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# Love, Marriage, and Motherhood: Changing Expectations of Women in Late OttomanIstanbul

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the early work of famous novelist Halide Edip Adivar against the background of public discussions on women and gender in late-Ottoman society. Gender relations and women's issues constituted a fertile ground for the debate about social transformation. Edip and her feminist peers wrote about passionate love, companionship in marriage, the significance of motherhood, and women's legal rights in their works. This reflects women's vision of new gender relations and provides evidence for their contributions to the forging of Turkish modernity prior to the founding of the Turkish Republic. It also illustrates the hybrid nature of culture, which resists unconditional adoption of Western models.

### **Love, Marriage, and Motherhood: Changing Expectations of Women in Late-Ottoman Istanbul**

Much has been written about Halide Edip's literary and political career, public and personal achievements. Today, her work is largely considered as an integral part of the Turkish literary canon. But the distinguished place she occupies in the mainstream of Turkish culture and literature is mainly due to the increased incorporation of nationalism into her personal and public narrative. Assessment of her work as a writer, translator, and novelist rarely goes beyond the celebration of an exceptional Turkish woman—a nationalist—who courageously rose to historical and literary eminence during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Moreover, many of these accounts tend to set Edip dramatically apart from her cultural contemporaries, rather than connecting her to her cultural milieu. Beyond this, the scope of academic work on Edip is limited, except for

İnci Enginün's valuable contributions<sup>1</sup> and a few relatively recent studies on Edip's life and times.<sup>2</sup>

It is true that Halide Edip belonged to a cosmopolitan circle of women, and was perhaps the most visible among them. She was the daughter of a secretary to sultan Hamid II; one of the first Muslim graduates of the American College for Girls in Üsküdar; one of the first female members of the Young Turk discussion club, the Turkish Hearth; a leader of a woman's organization, the Association for the Exultation of Women; an organizer of charitable works, and an educator, political leader, and prolific writer. Certainly not a typical Anatolian woman, Edip was exceptional in many ways. But she was also a part of a larger circle of elite women who articulated their own vision of gender relations in late-Ottoman society. Edip's work provides us with evidence of women's participation in debates of cultural change, as well as a reflection of changing gender relations in late-Ottoman society. This study proposes to contextualize Edip's early work, reading it against the background of literature by feminist women of her time in order to establish some of the shared attitudes in relation to gender and modernity. It aims to associate rather than dissociate Edip's work with her cultural venue. In order to accomplish these goals, this study examines Edip's early work, an under-explored part of her writing, and relates it to literature that focused on similar themes in *Kadınlar Dünyası (Women's World)*, a feminist journal published by women between 1913-21, as an expression of change in gender relations and roles in the late-Ottoman Istanbul.

Edip's early work is often overshadowed either by her memoirs<sup>3</sup>, which are historically valuable for students of the early twentieth century Middle East, or her better

known later work, for example *Ateşten Gömlek (The Shirt of Flame)* (1922), *Vurun Kahpeye* (Hit the Harlot) (1923), and *Sinekli Bakkal* (1935) (*The Clown and His Daughter*),<sup>4</sup> which have contributed to her popularity as the novelist of the 1920s and the Turkish war of independence. Lacking the kind of historical immediacy that surrounds these novels, the earlier pieces deal mainly with Ottoman Muslim women in the context of romance fiction.<sup>5</sup> Although unassuming in their scope and craftsmanship, these romances, along with a number of articles, brief literary pieces, essays and translations produced during the teens of the twentieth century, express and respond directly to currents of cultural change in the cosmopolitan circles of the empire.<sup>6</sup> Among these, *Yeni Turan* [New Turan] is perhaps the most significant political treatise written by Edip. But even in a blatantly political and nationalistic piece like *Yeni Turan*, Edip creates a women's utopia rather than merely a political utopia on Pan-Turanism. *Seviyye Talip*, *Handan*, *Raik'in Annesi* [Raik's Mother], and *Yeni Turan* are typical novellas from Edip's early period, which focus on significant gender-related themes, such as love, marriage, motherhood, and divorce—themes that in late-Ottoman culture comprised the “woman's question”—as part of a social transformation project.

Protagonists of Edip's early fiction, Handan, Seviyye, Refika, and Kaya, resemble Jamesian characters, who struggle with society and manners, simultaneously as they struggle with their own psyche and consciousness. Although there is no direct evidence that Edip was influenced by Henry James,<sup>7</sup> the way, for example Edith Wharton<sup>8</sup> had been influenced by him, it is quite likely that as a student and translator of literature in English she was familiar with the type of psychological realism employed by James. Like Jamesian characters, the relationship Edip's female characters had with society, nature,

and the subconscious was ambivalent. Their universe revolved around little dramatic action, but much psychological turmoil, whose origins lay in the cultural transformations of their time. Particularly Handan, skating dangerously down the slope of her emotions and into an abyss, resembles Edith Wharton's famous character Ethan Frome. All of these women are individuals in their own right, but their stories present the audience with some "social significance" beyond their individual plight. The social significance often starts with their names: for example Refika (wife) representing the exemplary wife; Seviyye (balance and elevation), equilibrium in gender relationships and love; Kaya (rock), strength and determination in pursuit of ideals; and Handan, (gay and cheerful) ironically, innocence lost.

But Edip interrogated gender and modernity rather than advocating a single message: in her work gender became the playground of societal tensions. In *Seviyye Talip*, *Handan*, *Raik'in Annesi* and *Yeni Turan* these tensions materialize in symmetrical characterization. Edip's strong "new" women are often contrasted with their parallel other: Handan and her soul sister Neriman love and adore each other, but while Handan becomes the object of passionate and destructive love affairs, Neriman turns into a happy and unquestioning mother of two; Seviyye is admired by Macide, the narrator's relatively traditional wife, who aspires to be like Seviyye, but is far removed from the kind of sophistication this type of personality involves; Refika, the model wife, is contrasted with her husband's European mistresses and other Muslim women who superficially imitate such women; and, finally, Kaya's parallel other is Samiye, her visible old, rather than underground new and "radical" self. Hence the tension in these two conflicting sets of

personalities—the conformist and the reformist—creates the foreground for the discussion of cultural transformation in society.

Can love lead to happiness? Is love necessary for a good marriage? What does love involve—having mutual goals and ideals or an animal infatuation for the opposite sex? Is love possible without companionship and empathy? What happens to a marriage when it lacks love and companionship? Does motherhood assign special roles to women and if so have these roles remained the same? The "woman's question", defined largely within these parameters, constitutes the core of Edip's early fiction.

The "woman's question" was central to debates about cultural change in the late-Ottoman Middle East. In the case of republican Turkey, a scene of dramatic transformations, historical focus tends to remain on the state's initiative in rendering change. This is often done by examining a series of reforms initiated by the state, whose goal was the creation of a "new woman" and a "new family" as the centerpiece for broader cultural transformations. There is a significant amount of truth in this view: legal, bureaucratic, educational reforms, which impacted women's status were often initiated by the state. But the absence of women's own voices in the process of modernization remains a problem. Our accounts of the recent past will be incomplete at best if we refrain from asking how broad cultural changes could come about without the willing participation of women and what kind of role women played in the forging and articulation of gender relations in the early twentieth-century.

Cultural currents involving gender in the early twentieth-century Middle East have been the focus of relatively few studies, despite evidence that the state alone could not have engineered society. Women's organizations, journals, and publications, such as

*Women's World*, which emerged during the second constitutional period between 1908-1914, generate evidence that some women were active participants and negotiators of change in Ottoman society. If *Women's World* stands for an expression of a collective feminist platform among cosmopolitan women, Edip's work provides us with an expression of a personal view point from a renowned literary figure, who was at the core of debates with her own agenda of social reform--an agenda which linked women's status to that of the nation's. That is why it is enlightening to turn to her early novellas and examine the ways in which issues significant to women at the time were treated.

*A Woman's Question is a Man's Question: the Significance of Narrative Voice  
in Edip's Early Fiction*

Representation of female identity was central to Edip's early work, which sought to reformulate women's roles in society. Many sophisticated female characters in her novellas struggled with unfulfilling relationships and societal constraints which surrounded them. Although Edip created such sophisticated female characters and made them the center of her fiction, she presented them to the audience indirectly. Handan, Seviyye, Refika, and Samiye—a.k.a. "Kaya"—all of whom were complex female protagonists, never told their own story to the reading public directly, even if they led exemplary lives for elite women of their times.

The story of each female protagonist was narrated by a first person, a sort of an observer-narrator, reminiscent of the character "Nick" in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, or through other literary devices such as letters, all of which served to veil the

female protagonists from the direct gaze of the audience. Moreover, many of Edip's narrators were male, a device she must have chosen purposefully. It is not an accurate expectation to see narrators as the mouthpiece for writers; however, it is still peculiar that Edip's narrative personas are consistently male. Why would she present the female identity, the focal point of her work, through the lens of a male narrator? This is a question which refers us back to the cultural and historical context in which Edip wrote her fiction. It also refers us back to her contemporary "implied reader".<sup>9</sup>

One possible answer to this question is that Edip employed male narrators in order to give a sense of credibility to the stories she told, as the contemporary educated audience, like those in other patriarchal societies, assumed "authorial" voice to be ordinarily masculine. Perhaps this was simply a strategic choice of a writer trying to establish herself in the literary scene. It is also possible to argue that the narrative devices used by Edip in her early fiction are not exceptional in that they belong with the tradition of female writers veiling their identity through male pseudonyms. But Edip's identity as a female writer was out in the open, even if her narrative voice was disguised.

Evidence suggests that Edip, like most canonized writers, had a fortunate start. Not only was she well-educated, she was also connected to the powerful elite of her time through her father and acquaintances. Her appearance in the literary scene of Istanbul coincided with Hamidian reforms on women's education and the celebration of women in the intelligentsia.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, her predecessors, particularly Fatma Aliye, unburdened her from the responsibility of being a trail-blazer as a female writer. Although her public statements would cause serious political hardships,<sup>11</sup> Edip did not have to hide her pen behind a pseudonym. Yet in her early work, Edip's narrators were often male:



conservative Asım narrates the story of Kaya, a revolutionary female leader in *Yeni Turan*; Salim, the quiet social run-away of *Raik'in Annesi* relates the story of a proud mother and wife; in Seviyye and Handan's stories, male narrators are immediate family and friends, who come dangerously close to having their relatively uneventful lives being shattered by their interest in these extraordinary women. Why would a female writer who was open about her craft hide behind a male mask during the creation of her craft? Was this because she had internalized the predominantly male perspectives on the culture? Was it because Edip, the writer, identified herself more freely with famous male writers of her own time?

In feminist and colonialist theories "being seen," being penetrated by the gaze of the colonizing other plays a significant role in the subject's viewing of herself from without. In her article on Edip's voice in *Seviyye Talip*, Nüket Esen discusses feminist theory from Showalter to Sandra Gilbert in order to prove that Edip employs "double-talk," a characteristic of what is called "women's fiction".<sup>12</sup> This observation is simultaneously accurate and misleading. It is accurate because in *Seviyye Talip* Edip employs Fahir, a constitutional-period intellectual, as her narrator so that she can present the reader with the perspective of men like Fahir during this period. It is misleading, because the "double-talk" in Edip's early work does not follow from Edip's loss of her own voice—the female writer's voice—in a predominantly patriarchal society. This is also a dangerous proposal since it constitutes the grounds on which women's fiction is segregated from the "mainstream" and marginalized.

But even if there is anything accommodating about this "double-talk", the content of Edip's stories hardly agree with the so-called submissiveness of their form. While the

male gaze wonders on them, Edip's female protagonists transgress many cultural, sexual, and gender boundaries: they exist as proud, outspoken, rebellious women in many respects. Kaya leads a secret life as the female leader of a revolutionary movement, Seviyye disregards the cultural boundaries placed between her individual choices and her status, Handan remains a passionate lover and a sophisticated intellectual until the day she dies, and the most conventional of them all, Refika, achieves victory in the battle of preserving her honor and marriage. Perhaps Edip bows to the traditional expectations of the reading audience by assuming a male voice; nevertheless, these stories question, to varying degrees, tradition and good manners in late-Ottoman society.

I would argue that Edip employs male narrators consciously and as a matter of strategy. Writing on love and relationships as a woman at the turn-of the century, Edip's choice of presenting her protagonists through the gaze of male characters signifies her willingness to question the values with which the society is governed. Female characters like Seviyye, Handan, Kaya, and Refika in fiction inform and acquaint the contemporary reader with the possibility of a new kind of existence for women. This, in and of itself, represents a change in the kind of stories women were allowed to tell about other women, one of their own kind, in late-Ottoman society. In these novellas Edip builds a social critique based on the discrepancy between the values of her weak or unreliable narrators and those of the female protagonists and the implied author. More significantly, she uses male narrators to turn the "woman's question" upside down, making it a "man's question". Her work solicits answers to the issue of new gender relations from male narrators, and by implication, from men in a changing society.

In the example of *Seviyye Talip*, the narrator, Fahir, finds himself in the middle of a “woman's question” just as he denies the significance of such a question. The novel opens as Fahir returns from England to a country of change. The constitutional period has just begun, he notes, but is clouded by the Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the independence of Bulgaria, and the struggle over Crete. The audience is told, from Fahir’s perspective that the new period of change also impacted women. But with the prospect of these and other national issues, Fahir is against the emergence of a “woman's question”.<sup>13</sup>

Fahir himself is an open-minded reformist, who likes the “new woman” he sees in Seviyye: a blond, who dresses fashionably, speaks foreign languages, enjoys classical music, and plays the piano. But he is equally troubled by the implications of “the new woman” for his own relationships. He is shocked and impressed by Seviyye’s boldness and honesty. Despite a socially unforgivable act, adultery, Seviyye seeks and receives respect. She refuses to continue a dishonest and loveless relationship with her husband, leaves him for her Hungarian piano teacher, begins living with the new man in her life, and is eventually successful in obtaining a divorce from her husband. Seviyye’s boldness makes her the object of Fahir’s platonic desire, but her choices also represent a dangerous role model for Fahir's wife, Macide, whose traditional humble ways change dramatically through increased contact with Seviyye. If Seviyye represents the new woman, her issues, for instance search for love and companionship and the right to divorce, are also the issues of Fahir and all “new” men. Can educated and reform-minded men, who desire “new woman” in their lives, really cope with what they are asking for? Or to put

the question in another way, are the “new men” really “new”? Finally, if gender questions are “less” important, why does one face them persistently in private life?

In *Handan*, the audience gets to know about female characters mainly through the lens of Refik Cemal and his correspondences with a friend, Server. In these depictions, the women in the book, including Refik Cemal’s wife and Handan’s best friend, Neriman, are “Europeanized [alafranga]”<sup>14</sup>; they wear “short light cloaks [yeldirmes]”, display “free attitudes”, speak “fast English”, play tennis in short skirts and head covers<sup>15</sup>. They are known by the conservative women of the neighborhood as the “new world girls”, who, having been brought up by nannies and tutors, embody all the “European craziness”<sup>16</sup>. The man of the household and Neriman’s father Cemal Bey is responsible for the young women’s European education, while his own wife is not very pleased with this type of upbringing. From Refik Cemal and Server’s letters we learn that they have always been intrigued by these women, but have been too shy to approach them. In the end, they both build long-lasting relations with Cemal Bey’s “alafranga” girls.

The novel revolves around Handan’s emotional world and relations, which Refik Cemal follows, first through his wife Neriman, and then, in person, as he is pulled into Handan’s sphere of influence. Handan is married to an Ottoman pasha and wears a wedding ring, found to be snobbish by Refik Cemal and Neriman, who believe that the pasha encourages such behavior in Handan. While the tragic end of Handan’s quest—for love, companionship, and loyalty—complicates the trope of “new woman” and new gender relations, it is clear that the narrator, Refik Cemal is infatuated by this intelligent woman, whose beauty seems to shine through only for those who get to know her

intelligence. In fact, Refik Cemal begins to compare his wife Neriman, who is relatively content in her traditional roles as a wife and mother, to Handan--neither a happy wife nor a mother. Handan's first and unfulfilled love to Nazım begs questions of the nature and desirability of love, and of independent-minded women's choices and needs. Hidden in Handan's story is the story of a constitutional-period intellectual, the story of Refik Cemal's emotional and behavioral growth through an encounter with a sophisticated "new" woman.

Similarly, in *Raik'in Annesi* and *Yeni Turan*, Edip uses male narrators in order to turn the "woman's question" upside down, making it a "man's question". *Raik'in Annesi* is one of Edip's earliest novels, produced in 1910. The book reveals little about its protagonist Refika, but the fact that she is Raik's mother and a good wife, who is wronged and cheated by her husband. This is not a sheer coincidence, since Refika's choices about love and companionship emerge out of her desire to protect the well-being and honor of her son, Raik. As opposed to Handan and Seviyye, Refika's virtues lie rather in her "traditional" Ottoman-Turkish approach to gender roles. Even though she has been wronged at an early age by her husband, pushed to the verge of an adulterous relationship by her husband's cousin, Mansur, and is aware of the attraction that the narrator feels towards her, Refika defeats such urges, remains an honorable woman, a good mother and a loyal and forgiving wife.

The narrator, meets Refika and her little son Raik at one of the Princess Islands, where he takes refuge from family pressures to marry him off to a neighbor's daughter half his age. As an eligible bachelor, he ruminates about contemporary women, issues of compatibility in a marital union, the desirability of marriage, the significance of love and

companionship, and the qualities of a good wife. During his brief encounters with Raik and his mother, Refika, these questions are transformed into questions about what marriage offers to a woman like Refika, who has been cheated by her husband and left alone on the island with her son and father. The husband, Rauf, leads a promiscuous life with a Polish woman of the “low” kind, and is in fact a friend of the narrator, which brings another level of urgency to the narrator's questions about men in marriage. The narrator helps Refika and a remorseful Rauf patch up their relationship, and returns from his social flight with answers to his questions: there are good women; a marriage should be based on mutual interests and likes; there should be compatibility in age; a husband's treatment of his wife is significant, just as loyalty, devotion, and companionship are the desirable qualities in a good husband; and perhaps most significantly, a child is a treasure to be cherished by both parents.

The role reversal through the use of a male narrator in regard to the “woman's question” is repeated in *Yeni Turan*, which opens with the confession of the narrator about his moral obligation to tell the heart-breaking story of Kaya. Motivated by a profound sense of guilt, Asım, the narrator, seeks redemption by telling Kaya's story before his death. His sense of guilt is personal, for he is among those who wronged Kaya; historical, for Asım believes that what happened has historical significance for the country; and, political, since he has participated in conduct unbecoming of political relationships.

At the time of the narrated events, Asım is 25 years old and a recent graduate of the faculty of political science. His uncle, Hamdi Pasha, is a powerful leader in the political party called the “New Ottomans”, soon to become their new minister of interior.

Kaya's story is intertwined with the story of two political parties with opposing visions of how to save the country. While the new Ottomans, represented by Hamdi Pasha in the book, stand against Turkish nationalism, and defend, increasingly a centralist position, the party of Union and Progress (UP), represented by Kaya and her relations, defend Turkish nationalism and an ideal called "new Turan"—the relation to pan-Turanism and Turkish racism are obvious for today's audience—and propagate a decentralist position.

Written for the paper *Tanin* in 1912, *Yeni Turan* coincides with the legitimization and rise to power of the Committee of Union and Progress as a party in the imperial politics and with the articulation of Ziya Gökalp's doctrine of Turkism. The novel propagates these ideals which originate in the Union and Progress and Turkish Hearth circles. But as the narrator explains, "Perhaps the most striking aspect of New Turan [was] the institutions [organized] for women".<sup>17</sup> Kaya, the new Turanist protagonist, is an active organizer of women's schools, workshops, and charities all around the country. In fact, the novel repeatedly suggests that Kaya is new Turan and new Turan is Kaya.

Influenced by the politics of his uncle, the new Ottomanist Hamdi Pasha, Asım claims, at the beginning of the novel, that discussions of women's awakening, Turkish feminism, even when it is distinct from European feminism, are "evil thought[s], which will lead the country into a disaster."<sup>18</sup> Written against the backdrop of an epilogue in which Asım confesses to his personal wrongdoings and political short-sightedness, these lines are intended to urge the contemporary audience to question young Asım's traditional positions, rather than those of "radical" Kaya, who is a feminist political activist, an articulate speaker, an unmarried woman of 35, and a Muslim Turkish woman who wears a robe made for an imam, a judge, or a professor [cübbe], rather than the veil

[çarşaf], one who speaks to mixed crowds and stands out with her simplicity and power of intellect, rather than her elegance and beauty.

Asım helps Hamdi Pasha blackmail Kaya into marrying him, in return for freeing from jail her nephew, her companion, and her fellow compatriot Oğuz. This is an act, Hamdi Pasha believes, which would discredit Oğuz and Kaya's cause of new Turan. Hamdi Pasha and his party use the press to provoke the conservatives against the new roles assigned to women by the CUP. But in search of approval from his new wife, Hamdi Pasha himself gives his official approval to certain laws that grant education to women. Having confessed his contributions to all these deceitful and unprincipled acts, Asım closes the novel with a final bid for forgiveness, in which he declares that his only consolation is his explication, through this narrative, of why Kaya, the mother of new Turan, had married and lived for four years with someone like Hamdi Pasha.

In Edip's early novellas, indeed the "new" woman is profoundly concerned with companionship, love, marriage, motherhood, and active participation in the life of the nation. But the "new" woman's issues are those of "new" men, as the latter learn to render companionship, honest love, and equal partnership to his soul-mate. Edip's role reversal in regard to these issues is a premeditated response to innumerable articles, stories, novels by mostly male writers that appeared in the contemporary press about their disenfranchisement and victimization in unhappy marriages. As Deniz Kandiyoti argues in her article entitled "Gendering the Modern",

The polemical literature of the turn of the [nineteenth] century  
about Ottoman domestic mores appears to single out one



main victim, the woman. Her ignorance and seclusion and the indignities of polygyny and repudiation were major objects of criticism. The denunciatory voice was that of the male modernist reformer. Implicit in this critique was also the belief that men were condemned to loveless matches arranged by their kin and inadequate spouses who could not provide intellectual companionship.<sup>19</sup>

Kandiyoti builds her argument on Alan Duben and Cem Behar's study of *Istanbul Households*, which analyses demographic data from Istanbul in the teens of the twentieth century and compares it with literary and historical sources produced at the time. Duben and Behar note that while the demographic data illustrate negligible levels of polygamy, low rates of teenage marriage, and extended family arrangements, contemporary popular and elite literature tended to treat these issues as problems to be solved. What the "new" man wanted was a "new" woman as his companion, lover, wife, and mother of his children as part of a modernist project, the creation of the new family and new nation. Kandiyoti explains that the discrepancy between the demographic data and literary evidence is rooted in "the urge to articulate a new morality".<sup>20</sup>

Edip played a significant part in the articulation of a new, modern morality, but her part in the process was ambivalent. She spoke for the "other"--the female "victim" of traditional mores--that the modernist male writers of her time sought to civilize. Edip's male narrators were often of the modernist cast by upbringing and educational background. Yet, they had the hardest time, as fathers, husbands, and admirers, in

coming to terms with the "new" woman and domestic order that they so much desired. This represented an irony in so far as modern men invested a good deal in the creation of the "new" woman project. From the 1870s to the 1920s, major authors and intellectuals all the way from Namık Kemal, Ahmet Mithat, Şemseddin Sami, Abdullah Cevdet, to Ziya Gökalp and a host of other literary and popular culture figures debated modernity in the context of the relationship between women and the nation.<sup>21</sup>

In literature and in life, not only the “modern father” as Kandiyoti notes, but the modern men in general—for “modern” teachers, lovers, husbands played a similar role—“had a special link to [their] daughters, who were valued, educated, and nurtured—men gave social birth to the new woman of the republic.”<sup>22</sup> Kandiyoti’s discussion of men’s involvement in the creation of modern morality, which embraced the “new” woman trope, goes beyond the late-Ottoman era in which Edip wrote her early novellas. Unlike the Kemalist period in which modern family and nation acquired a crisper definition, at the time Edip wrote her novels the Turkish version of modernity was still being forged and articulated.

In the case of Edip's personal life, her relationship to powerful modernist men like her father and first husband shaped some of her views. Her father, who raised Edip with nannies and tutors, sent her to the American College for Girls, and supported Edip in her quest to become a writer, ended up disappointing Edip, her step-mother and the family when he re-married. Edip's autobiography, *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (1926) and *The Turkish Ordeal* (1928) depict the bitterness she felt for having made the discovery that "modern" men of wealth, power, and status were not quite modern. This pattern repeated itself and led her to divorce her first husband, who originally was her tutor.

In fiction, none of the men important to Edip's protagonists is an absolutist despot. Most of Edip's modern protagonists are daughters of relatively "progressive" fathers. From Kaya, who is the daughter of Lütfü Pasha, a strong supporter of the CUP and of women's rights, to Handan, who is known as "one of Cemal Bey's alafranga daughters"<sup>23</sup>, from Seviyye, who has been raised as a modern woman to Refika whose best friend is her father, all of these women have men—lovers and husbands, as well as fathers-- aspiring to be "modern" in their lives. Even more interestingly, Refika's father takes on the parts of her companion and Raik's father. Raik addresses his mother as "nene" (grandmother)—a great irony in the light of the fact that Refika is a young and attractive woman--rather than "anne" (mother). But Refika constitutes a sort of a synthesis, a compromise figure between the old and the new in Edip's early fiction. It is also possible that Edip points to the price the old man is asked to pay for having married Refika off at a young age to an undeserving man. Like the Frankenstein they created, the object of "modern" men's desire, the "new" woman and the "new" domestic order, is also the source of their anguish. Edip's reversal of roles—troubled men, as opposed to troubled women pausing at the gates of modernity—offers a subtle criticism of the type of contemporary commentary that Duben, Behar, and Kandiyoti mention. Fellow feminists displayed a similar type of distrust in the motives of their male compatriots when they wrote articles for the journal *Women's World*. Although men could speak of women favorably in words of companionship and partnership, their actions differed a great deal. In her study on the Ottoman women's movement, Serpil Çakır observes that women who wrote for *Women's World* doubted the sincerity of men, especially male writers, in solving women's problems.<sup>24</sup>

While recasting the woman's question as a man's question and as a gender issue, Edip as a female novelist ventured into uncharted territory. But she was cautious enough to leave a safe distance between her audience and her characters. Another formal characteristic of Edip's early novels is that each story involving love and relationships takes place on a literary-imaginative "island": a foreign country, one of the Princess Islands in the Sea of Marmara, or the distant universe of a few powerful men, located in an isolated Istanbul neighborhood. In these relatively sealed milieus<sup>25</sup>, educated and proud Muslim women tame their husbands, fall in love, or even find themselves in the midst of complicated adulterous affairs. They are the girls of upper-class Istanbul neighborhoods, but they risk previously unforeseen spiritual and carnal adventures at a distance that is simultaneously safe and within reach for the audience and the writer.

*Love and Marriage: Handan vs. Kaya*

In Edip's 1912 novel, *Handan*, the main character encounters a series of disappointments in her search for individuality—the quest of being loved, desired and chosen for who she is. Handan's is a love story, in which the meaning and significance of love are questioned. Handan experiences what she thinks in retrospect to be love in her relationship with her socialist tutor, Nazım. She refuses Nazım on the grounds that he cannot articulate his love for her apart from the passion for his cause. Handan's insistence on the articulation of love apart from mutual ideals and interests turns out to be her tragic fallacy. It impacts the rest of her life and that of Nazım's. Personal loss, coupled with imprisonment and oppression during the last days of the Hamidian regime,

result in Nazım's suicide, an act that leaves its sad imprint on the remainder of Handan's life. When she marries a sophisticated and "alafranga" Ottoman pasha, her mobility and comfort expand, and her sexual desires get fulfilled—there are references to a "strange" attraction that the two felt towards one another—but these fall short of bringing her true love and companionship.

The final catastrophe takes place when Handan falls in love with the husband of her best friend and relation, Neriman. In an altered state of mind during a desperate illness, she admits to falling in love with the narrator, Refik Cemal. There is a promise, in this attraction, of true love and companionship, for Refik Cemal cares deeply for Handan, too. But for Handan, certainly more so than for Refik Cemal, fulfilling such a promise will come at the cost of great shame. The recognition of the mutual attraction between them comes at a point when Handan experiences mental and emotional deterioration—how else could she ponder a love affair with Neriman's husband? Or is it passionate love that brings Handan's emotional and intellectual deterioration and ultimate destruction? This is a question Edip puts to her audience.

Handan's story is reminiscent of Kate Chopin's *Awakening*,<sup>26</sup> in that, powerful emotions, which cannot be fulfilled—for example love--bring destruction. Moreover, this type of love brings an "awakening" that a woman desires and fears. Chopin's and Edip's narratives suggest that such an awakening—of individuality and of desire—is doomed to failure because of social pressures. But Edip's message about women in love departs from that of Chopin's in dramatic ways. For Edip finds those pressures somewhat necessary, valuable, and desirable, while Chopin depicts them as real but undesirable and tragic.

Nineteenth century literature recognized the power of passionate love in great masterpieces. So did Edip and educated cosmopolitan woman in the Ottoman Middle East. Passionate love was overwhelming and when it hit, it took over every aspect of one's life. It was a threat to harmonious homes as in the family life of Handan's friend Neriman and her husband. This theme was repeated in more benign ways in *Seviyye Talip*, in which the narrator's peaceful relationship with his wife was threatened by his attraction to Seviyye. While Seviyye was saved due to her brave, honest, and rational choices, Handan was destroyed for having given into powerful urges. Love took full possession of the lover, and when suppressed, found its way out in delirious confessions.

A cluster of images that pertained to love--as "free love", as the basis for marriage, as sentimentalization of marital ties and as a force that destroyed marriages--occupied the imagination of Ottoman elite men and women. As Duben and Behar contend, "In Ottoman society the introduction of the idea that a man and a woman should unite in matrimony of their own volition and only if they were in love caused great intellectual and emotional turmoil."<sup>27</sup> This was evident not only in Edip's early romances, but also in Ottoman women's popular press. In *Women's World*, the women who came from the same cosmopolitan circles as Edip, discussed the issue of love extensively. Translated articles from Western sources also accompanied the discussion on love. One such translation was a long piece by Bert Danjen on "Free Love" and it was advertised as an essay on "what every woman should know in order to live their lives."<sup>28</sup> The article discussed the plight of bourgeois girls who ran away from the captivity of their parents only to confront the captivity of their husbands. It asserted that there were "many bourgeois girls who env[ied] girls from poor, labor-class backgrounds" for their

freedom and individuality.<sup>29</sup> A marriage based on love was a thousand times more moral than a marriage based on other calculations, including respectability and money. The women who fell from grace were those who never knew free love. There was no room, in love marriages, for infidelity.<sup>30</sup>

But such Western views were not widely shared by the female audience of the journal. An open letter from Fatma Zerrin to her friend Firdevs claimed that passionate love created storms in one's personality. Men often felt such feelings due to the material qualities of a woman such as beauty and wealth. But true love differed from this kind of passionate love in that it was what a mother felt for her child, a person felt for the country, or a friend felt for another friend--a feeling that involved no material return. Fatma Zerrin warned her friend, as well as the readers, to stay away from the evils of their time.<sup>31</sup> Fatma Zerrin's choice of vocabulary, her preference for caring and compassion, also underscored the opposition between two Turkish words: "aşk" for passion and "sevgi" for devotion.<sup>32</sup>

In modern drama and the novel, love as "aşk" was a prominent theme, "the objects of men's affections" frequently being depicted as "women who lived on the edge of society: non-Muslims, slaves, prostitutes, or fallen (aşifte) women."<sup>33</sup> Halide Edip's Muslim female characters were exceptions to this trend. Yet, in love they faced destruction and fall from grace and as the object of love they almost destroyed other people's homes. Clearly love was something to be wary of. It did not merely undermine social norms, jeopardize family honor, and subvert the authority of parents;<sup>34</sup> it also obscured the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behavior, respectable and

unrespectable people, ultimately sabotaging one source of security that upper-class women almost always thought they had, namely the family.

In *Women's World*, Nimet Cemil argued that there was a difference between a hired mistress and a righteous woman. She outlined these differences in polar opposites, regarding the former as corrupt, polluted, disloyal, captive, and profligate. Such women could be found in the district of Beyoğlu. Although Cemil did not elaborate on the woman's dwelling, contemporary readers knew full well about Beyoğlu, the Istanbul neighborhood of fashion and nightlife, the majority of whose inhabitants were non-Muslim. In contrast, Cemil's married woman was pure, untainted, innocent, free, loyal, and frugal. She was to be treated with respect and love, and not with pity and expectation of service.<sup>35</sup> Elsewhere, in another piece that responded to allegations that women in the streets did not cover themselves properly, Cemil exclaimed that one had to distinguish immoral women from intellectual women. Holding up the example of "civilized" nations, she proclaimed that decent women felt the need to attune their dress to the times.<sup>36</sup> But in terms of respectability, Cemil suggested, they could not be equated with lowly women. In love, Edip's Muslim women risked precisely the same kind of threat. Edip's characterization of her heroines, therefore, underscored their sophistication and intellect, rather than their beauty and charm. Her descriptions focused on Handan's sophistication, Kaya's simplicity and strength, Refika's composure, and Seviyye's respectability in order to distinguish these intellectual characters from "fallen" women.

For upper-class women like Edip the boundaries of cultural change were drawn when it came to free or passionate love. Although Edip's heroines aspired for love, they also understood that they took enormous risks for their honor, status, children, and



stability of the marriage institution, if they embraced passionate love. Therefore, Handan, who had difficulty controlling her desires, was admirable and interesting, but also confused about the issue of love.

Unlike Handan, Edip's two other heroines, Seviyye and Kaya, were self-assured and clear about their choices. They both represented women who had social ideals, surpassing individual private desires: Seviyye stood for women's legal rights, while Kaya had an unshakable belief in the creation of a new social order in which Turkish women re-asserted their "historically" rooted rights. Kaya's forced marriage to the "Ottomanist" Hamdi Pasha stood for the perpetuation of the old order in which women were forced to marry men many years older than their age, and lived unhappy lives. Her devotion to Oğuz, although unfulfilled, represented a new kind of union in love. This type of love involved no physical passion, but devotion to a mutual cause. Kaya's story is sad. However, this is due not to her or Oğuz's doing, but the meddling of the old order, in the persona of Hamdi, with their happiness. If such meddling had not taken place, the audience is assured through Kaya's unshakable belief, she and Oğuz would have been united in a simple but egalitarian marital union, forming what Gökalp calls in a reference to the Turkic family, an "ocak" (hearth).<sup>37</sup>

In Edip's fiction, strong passions for social causes, primarily for one's country, were acceptable and desirable. Duben and Behar argue that passionate love, inspired by the French revolution, increasingly acquired a political association with liberty during the constitutional movement--an association which was domesticated during the Young Turk and World War I periods.<sup>38</sup> But strong passions for an ideal that transcended individuals were not novel to Ottoman soil. Mystic literature had combined powerful passions with

transcendental ideals in the image of God. From Yunus Emre to Rumi, love for God's creatures and ultimately for God entailed overwhelming, rather than serene emotions.<sup>39</sup> The association of passionate love with ideals, therefore, had local roots and was not solely inspired by the dissemination of the principles of the French revolution; nor was it merely an innovation of the constitutional movement. The transformation took place in the realm of politics rather than of love, in the proposition that political self-realization lay on earth, in "liberty", rather than in union with God. While it is hard to deny the influence of new personal and political ideals originating in the West such as "love marriage" and liberty, it is significant to emphasize the ways in which such new ideals could be nativized. In an article on Edip's nationalism Duygu Köksal discusses the writer's sympathy for Sufi mysticism which emphasized transcendental love and simplicity.<sup>40</sup> In novels like *Yeni Turan*, Edip indeed projected a transcendental passion to the union of the sexes in a political goal. Love between men and women was nurtured by passions for an ideal greater than two people's love. In fact, Kaya was perfectly willing to sacrifice her personal love for Oğuz in the name of their mutual ideal, the new Turan. Similarly, Seviyye's choices were rooted not only in a selfish quest for happiness, but a rational pursuit for her individual rights.

Not every marriage involved such a mutual union of high ideals, though. Even when a union did not involve such elevated ideals as those of Kaya's, personal companionship and political camaraderie were essential. They were increasingly viewed as necessary ingredients of a happy marriage. This was pointed out also by Edip's contemporaries. In "Warning",<sup>41</sup> a story serialized for *Women's World*, the heroine Meliha, whose name means beautiful and feminine, is depicted as an unhappy woman.

Meliha's misfortune is to be tucked away in a beautiful home with her daughter Şükriye (gratefulness). Yet, her major concern is not the isolation of her home life, but the lack of her husband's emotional companionship. Meliha dreams in front of a mirror of the past, her husband's conversations with her, his promises and kisses. Her marriage falls apart due to her husband's nightlife, taste in "fallen" women, and his lack of concern for the emotional well-being of his wife.

Love was an important concern. Yet, if marriages started with love, they could also end with love. Passionate love and physical attraction were already acceptable propositions for men, who could maintain concubines and co-wives. Women objected to the opening of modern horizons for indulgent Ottoman men. New gender relations, according to feminist women, should not imply that men's passions be accommodated by fallen-women, non-Muslims, and foreigners, in addition to concubines and co-wives. Moreover, conventional forms of sexual indulgence did not threaten women's security in a marriage as much as the modern notion of "amour", which implied not only the satisfaction of physical urges, but also a conjugal union in love.

Not that women did not appreciate "amour" and did not experience the kind of passionate attraction to the other sex that men did. At least two of Edip's heroines, Refika and Handan, struggled against such powerful urges. The power of love in transforming one's life was acknowledged. But taming such passions was also deemed necessary for women whose status was at risk precisely because of this transformation. Passionate, impulsive love was a threat to the honor and respectability of women in a society that embraced conflicting ideals. As far as upper-class women were concerned,

characters like Refika and Handan found the proposition of love attractive and dangerous. It was a threat to their honor.

But as far as respectability and honor were concerned there was no double standard in women's fiction. In Edip's fiction male characters who engaged in passionate affairs with women other than their wives faced similar risks. Refika's husband, Rauf and Handan's husband Hüsnü Pasha, were both condemned and shunned by the male narrators of these books for being dishonest and disloyal to their wives. Whether their extra-marital relationships were simple escapades or passionate affairs, they were portrayed as men whose honor and respectability were at risk.

In return for withdrawing any claims to passionate love, women expected companionship in marriage, even if it was merely a contract of partnership, as some advocates of divorce rights argued. The traditional cultural belief held that love tended to follow marriage, even when it was arranged.<sup>42</sup> What became acceptable for upper-class women in the discussion of love was not that everything had to start and end with passionate love, but that lack of emotional companionship, compassion, and affection could now ruin a marriage: a novelty for earlier generations who must have expected the same, but would be hard pressed to view it as a major source of marital breakdown. Clearly, this represented a significant facet of cultural change in late-Ottoman society.

*The Mother and the Child: Raik'in Annesi*

In *Raik'in Annesi* Edip discusses the significance of the relationship between the mother and the child in the context of changing mores. Refika and her son Raik's

personalities are closely connected. The child is a reflection of the mother, and the mother excels in the angelic reflection of her child. The story is aptly called "Raik's Mother", since Refika's most significant role throughout the narrative is being Raik's mother. In fact, the narrator, and consequently the audience, would have never gotten to know her if it were not for her son. The narrator is struck by Refika's relationship to her child, and the perfect overlap between his image of a good wife and mother and Refika's personality. Moments before meeting her, he lists the qualities of an ideal wife. The narrator is looking for a woman who is a "believer", a "God fearing woman"; one who "goes to a mosque once in a while", who feels "the poetry and spiritual elevation in prayer", and instills such feelings in her children.<sup>43</sup> The portrait of the woman the narrator has in mind is quite precise, down to the minute details of plain appearance, dark hair, smiling eyes, compassionate mouth, and soft hands, complementing a personality solidly grounded in traditions: "if she knows music, she should know classical, serious pieces and lullabies in order to put her children to sleep."<sup>44</sup>

Refika fits this picture. She is a "traditional" woman, who makes her husband's foreign mistress appear more banal than the woman already is. The contrast between the two is stark: Refika is thin, tall, and not pretty, but attractive, respectable, and honorable, while the foreign mistress is a pretty, chubby, flamboyant and trite blond. Refika, who fears divorce as a "Catholic would", watches over her own household all alone, remaining committed even to a "traitor" like Rauf.<sup>45</sup> The Polish mistress who is evidently a repulsive "low" character, shows off her French, displays a good deal of flesh, shamelessly enjoys nightlife, and indulges her whims in affairs with married men like Rauf.<sup>46</sup> The difference between the two women speaks for the difference between the

local and the foreign, the old and the new. It also speaks for the rupture in the relationship between Refika and Rauf. Both of them symbolize a form of synthesis between the two worlds, but the two interpretations differ considerably. For Refika modernity promises new rights and responsibilities embedded in her role as a mother, while Rauf's version of modernity consists of new avenues of irresponsible gratification.

But the gap between the man and the woman is filled; the unnatural "union of two bodies whose hearts are strangers to one another"<sup>47</sup> is made natural through the presence of angelic Raik. The child establishes spiritual connections, between the grandfather and the narrator, between his mother and the narrator, finally between his own mother and father. In fact, two estranged worlds come together in a desire to retain a good future for Raik.

Raik is not just a child. He is important as the future individual and the promise of the country. The narrator refers to him as "my good friend" and as "Mr. Raik"; his grandfather listens to Raik's stories as if they are the most delicious literary piece,<sup>48</sup> and his mother values him beyond and above her personal needs and desires. Moreover, the attachment and affection between the mother and the child are apparent, rather than discreet. While Refika represents the traditional woman, her relationship with Raik is hardly traditional. In the context of turn-of-the-century Istanbul, the mother and the child display manners and attitudes that are relatively new. The national significance that the child begins to acquire has consequences for the mother.

Motherhood was the single "important duty" entrusted to "Ottoman womanhood".<sup>49</sup> According to Aliye Cevad, a writer for *Women's World*, the purpose of the family was the future, which translated itself into the future of national life. "Family

[meant] nation, and nation [meant] family.”<sup>50</sup> This was why the feminist journal included a subsection in each consecutive issue on “terbiye-i etfal”, “child-rearing”. Even when the topic was “naval trade”, a subject not even remotely connected to child-rearing, an author was willing to take this opportunity to emphasize that mothers encouraged their children to appreciate the needs of the country and to choose the right profession accordingly.<sup>51</sup>

Aziz Haydar, a regular contributor to *Women's World*, argued strongly that mothers instilled love of country in children and it was mothers of the nation again who would teach the children how not to forget their “national grudges”. According to Haydar, personal grudges were to be forgiven, yet the national ones, such as the consecutive Ottoman defeats in Crete, Tripoli (1911), and the First Balkan War (1912), were to be remembered. Mothers, a collective entity, lost their children, the martyrs; and mothers should act as the keepers of this memory.<sup>52</sup>

Elsewhere, another article declared categorically that Ottoman defeat in the First Balkan War was due to Ottoman women. The writer argued in a piece entitled “Why Are We Defeated?” that this was a question everyone pondered, and that the answer lay in the nation’s spiritual weakness; its lack of passionate love for the country; its idleness and ignorance, a malaise that could only be cured by educated mothers who raised the nation’s soldiers with their spiritual influences at home, inspiring them with ideals and determination.<sup>53</sup>

Narratives on motherhood often defined women not only as actual mothers, but also as potential and symbolic mothers in the service of nationalism, which in all of its reincarnations--as Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism--needed educated mothers.

Contributors to *Women's World* addressed all of these discourses at once. Their definition of nationhood was fluid, although it occasionally focused on religion or race as a marker of who they were and what they were expected to do. The journal tended indiscriminately to employ terms like “Ottoman womanhood”, “Turkish race”, and “Muslim women”. But their personal identities were never subject to such ambiguities: they were mothers, actual, potential, and symbolic of a nation. They raised the future citizens of the nation. Edip, too, utilized contesting ideologies of the time to strengthen her points about love, marriage, motherhood, and divorce. She did not hesitate to merge new models with the existing ones, and combine Islamism and Western influences in the discussion of motherhood. In *Raik'in Annesi* she employed Islamism, rather than Turkish nationalism, as in the later piece *Yeni Turan*, as a framework for the discussion of righteous motherhood.

There was a growing understanding about the significance of the science of child-rearing for the future of the nation. This was acknowledged even in the highest offices of the empire in the period prior to the reinstatement of the Ottoman constitution. When Halide Edip published her first translation as early as 1897, a book entitled *Mader* (Persian for “mother”) from English, her choice of John Abbot’s work was commended by Mahmud Esad, the legal advisor to the imperial treasury, who argued in an introduction to Edip’s book that the women’s education was essential to children’s education, which, in turn, would create progress in the social life of the country.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, Sultan Abdülhamid himself had bestowed an official honor on the translator;<sup>55</sup> and Edip, having thanked the Sultan for the honor, explained the significance of this work in her opening lines: “Children are society’s future hope. And those who will give them



the first lesson, the first education, are mothers. For this reason, motherhood is a great, a very great duty.”<sup>56</sup> In 1900s, motherhood and wifedom were critical not only to discussions of marriage and love, but also to women’s claims to education and employment. Educated women that wanted to carve out a better future for themselves combined Western influences with contesting ideologies such as traditional Islamism and modernity to re-formulate their role in society.

*Women’s World* curiously combined in its pages translated articles from European sources with essays based on traditional sources, both justifying and asserting the importance of women as mothers. “Mother’s Place According to Sharia Laws” maintained that a woman had an elevated and special place in the Islamic Sharia (i.e., legal code) due to her role as a mother. Making references to different kinds of Hadith (traditions of the prophet Muhammad), the article echoed the Muslim saying that Heaven is at the feet of mothers. A mother’s place was above and beyond every other member of the family as the recipient of respect.<sup>57</sup> The same issue also included a translated article which took the argument further, to its logical conclusion. “Women in the Modern-Day Social Sciences” championed the “special nature” of mothers, which made them particularly fit for national, scientific, and political professions. The article made references to female scientists such as Madam Curie, to the feminist cause in Europe and to the suffragettes, concluding with an optimistic note on how women’s advice would be heard in academies and parliaments soon.<sup>58</sup> For, precisely because of their special nature as mothers, women nurtured no personal ambitions. Moreover, they always acted with “composure” in matters of social significance.

This editorial choice was hardly a sheer coincidence. This was precisely how upper-class women in elite Istanbul society were able to forge a new notion of femininity, identifying it both with Europe, the sight of new experiences, and with the Middle East, the sight of known experiences. The new notion of femininity was based on the convergence of the traditional and the modern, incorporating the gendered vision of Victorian domesticity with the gendered vision of traditional Islamic practices that propagated separate but complementary roles for the sexes. Western influences coming from a variety of European sources furnished them with new tools to maintain as well as transcend their traditional roles, and to assert new responsibilities. For upper-class women, domesticity in the form of actual, symbolic, and potential motherhood became the key to new experiences outside the home.

But the type of significance that the mother-and-child relationship attained was based on the novel proposition that children would grow up to be “citizens” of the empire, and would therefore “have a say” in the future of the country: such talk would have raised eyebrows only a few decades before. Prior to 1839, the subjects of the sultan had hardly anything to do with the future of the empire’s vast territory. The notion of homeland consisted of one’s own neighborhood, village, city, or the region, rather than “vatan”, a land mass defined by boundaries and populated by citizens.<sup>59</sup> Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909) was the very sultan who had shelved the Ottoman constitution and spent a good deal of his rule in conflict with constitutionalism.

The full reinstatement of the Ottoman constitution in 1908 had indeed affirmed acceptance of such a notion, that is to say, the notion of child as the future citizen, living in a country run by a constitution and a parliament. Women took full advantage of these

debates about the “new period” ushered in by the Young Turk revolution, and underscored their role as mothers who would single-handedly guarantee that children’s loyalties were directed at the right places, the country and the religion. They repeatedly made this point through translated essays, in addition to editorials, articles, and literary pieces. An essay translated from French for *Women’s World* discussed the French revolution, a common point of comparison for the contemporary Ottoman reader, to the Young Turk revolution of 1908, and argued that a revolution is never complete if it brings freedom only to men.<sup>60</sup> A feature story covered by *Women’s World* about the Ottoman Union Girls’ School in Beşiktaş (a neighborhood of Istanbul) brought this point home by depicting the students of the school as “the future mothers of the nation” and “the future’s determined guardian mothers”. The article argued that “the day when we can succeed in building this school in every region of the country, we can rest assured of our future.”<sup>61</sup>

The emphasis on motherhood was well placed, for if women were so important as mothers, they not only needed to be educated, but also their gentle spiritual influence and sense of determination could improve the country’s social life at large. The empire needed change, and change came from new generations. Mothers alone could guarantee the direction of change, tampering it, as well as fueling it. Mothers reared the citizens of the future, and hence, needed elementary, secondary, and even high schools; they also deserved better treatment in the trolley and the boat, from other men as well as from their own husbands; and finally, if their influence was *already* so central to other lives, so definitive for the collective future, who could possibly say “no” to a mother who wanted to become a teacher, a nurse, a clerk, and perhaps even a voting citizen?<sup>62</sup> Rather than

posing a conflict with the role of motherhood, women's participation in social life, the new roles they could attain in the workplace, took their justification from motherhood. Although Refika's denial of her own needs and desires, and her re-union with Rauf appear traditional, the reasons with which she makes these choices—concern for her child's happiness and future-- reflect ideals that are quite novel. Perhaps motherhood always entailed consideration for the child's well-being, but a child's desires and potential hardly made or broke marriages until the articulation of "modern" morality.

*Women and Legal Reform: Seviyye's Quest for Justice with Respectability*

If motherhood entailed special rights and new responsibilities and resulted in increased autonomy in the public sphere, it also was inseparable from wifedom. *Raik'in Annesi* tackled the issue of a wife's choices when her marriage fell apart. Although Refika, the ideal wife, chose her marriage over divorce and adultery, due to concern for her child, she also did not hesitate to go back to her father's home and live apart from her husband when she could no longer take Rauf's infidelity and disrespect. A woman's choices in the case that a marriage fell apart was a significant issue among better educated, elite women in the early twentieth century. In mainstream press as well as in elite journals like *Women's World*, there was a growing concern over divorce practices. In *Women's World*, the program for reform dealt mainly with restraining men's abundant and irresponsible use of divorce, assuring protection to women who were divorcees, and expanding women's right to divorce. These involved a variety of strategies, from an appeal to religion to comparisons with the West. Women argued that divorcing a wife

instantly represented a lack of piety, morals, and religious knowledge.<sup>63</sup> Articles and editorials in *Women's World* concentrated on expanding women's autonomy in divorce by providing them with equal rights to initiate divorce.

Among Edip's heroines Seviyye best represents Edip's concern with women's right to divorce. The title of the book suggests an aspiration for the leveling of the relationship between the sexes, without jeopardizing women's honor and respectability. For "seviyye", the name of the protagonist is an ambiguous word that denotes both leveling and keeping the level high.<sup>64</sup> Seviyye embodies many of the characteristics of a "new" woman who defines the new age. She is blond, speaks foreign languages, enjoys Western classical music, dresses fashionably, and plays the piano. The narrator is originally critical of Seviyye: she was married to the uncle of his best friend, but fell desperately in love with her Hungarian piano teacher. Seviyye tries in vain to persuade the relatively "traditional" husband—"relatively" since he does not resort to dramatic action in defense of family honor--to divorce her. Being unable to initiate divorce herself and finding it disgraceful to continue her marriage when she loves another man, Seviyye deserts her husband and begins living with her piano teacher-- a socially unforgivable act for the time. It is in her plight that Edip questions the absurdity of a law that causes despair, hypocrisy, and social immorality. Seviyye's honesty and courage are praiseworthy, as is her eventual success in obtaining divorce and marrying the man she loves.

Edip herself was no stranger to the two facets of despair that women in upper-class society encountered. As mentioned earlier, both her father and her first husband had attempted to maintain co-wives.<sup>65</sup> Edip's description of having been raised in a

household where there were co-wives renders the practice awkward and unnatural, suggesting simultaneously a conflict between modern mentality and traditional measures of respectability. Although not stated explicitly, her father's marriage to her bookish nanny seems to have originated from an obligation to protect the woman's honor without sacrificing the family union with Edip's step-mother. The conflict between ideals of honor and models of modernity are increasingly resolved during the constitutional period, culminating in the making of the 1917 family law, which granted a wife the right to divorce her husband in case her permission to become a co-wife was not sought.

During the constitutional period, many of the literary and journalistic discussions about the need for legal change began with the same reference to the changing times. It was no coincidence that *Seviyye Talip* opened with the return of an exiled character to a vastly transformed country, for a discussion of legal change took its justification from the assertion that this was a brand new age.

The writers of *Women's World* followed the same paradigm whenever they discussed women's right to divorce. Nimet Cemil opened her article on the need for legal change stating ironically that "we claim that this is a new period", continuing with how "everyone is finally free to express their opinion since the reinstatement of the constitution."<sup>66</sup> An editorial in *Women's World* on "Women and the Right to Divorce" started with the same note on this being a "period of revolutions and change" and defined divorce as "one of our most important problems".

Cemil argued in her article entitled "Divorce" that the ease and frequency with which divorce took place was absurd, referring to men's unilateral right to a divorce. She called for legal reform in which divorce would take place at the Sharia court, in the

presence of a judge willing to hear a woman's position, which would be duly registered. The editorial signed as *Women's World* likened the institution of marriage to companies that held cooperative, collective, or anonymous partnerships, in which all the partners held the equal right to annul their partnership if and when such a move became necessary.<sup>67</sup>

The journal voiced some of Edip's public and literary statements on divorce, too. Cemil insisted that this was the most significant problem facing society, much more important than trivial issues such as clothing; and that people such as Edip made the issue their subject on repeated occasions, asking for effective measures to protect the rights of women and children who survived divorce.<sup>68</sup> The editorial entitled "Women and the Right to Divorce"<sup>69</sup> turned to the West in setting standards for fair divorce laws and argued that women would not abuse their right to divorce. Bringing its examples from France where the law had recently given women the right to initiate divorce in 1911, the editorial posed the problem of responsibility. The writer showed that even if statistically more women applied for divorce, a majority of these cases were initiated due to the husband's infidelity, whereas the smaller number of divorce cases initiated by men mostly originated from other causes, illustrating that, in either case, responsibility for divorce lay with men. The common thread that ran through the articles, as well as Edip's discourse on divorce, was that the Western models for change needed to be incorporated into models for the Islamic family.

*Conclusion: Articulation of "New" Morality*

Edip, a female Ottoman novelist, wrote about Muslim women caught in life situations not likely to be depicted before. Her early novels suggested a possibility that at least one segment of Ottoman society, elite and cosmopolitan, was going through a major transformation in terms of gender roles and expectations. She also penned her novellas in such way as to turn the "woman's question" upside down and make it a "man's question". The question was about the nature of new directions that gender relations should take. The relationship between the sexes, according to Edip and some of her contemporaries, involved companionship as a requirement rather than an ideal.

Companionship, and what is more, love itself were necessary for equal partners to form a family. But love was a double-edged sword. As caring and compassion, love was necessary, while as passion and desire, it was dangerous and unpredictable. Passionate love could dissolve marriages as well as instituting them. A healthy marriage involved equal partnership, life-long companionship, and a strong love, but not necessarily passion. Moreover, these originated from, and were nurtured by, ideals greater than individualistic concerns. Such ideals ranged from the creation of a new country and the creation of new gender relations to the upbringing of model future citizens.

Marriage involved regeneration, but a happy marriage need not always entail children. When children were present, however, marriage became a whole new playing field. Motherhood and fatherhood had their own requirements based on the new proposition that a child should be treated as a future adult and a citizen. A child, like Raik, was an inquisitive and intelligent being, whose future participation in the affairs of the family, and, subsequently of the nation, depended on the way he or she was treated by their parents. The mother played a crucial part in the preparation of the future citizen,



which entitled her to special demands for respect, social recognition, and public participation. The father, too, needed to model good behavior for his children. If marriages fell apart, separation was an honest way for women to opt for a more fulfilling life, while divorce posed not just a cultural, but a legal problem for the family and the nation.

There were two undercurrents in the discussion of love, marriage, motherhood, and divorce: preoccupation with national heritage, and women's respectability. In asserting their new responsibilities as mothers of the nation, upper-class women like Edip were making a statement about women's righteousness, composure, and respectability. This was necessary in order to battle the mentality that linked women's education and public work to immorality. In arguing for their right to divorce, women recognized passion as a threat to their marriages. Instead, they emphasized compassion and equal partnership in needs, desires, interests, and ideals. This was a matter of perceptions, public as well as personal. The demand for social and legal rights, they assured the public, was not the same as a demand for the lifestyle led by "fallen" women. Respectability and dissociation from "fallen" women were paramount to social recognition of women's demands.

Edip's discussion of new ideals of love, marriage, and parenthood suggests both the inevitability and the danger of change. While Western influences and the articulation of new morality forced the issue of change, it also threatened women's respectability. Edip's early fiction responded to these tensions by synthesizing the new influences with the old: a father was a wise and respectable friend, but he still stood for the good of the household; a husband was a companion and a model for children, but still held an

elevated status in the family; a wife was an equal partner who rightfully sought companionship, but she was loyal and honorable; a child was an inquisitive future citizen, but one that was obedient; a mother was informed and educated, but the span of her knowledge included Islam as well as modern child-rearing techniques. In the example of Edip and her contemporaries writing for *Women's World*, it was apparent that there were limits to direct incorporation of modernity. These limits resulted from the reluctance to compromise the safety and security of known institutions. They sought to expand women's autonomy through divorce without jeopardizing the institution of marriage altogether: hence, the unease that upper-class, educated women felt when they talked about passionate love.

Analysis of modernity all too often assumes unmediated espousal of Western models. Women's reluctance to copy modern gender relations directly from the West illustrates the hybrid nature of reformist movements in the modern Middle East. Their limited attachment to Western models was also an outcome of their encounters with Western imperialism. The first wave of feminist women in Turkey had at once looked to Western feminism and criticized the West for its imperialism. The "new Muslim woman" identity that they forged as an alternative to Western models simultaneously incorporated and refused the West in the name of nationalism. Şirin Tekeli describes this as "the essence of the polemics that women writers such as Halide Edip and Fatma Aliye held with Westerners".<sup>70</sup>

Edip's interrogation of gender relations and women's roles reflected the broader tensions in late-Ottoman society: the call for change without the risk of alienation from cultural and religious roots. It also detailed educated women's projection of their

contribution to the making of a "modern" society in a predominantly Muslim country, well before the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Finally, Edip's suggestion that women's issues were indeed men's issues, is a theme that should still resonate with the contemporary audience in the Middle East.

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#### ENDNOTES

The author is grateful to PSU Faculty Enhancement Grant and to the helpful administration and staff of The Women's Library and Information Center in Istanbul, which made this study possible.

<sup>1</sup> For example, İnci Enginün, *Halide Edip Adivar'ın Eserlerinde Doğu ve Batı Meselesi* [The Issue of the East and West in Halide Edib Adivar's Works] (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Ayşe Durakbaşa, "Modernleşme Tarihimize Farklı Yaklaşımlar: Halide Edip Adivar'ın Biyografisinin Yazımı İçin Notlar" [New approaches to our history of modernization: notes on the writing of Halide Edip Adivar's biography] in *İktisat Dergisi*, İstanbul, 383 (October 1998): 98-102. Şehnaz Şişmanoğlu, "Halide Edib: Cumhuriyetin Asi Kızı" [Halide Edib: the rebellious daughter of the republic] in *Virgöl*, İstanbul, 40 (April 2001): 49-51.

<sup>3</sup> Ayşe Durakbaşa's *Halide Edib: Türk Modernleşmesi ve Feminizm* [Halide Edib: Turkish Modernization and Feminism] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000) is among the latest comprehensive studies on Edip, but this work, too, relies heavily on Edip's memoirs. Durakbaşa's work is based on her dissertation presented in 1993 to the University of Essex, England.

<sup>4</sup> *Ateşten Gömlek* and *Sinekli Bakkal* are available in English with the titles indicated here.

<sup>5</sup> Edip's later work also revolves around formidable female characters in love. But she employs these characters for historical commentary on nation building. According to Berna Moran what distinguishes Edip's later works from her earlier novels is the use of the female protagonist. He argues that while protagonists of earlier works are individual women in romance, main characters in later works become vehicles for social commentary. See his discussion of *The Clown and His Daughter* (1935) in *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış. Ahmet Mithat'tan A. H. Tanpınar'a* [A critical perspective on the Turkish

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novel from Ahmet Mithat to A. H. Tanpınar] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1987), pp. 10/145-169. A point hardly ever raised in the discussion of *The Clown and His Daughter*, is how a critique of republican Turkey might be the subtext of Edip's examination of the Hamidian rule and Young Turk revolution in *The Clown and His Daughter*.

<sup>6</sup> Aside from newspaper articles, Edip's early works mainly include the novels *Heyula* (1909), *Raik'in Annesi* (1909), *Seviyye Talip* (1910), *Handan* (1912), *Yeni Turan* (1912), *Son Eseri* (1913); short stories, *Harap Mabetler* (1911); translations *Mader* (1897) and *Talim ve Terbiye* (1912).

<sup>7</sup> Henry James (1843-1916), brother of the American psychologist and famous philosopher of pragmatism, William James, was a famous novelist and a conservative critic of American culture. His approach to gender issues differed considerably from those of feminists. He was interested in differences between social classes, America and Europe, men and women. One of the striking qualities of his fiction was the psychological realism he employed in famous works such as *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), "Daisy Miller" (1879), and "The Beast in the Jungle" (1903).

<sup>8</sup> Edith Wharton (1862-1937) is known for her keen observations on the manners of the American leisure class. Like Edip, she was concerned about gender relations and marriage. She was a close friend of Henry James, and an admirer of his work. Some of her well-known novels include *The House of Mirth* (1905), *The Custom of the Country* (1913), *Ethan Frome* (1911), and *The Age of Innocence* (1920).

<sup>9</sup> For "implied author" and "implied reader" see Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1961) and *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974). For an up-to-date discussion of these literary terms and their relationship to narratology, see Greta Olson, "Reconsidering Unreliability: Fallible and Untrustworthy Narrators" in *Narrative* 11/1 (Jan. 2003).

<sup>10</sup> On Hamidian period reforms regarding women's education see Elizabeth B. Frierson "Unimagined Communities: State, Press, and Gender in the Hamidian Era" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> During April 1909 insurrection, conservatives attempted to hunt Edip down. She had to take refuge in the American missionary school and even leave the country for a while. For the writer's autobiography see Halide Edip Adivar, *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (New York: Arno Press, 1976 [c 1926]) and *The Turkish Ordeal* (Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1981 [c 1928]).

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<sup>12</sup> Nüket Esen, "Seviye Talip'te Kadın Yazarın Sesi", [Woman writer's voice in *Seviye Talip*] *Varlık* 1086 (March 1, 1998): 13-15.

<sup>13</sup> Halide Edip Adıvar, *Seviye Talip* (İstanbul: Atlas Kitabevi, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition [1967]), pp. 11-13.

<sup>14</sup> Halide Edib Adıvar, *Handan* (İstanbul: Atlas Kitabevi, 21<sup>st</sup> edition, no date), p.13.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14, 16.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>17</sup> Halide Edib Adıvar, *Yeni Turan* (İstanbul: Atlas Kitabevi, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, [1967]), p.17.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>19</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti, "Gendering the Modern: On Missing Dimensions in the Study of Turkish Modernity" in Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, (eds.) *Re-thinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), p.120.

<sup>20</sup> Kandiyoti (1997), p. 116.

<sup>21</sup> For various excerpts see "Aile, Kadın, Çocuk ve Ev Üzerine Seçme Yazılar" [Selected pieces on family, woman, child and household] in *Sosyo-Kültürel Değişme Sürecinde Türk Ailesi* [Turkish family in the Process of Socio-Cultural Change], 1015-1150.

<sup>22</sup> Kandiyoti (1997), p.123.

<sup>23</sup> *Handan*, 13.

<sup>24</sup> Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, [Ottoman women's movement] (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1994), p. 125.

<sup>25</sup> The significance of place in Edip's novels is an issue that needs to be studied in depth. Edip employs Europe as the "space of otherness" where some of these romances occur. Irvin Schick's discussion of place in Orientalist erotica bears some relevance to Edip's romances placed in the seemingly exotic West. See Irvin C. Schick, "The Women of Turkey As Sexual Personae" in Zehra F. Arat (ed.) *Deconstructing Images of "The Turkish Woman"* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), pp. 83-100 and Irvin C. Schick, *The Erotic Margin. Sexuality and Spatiality in Alteritist Discourse* (New York: Verso, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> Kate Chopin (1851-1904) *Awakening* (New York: Dover Thrift Editions, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> Cem Behar and Alan Duben, *Istanbul Households* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.87.

<sup>28</sup> Bert Danjen "Serbest Aşk", Mesadet Bedirhan (tr.) *Kadınlar Dünyası* 142 (27 Cemaziyelahir 1331): 5.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Fatma Zerrin, "Kardeş Mektupları. Firdevs'e", *Kadınlar Dünyası* 142 (27 Cemaziyelahir 1331) pp. 10-11.

<sup>32</sup> "Sevgi" involves affection, care, and compassion, as opposed to "aşk", which involves desire and ecstasy; carnal, sensual, and physical passions. It is what Duben and Behar aptly call "amour".

<sup>33</sup> Behar and Duben (1991), pp. 88-89, 91.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 88-89.

<sup>35</sup> Nimet Cemil, "Tel'ak", *Kadınlar Dünyası* 142 (27 Cemaziyelahir 1331): 4-5.

<sup>36</sup> Nimet Cemil, "Yine Mi Taarruz?" *Kadınlar Dünyası* 141 (20 Cemaziyelahir 1331): 10.

<sup>37</sup> Ziya Gökalp, "Aile Ahlakı" [Family Morals] in *Sosyo-Kültürel Değişme*, p. 1094.

<sup>38</sup> Duben and Behar (1991), p. 88.

<sup>39</sup> Passionate love in mystic literature is beyond the realm of this article. I hope here to draw attention to the simple fact that love for God in mystic literature was passionate and transcendental as in the famous Yunus Emre lines: "Your love has wrested me away from me/You're the one I need, you're the one I crave/Day and night I burn, gripped by agony/You're the one I need, you're the one I crave " Talat Sait Halman (trans.) in Kemal Silay (ed.) *An Anthology of Turkish Literature* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1996), p. 34. Alevi mysticism employed Ali interchangeably with God as the transcendental object of desire.

<sup>40</sup> Duygu Köksal, "Nationalist Theory in the Writings of Halide Edib." *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 17 (Fall 1993): 80-91.

<sup>41</sup> "İbret" in Turkish means a lesson, a public example learned through misfortune; an unhappy event that serves as a deterrent. Nazife İclal, "İbret," *Kadınlar Dünyası* 141 (20 Cemaziyelahir 1331): 12-14.

<sup>42</sup> This is often expressed by the saying "Nikahta keramet vardır." [The sanctity of the marriage act will work wonders, i.e. on the relationship of the spouses.]

<sup>43</sup> Halide Edib Adivar, *Raik'in Annesi* (İstanbul: Atlas Kitabevi, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, [1967]), p. 139.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>45</sup> "Traitor" is a common description for a disloyal husband, but Edip's rendering of it makes one wonder whether the disloyalty in question is directed at the wife or country.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 157-159.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>49</sup> Bedia Kamuran, "Osmanlı Kadınlığına Taalluk Eden Vezaif-i Mühimme" *Kadınlar Dünyası* 143 (4 Recep 1331): 7.

<sup>50</sup> Aliye Cevad, "Aile", *Kadınlar Dünyası* 37 (1913): 2 cited in Duben and Behar (1991), p. 37.

<sup>51</sup> Bedia Kamuran, "Terakki Yolları", *Kadınlar Dünyası* 142 (27 Cemaziyelahir 1331): 10.

<sup>52</sup> Aziz Haydar, "Kinimizi Unutmayalım", *Kadınlar Dünyası* 142 (27 Cemaziyelahir 1331): 4.

<sup>53</sup> Feride İzzet Selim, "Neden Mağlub Olduk?" *Kadınlar Dünyası* 141 (20 Cemaziyelahir 1331): 11.

<sup>54</sup> Mahmud Esad, "Kerime-i Maneviyemiz İffetli Halide Hanım Efendiye", *Mader* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1314), pages unnumbered.

<sup>55</sup> Enginün (1978), p. 26.

<sup>56</sup> Adivar (1897), pages unnumbered.

<sup>57</sup> Reşit Beyefendi, "Ana Kimdir? Şeriat Nazarında Anaların Derecesi", *Kadınlar Dünyası* 141 (20 Cemaziyelahir 1331): 8.

<sup>58</sup> "Edvar-ı Müteahhire İctimaiyatında Kadın", *Kadınlar Dünyası* 141 (20 Cemaziyelahir 1331): 7.

<sup>59</sup> It was with the imperial decree of 1839 (known as "Tanzimat reforms") that former subjects of the Sultan were acknowledged as "citizens." Moreover, prior to the modern period, there was no developed sense of nationalism within the vast expanse of Ottoman territory. "Homeland" stood frequently for one's local environment; the village, or the town.

<sup>60</sup> Mükerrerrem Belkıs, "Kadınlık Meselesi", *Kadınlar Dünyası*. 141 (20 Cemaziyelahir 1331): 6.

<sup>61</sup> "Beşiktaş'ta Akaretler'de Kain İttihad-ı Osmani İnas Mektebi", *Kadınlar Dünyası* 142 (27 Cemaziyelahir 1331): 7.

<sup>62</sup> Elsewhere it has been noted that late-Ottoman feminists did not envision suffrage as one of their immediate goals due to the presence of other crucial issues on their agenda. See Aynur Demirdirek, "In Pursuit of the Ottoman Women's Movement" Zehra F. Arat (trans.) in Zehra F. Arat (ed.) (1998), pp. 65-81.

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I would argue that women's suffrage, while not a significant part of their agenda, was discussed in *Women's World* through translated articles from Western sources.

<sup>63</sup> Nimet Cemil, "Tel'ak".

<sup>64</sup> "Seviyye" is from Arabic and means "balance, equilibrium". "Talip" means suitor. Here it is the last name of the primary female character. Ironically, it is the last name she takes from her first husband who for a long time refuses to divorce her.

<sup>65</sup> Adivar (1926).

<sup>66</sup> Nimet Cemil, "Tel'ak".

<sup>67</sup> "Kadın ve Hakk-ı Tel'ak", *Kadınlar Dünyası* 143 (4 Recep 1331): 2.

<sup>68</sup> Nimet Cemil, "Tel'ak".

<sup>69</sup> "Kadın ve Hakk-ı Tel'ak".

<sup>70</sup> Şirin Tekeli, "Birinci ve İkinci Dalga Feminist Hareketlerin Karşılaştırmalı İncelemesi Üzerine Bir Deneme," [An Essay on the Comparative Analysis of First and Second Wave Feminist Movements] in Ayşe Berktaş Hacımirzaoğlu (ed.), *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler* [Women and Men in 75 Years] (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1998), p. 342.