (in addition to what forms of sociality are cut off). Also, given that Fatma is herself is "an Arab," what do we make of this sudden distantiation from Ahmet in terms of ethnicity? We should not understand from this that Fatma would have preferred to marry a "Kurd" or a "Turk." Instead, I think, she meant someone not specifically marked as an Arab – for instance, someone whose status was high enough that his (and her)

ethnicity no longer mattered. Thus in my reading, at this moment, "Arab" suddenly stood in for much else: the neighborhood, the house she grew up in, the house where she found herself now, all of it.

The new city flat: Betül and Nur

I learned about the gendered dimensions of urban dwelling largely through interacting with my roommates in my city flat, two women slightly my juniors named Betül and Nur, who were studying Islamic philosophy (*Ilahiyat*) at Urfa University. Both came from mid-size cities in southern (but not southeastern) Turkey. Like many of their unmarried classmates, Betül and Ayşe had previously lived in housing established by *Nur,* an Islamic revival movement active throughout Turkey. (*Nur* has dormitories which provide housing for members who are away from home, e.g. at college). Betül and Nur, who were roommates in the dormitory, had grown tired of some of the house's rules, like restrictions on internet use and on visiting family. And so after the first semester, during winter break, the two moved in with me.

In the Nurcu dormitories where Betül and Ayşe used to live, each unit had an *abla* (a "big sister") who was in charge – that was Betül. She continued this role even in our new living situation, and it suited her, as she was responsible, nurturing, and fair-minded. The building where I lived was marginal and morally ambiguous – on the fuzzy border between old and new cities – and it thus required work to make it an appropriate dwelling for young women. When Betül and Ayşe moved in, their first work was to remove all of the carpets, clean all of the floors, and then replace the carpets again. They immediately had our electric meter rewired so that we would have to start paying for electricity (before it had been illegal, *kaçak*). The transformation of my apartment, the work Betül did to make it habitable, opens up what is distinctive about new city dwelling, what its values are, and how it differs from village or para-urban life.

The dwelling type of the new city is the high-rise apartment complex. Apartments in Urfa typically have four or five bedrooms (I was unable to find a one bedroom apartment, period). This is because "families are so big," as is often said – but also because, unlike village homes, it is taken as axiomatic that these large families

ought to be distributed across (generally furnished) rooms with separate functions (e.g., a dining room, private bedrooms). When Betül and Ayşe moved in, the boundaries between different rooms of the apartment were drawn in new ways. One did not wear shoes past the front door, but changed into cloth house slippers. These cloth slippers were not worn on un-carpeted surfaces within the home, such as the kitchen and the bathroom, each of which had its own designated plastic slippers, kept on the threshold. Betül and Ayşe coached me on observing these new thresholds, which to me were far from intuitive (I'd often find myself wearing the plastic "kitchen" shoes in my bedroom, for instance). My efforts to observe these spatial distinctions were earnest, but I sensed not quite adequate: for instance, they eventually placed pieces of linoleum around the front door and bathroom door thresholds, to compensate for the fact that I often absent-mindedly crossed the threshold before making the necessary footwear changes.

Other boundary work involved insulating the apartment, shoring up the frontier between its interior and the world outside. In new city residential buildings, visibility is often restricted or directed in specific ways: High-rise apartments are removed from the street, and, while most have balconies, these afford one-way vision (you can see down to the street, but it would be difficult for others to see "up" to you). Our flat, by contrast, was on the first floor—and on a street so narrow that there was fairly direct visibility from the building across the street. Upon moving in, Betül and Ayşe replaced my sheer curtains with opaque ones, and they covered one high-up irregular window that I'd not even noticed (where an AC unit might once have been) by taping thick wrapping paper over it. They relocated my desk away from the window, where it had overlooked an editing room for a newspaper office across the way.

New city dwellings are for one generation only, the nuclear family, and extended families very often live in separate sections of the city (rather than clustered together in one neighborhood or one building). (Thus an upper-class newlywed couple I knew moved to a neighborhood that was expressly away from extended family, because what are they, villagers?). One effect of this separation is that one's day does not involve necessary and continual contact with a range of social others (family, neighbors, animals, and so forth). In marked contrast to

my village home, where guests could be easily and instantaneously accommodated, I would not have thought of bringing guests into the city apartment without giving my roommates ample notice. They would need time to prepare the house and themselves. To begin with, their clothing differed markedly depending on whether they were inside the house (with only women) or outside the house (/in the company of men). Inside the house, Betül wore pants; outside, she wore a skirt (or a floor length jacket). Inside, either a bare head or a loosely tied cotton scarf; outside, a silk scarf tied tightly and secured under the chin with pins.

In all, there was a strong sense of disjuncture between the inside of our home and the world outside. I once returned to our apartment from a stay in the village, on the third or fourth day of a heat wave that had slowed the pace of city life to a crawl. Walking home from the bus stop, I saw men sprawled out under the shade of trees in front of the municipality building; on the main street, a seller of watches was fast asleep behind his cart of wares. I was greeted at home by Betül – who, genuinely surprised by my bedraggled appearance, asked me whether it was hot outside. Betül's sedentary lifestyle was, in part, a matter of personality: She looked forward to Ramadan, because it meant that staying inside all day and not moving was normal and expected. "I'd like to be a koala," she said to me one day, hugging her arms to her chest, "just hold on to my branch."

But this preference for the indoors also takes part in a broader spatial sensibility that is distinct to the new city, which on the whole seems to have been built with the expectation that life happens inside of four walls (see too Kapchan 2011). We might contrast, for instance, the aesthetics of commercial activity in the old and new cities. New city stores are much like the stores you might find on any American main street: they are enclosed in glass, climate-controlled, and their contents are carefully organized and spread out in space. Any chain stores or banks would be in the new rather than old city. In the bazaar shops of the old city, it is as though the modern store were turned inside out. The contents of the shop are turned out toward the street. While these shops normally have a small inner room where the seller stands or keeps some of his wares, contents are generally displayed toward the street, whether it is spices, leather, plastic toys, clothing, fabric, or vegetables.

These distinctions involve density and spacing variations, as well as different implied viewer orientations.[13]

As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, Urfa's old city stores and restaurants do not have explicit gender divisions. Sometimes women really avoid these places, sometimes gender is observed situationally – through the positioning of bodies, for example. In the new city, by contrast, both stores and restaurants have explicit gender divisions. In most restaurants in the new city, the part of the restaurant on the entry level is the men's section (although it is not marked as such); there is a separate "family section" (*aile kısım*), usually upstairs, that is marked with a sign. The entry level is intended for groups of men only; the upstairs section is intended for groups that include women (whether they are "families" or not). Similarly, clothing stores have their men's sections on the entrance level. This includes chain stores like Benetton or LC Waikiki, which outside of Urfa would generally have the women's section on the entry level. In both instances, this marks a concern with marking off the realm of women from the wider urban context, both spatially and visually.

The apartment I shared with Betül and Ayşe was not, as mentioned, up to the standards of new city propriety—a fact evidenced by the complete absence of other women or families in the building. We had to work to delineate a domestic interior from the outside (e.g., by covering our windows), yet this boundary was still vulnerable to infraction. A man who also lived in the building swept the stairs of the hallway (unsolicited) and he came to our door each month to demand money for the service. Seeing as we were three young women, his approaching our door (after dark, no less) was in itself a disturbing breach of boundaries, and enough to make us all leery of him. One evening the three of us gathered to coordinate our responses. "Just slip the money through the slots if he comes," Betül instructed, "do not open the outer door"[14] (which was a thick metal door with down-turned slots so that no one could see in). While the doorman was an exception, a marginal individual, my roommates' response to him sheds light on a more general, and deeply gendered,

---

[13] The spatial and aesthetic distinctions between new city shops and shops of the bazaar was brought to my attention by Sam Williams. See also Geertz 1979.

[14] I must contrast Betül's response with that of my friend Seda from the village of Golpinar, who, when visiting me in the city, said she hoped our landlord would come to the door while she was there, because she would straighten him out.

sense of the street and its dangers. As a woman, one had to observe certain precautions: don't walk around by yourself after dark; don't open the door unless it is someone you know. "I'm not opening this door for anybody," Ayşe had said. "It could be my own father out there, I swear I'm not opening this door." Before I retired to my bedroom, Betül told me that if I was afraid I could come and sleep with them. And she promised to get me a bottle of the pepper spray that she carried in her purse, and which her father, a policeman, had given to her.

Gender in the new city is not "more" or "less" marked than it is in the other contexts I described, but it is marked differently. Recall that in the village home, the gendering of space is not fixed or intrinsic but is rather assembled and disassembled according to the movements of people. In the city home that I shared with Betül, by contrast, gender tends to be inscribed in space *as such*, and in a more enduring fashion. Thus living in the new city apartment, we observed a strong binary distinction between inside and outside, male and female, rather than those micro-dances of familiarity and proximity that characterized gendered relations in the village home. Thus spatial organization is not only reflecting a more formalized relationship between men and women, but is helping to instantiate that formalization. This formalization enabled some forms of mobility (for instance, the educational mobility that Betül, or Fatma's twin sisters, enjoyed) and constrained others. For instance, it was in part because getting dressed to go outside was so time consuming that Betül preferred to order her meals delivered, and preferred to have guests over to the house rather than visiting them. "Usually, people from big cities [like Adana] don't like Urfa," she told me, "but I don't mind because I don't like going out anyway."

Conclusion

This paper opened with the observation "there were no women on the street" – a claim evidenced by the lack of designated enclosures for them (e.g. "family sections" in restaurants). My ethnography suggests the possibility that certain forms of enclosure, *like* family sections, *make* certain kinds of movement visible as such

(e.g., Fatma's upward mobility), and leave other kinds of movement imperceptible (e.g., Pero's home-making). I cannot say for sure that twenty years ago there *really were* women on the street, and that their presence is simply not registered as such, but I strongly suspect this is so. One week toward the end of my fieldwork, I hosted in my home a woman from Western Turkey, a professor of anthropology. Over breakfast at a café on her last morning in Urfa, she told me (in English) that she liked "the setting" of the city, but thought it "still needs twenty years." When I asked why, she replied "The role of women. The absence of women in the public sphere." Puzzled, I gestured to the street outside, where there were plenty of women. "But they are all covered," she said, "It is not in a modern sense." Her comment reveals the complex notions of "presence" and "absence" in gendered discourse: what seem like self-evident binaries (inside/outside, present/absent) are coding much else.

There is a second and related line of argument in this paper. The official narrative has it that, as women move from the village to the city, or from the old city to the new city, they are also emerging from a domestic interior to the public sphere outside; from traditional to modern accommodations; from the past into the future. The idea is that women are ever less confined. Yet I find, moving from village to urban contexts, a certain thickening of the boundaries of the home, and an increasing emphasis on the interiority of the home as against the world outside (this resonates with the findings of Kapchan 2011). Thus while urban life increases "mobility" in some respects, this paradoxically entails a broader separation of women "at home" from various social others such as extended family, neighbors, guests, strangers, and especially men (who tend to be regarded as suspect, especially if they are single). In the contemporary urban context, the space of dwelling in some ways *becomes* the separate domestic sphere of women that it was assumed to be all along.