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Fatma Aliye's Stories: Ottoman Marriages Beyond the Harem

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Abstract

The harem image has dominated the conceptualizations of the family and the private sphere in the Ottoman empire at the turn of the century. This essay aims to review these conceptualizations and locate family life in both public and private spheres. The main source of inquiry will be the literary writings of Fatma Aliye (1862–1936) who wrote about women, marriage, education, poverty, and slavery. In these works, she outlined common dreams for Eastern and Western women, such as the love and companionship of an honest, monogamous man. These dreams envisioned Muslim women performing a variety of roles and thus transcended the given expectations from the family and from Muslim women as a monolithic category. In this light, this essay seeks to contextualize Aliye's works within the history of the family by evaluating Aliye's views particularly on marriage.

Keywords

harem, Muslim women, public sphere, ideal marriage, choosing a spouse, education

Introduction

Feminist scholarship has contributed to the evaluation of the family beyond the private sphere by freeing the boundaries of the public and private spheres.¹ Revealing the historical dimensions of the construction of the spheres has been an important axis of this emancipation.² Some groundbreaking works have also accumulated on the history of Ottoman households. For example, Carter Findley focused on the relationship between political culture and the changing nature of the great households in the Ottoman empire.³ Alan Duben argued in the late 1980s and early 1990s that the nineteenth century Ottoman family was not as big and polygynous as it was previously imagined to be.⁴ However, women in Ottoman family life still require reevaluations of previous conceptualizations of the harem.

A significant source for these works⁵ as well as other works that discuss the Ottoman family in an indirect way—such as those of Toledano and Erdem on slavery⁶—is the writings of Ahmet Mithat Efendi (1844–1912) and Fatma Aliye (1862–1936), who are known as the first Ottoman novelist and the first Ottoman woman novelist, respectively. Fatma Aliye was the student of Ahmet Mithat

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Efendi, who wrote her biography, *The Birth of an Ottoman Woman Writer*, when she was only thirty-three. While Aliye was from an elite family, Mithat, a self-made man, was of a lower-middle class family. Both writers were associated with the Young Ottomans, who suggested a new reading of Islam while struggling with various forms of Orientalism. Their writings continue to transform the existing notions of the Ottoman harem radically. For example, these writings, together with other sources, have compelled the author to focus on the harem as an educational institution that was carried into modern forms of public education.⁷ It was a place that accommodated more than just women; it was a household that harbored a family or families and had strong connections to institutions commonly associated with the public sphere.

I will here focus on Aliye's writings to argue that they pose interlinks between the public and private spheres and challenge the association of the family with the private sphere and religion with the public sphere.⁸ Aliye's evaluation of marriage as a spiritual matter will constitute the focus of this essay that builds on the theoretical arena where Orientalism is a gendered issue. Proper handling of the Orientalist conceptualizations of the harem needs to build on Edward Said's work, *Orientalism*, on a feminist reading of this work and on a focus on new forms of Orientalism.⁹ Gendered issues of Orientalism have previously been dealt with using Foucault's concept of heterotopia, where harems were presented as spaces where many different functions collided.¹⁰ This essay is a reflection of how the harem was carried into the public sphere in the late Ottoman empire, and its vantage point is the definition of the public sphere by Habermas as an abstraction from space and its feminist critique that situates this abstraction in relation to the household.¹¹

The changing family was an important pillar of the public sphere as well as a result of the structural transformation of it. From the eighteenth century onward, it has been an important pillar for new projects of modernism. For example, the reevaluation of family life and the call for a new form of family goes back to the second part of the Tanzimat (Rearrangement) Era in the Ottoman empire. In the 1860s—the time of Aliye's birth—the Young Ottomans developed progressive Islamic politics in the new journals they have introduced to the Ottoman public sphere. These Young Ottomans were connected with statesmen like Aliye's father, Ahmet Cevdet Pasha (1822–1895), who represented the state view in the 1860s into the Hamidian Era (1878–1908), in their pursuit to return to Islamic basics. However, the Young Ottomans were very critical of the status quo that consisted of the state intellectuals and administrators. The feminism of Young Ottoman men like Namık Kemal was a part of their dreams for a new family that could form the basis of a nation, but this feminism did not go beyond discourses of “saving women” from the prevalent understandings of the family.¹² The experiments of the Young Ottomans with concepts like feminism and nationalism included promoting women's education during the thirty-year period of Hamidian rule as well as the Tanzimat Era.¹³

In the Hamidian period, the first feminist magazines were issued by Muslim women like Fatma Aliye who at the same time cherished feminist ideals and struggled with Western feminism. During these thirty years, Abdülhamid II further modernized and centralized an empire that had become a smaller unit and had acquired a more Muslim population after nationalist ruptures. Women were increasingly educated in the public sphere as part of the partially secularist politics of education, which was developed to fit the needs of an increasingly homogeneous religious makeup.¹⁴ The Hamidian Era should also be thought of as a period that started after Abdülhamit II annulled the first constitution after only two years of constitutional rule. In this period, the Young Turks, who emanated from the Young Ottomans, developed their nationalist ideas underground. After the coup in 1908, which empowered the Young Turks under the name of the *Committee of Union and Progress* (CUP), the Second Constitutional Era started and it continued until a republic was founded in 1923. A second wave of feminist magazines, including *The Women's World* (Kadınlar Dünyası), appeared after 1908; they were published by openly nationalist feminists who imagine a family where the mother was the center. The mother, by bearing and raising a new generation, was going to be the

mother of the nation as well.¹⁵ The accelerated secularization of the Ottoman empire, that included and fed from such ideas embedded within projects of widespread public education, led to the foundation of the Republic of Turkey.

The secularist policies of the Young Turks proposed a single interpretation of Sunni Islam to mark Turkishness.¹⁶ While male national elites embraced nationalism, they questioned feminists as feminism was considered a Western concept.¹⁷ Ironically, the fact that nationalism in non-Western societies was also derived from Western nationalisms¹⁸ did not become an issue like feminism. In this line, the secularist politics of the CUP were easily replaced by masculinist ones. For example, while women from the first generation of feminists like Fatma Aliye fought against polygyny, the Young Turks chose to prolong it.¹⁹

The thoughts of Fatma Aliye on law, secularization, and family life thus shaped alternative modernities in indirect ways.²⁰ Her novels provide us with new ways for women's participation in reshaping secular perceptions of Islam in the private sphere. Aliye, who was one of the first Ottoman novelists, was also an acknowledged translator with international connections, as well as a columnist and a philosopher by the age of thirty three. As a writer, she was sufficiently equipped to deal with the then underrated subjects of women, marriage, family, poverty, and slavery.²¹

Fatma Aliye provides details about women's lives in different levels and these details served to represent Muslim women in ways beyond the generic perceptions of harem life. Presented from a critical approach toward the advantages and disadvantages of marriage, the harem life was deliberately regarded as one beyond the private sphere and into the public sphere. In Aliye's novels, marriage was an important part of women's contributions to public life. Marriages of masters and slaves, taking place in rich *and* poor households, were presented as a contrast to the Eurocentric view that tends to see harems and Ottoman women as monolithic categories.²² However, it should be noted that Aliye concentrated on Muslim women rather than non-Muslims or Sunni women rather women from other sects.

Fatma Aliye in the Interstices

Recent studies that appraise Aliye's work and place her within mainstream literature discuss whether to regard her as a feminist or not.²³ Those who argue that she is not a feminist evaluate Aliye's own struggle with Western feminism as a sign of her antifeminist conservatism. Those who consider her a feminist disregard this struggle in demonstrating that she is a feminist because she wrote on women and published in women's magazines. Findley's works on Fatma Aliye and the Ottoman household²⁴ are major sources that place Aliye within the "great household" that was an important space to acquire political change until the late eighteenth century and to educate men and women in the late Ottoman empire in general.²⁵ Findley also focused on Ahmet Mithat Efendi (1844–1912), who was Aliye's private tutor and biographer²⁶ as well as a renowned journalist and writer of the late Ottoman empire.²⁷ Findley is not only one of the writers who define Aliye as a pioneer feminist but one who considers Ahmet Mithat a feminist although his was of a limited kind of feminism similar to that of Young Ottoman thought.²⁸

Aliye's feminism was not in words but in action: she had a sincere interest in women's issues and women's participation in public life. Western feminism prioritized Western women's lives over other women, and white women's lives over black women's, but Aliye would not adopt such an approach. Thus, when feminism was concerned, she would remain in the interstices. I will trace Aliye's discussions of women's issues in the context of the interstices between private and the public spheres and to do so, I will feed from Aliye's novels, the writings of her contemporaries, and state decrees concerning women in the late nineteenth century.²⁹ In this pursuit, I will first analyze Aliye's life and its relationship to her narratives and move to the analysis of her novels. I will focus upon three of her novels: *Muhâdarât* (Stories, 1892 [reprint 1996]), where she touches upon slavery

and girls' household education; Refet (1898 [reprint 2007]), where she discusses poverty and girls' public education practices; and Enin (Lamentations, 1910 [reprint 2005]), where she discusses the relations between elite households and the intricate sets of educational practices between different strata of women.

Fatma Aliye, Islam, and Women

To Aliye, Muslim women, be they slaves or students, are at the center of Ottoman public life. Her novels are composed with their political implications in mind, and her attempts to put marriage into perspective is a part of her political project where the daily practice of Islam evolves into a tool to deal with issues of women's subordination and impoverishment. However, the Islam she proposes is not a vague reality above human beings. As will be revealed in the following sections, in her work, women contribute actively to a moral philosophy that derives from Islam. Her multifaceted lenses in reflecting on matters of the slavery and poverty of women in the context of marriage and Islam are a sign of her ability to go beyond her social and economic position as the daughter of Ahmet Cevdet Pasha. Therefore, in her work, women, as builders and maintainers of daily life, are an indispensable part of the public sphere.

The public sphere is a central construct in the novels of Aliye. It signifies an arena where people and houses are interconnected. However, the public sphere, as Aliye portrays it, is not in direct correspondence with the readily accepted definitions of the public sphere—such as Habermas's public sphere that represents an abstraction from space. Similar to this definition that Habermas carries on from Rousseau, Aliye's notion of the public sphere is a political concept described upon reason and virtue. However, it also has ingredients quite different from the classical understanding of the public sphere. Decisions regarding who will marry whom and whether a union of souls is possible through marriage are the subjects of this sphere. Not only Aliye but also contemporary feminist scholars have shown that these decisions are in fact at the basis of the foundation of the new bourgeois identity that Habermas saw as the main part of the formation of a public sphere.³⁰

In Aliye's novels, there are clear distinctions among women. Yet these distinctions are not between the rich and the poor, the slave and the master; they are rather between those who ultimately serve men and those who support each other. In her writing, not unlike the discussions of women found in the works of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), Jane Austen (1775–1817), and Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888),³¹ the difference between coquetry and sensibility and the development of reason and virtue in daily life prevail. By tracing new roles for women with these themes, Aliye also responded to late nineteenth-century European views of Islam, the Ottoman empire, and Ottoman Muslim women in her novels.³²

Yet her novels were criticized by the public when they were printed.³³ Her father Ahmet Cevdet Pasha was the first to doubt that a woman can write in a language of her own. When in 1889 he saw Aliye's first translation work, George Ohnet's *Volonte* (Meram), he believed her tutor Ahmet Mithat to be the actual translator.³⁴ Ottoman newspapers and journals too debated whether her translations and novels really belonged to her father or her brother Ali Sedat (1857–1900). It was only later when Aliye established herself as a renowned writer that her father finally accepted her talent and grew an interest in personally tutoring her; however, the same was never true for her brother who would not support her. Her husband Faik Pasha (b.1853) at first forbade her to write, translate, or even read novels. Only after ten years of struggle, when a mutual bond of trust was built, would he be convinced that *Volonte* talked about good morals and would let her translate it.³⁵

After winning her battle with her husband, Aliye immediately began publishing. At the age of thirty-three, she was already an acknowledged writer and translator as well as an intellectual who

earned fame in the Turkish exhibition in the Chicago Fair.³⁶ She had become such a well-known figure that Ahmet Mithat, a prominent intellectual of the time, composed her biography.³⁷

A reading of this biography, supported by her novels, reveals her intricate relationships within the harem. According to Mithat, Aliye was raised by nannies and lalas. Like other girls of her status who were born to rich and powerful families, she had vague memories of her mother or father.³⁸ For her, the Ottoman harem of an elite household was a world of women that was open to male friends and that was conducted by powerful women.³⁹ Aliye's novels are also great reflectors of the household of the time. *Enin* and *Refet* in particular portray the harem as a household governed by women. While *Enin* described the elite households Aliye was more familiar with, *Refet* dealt with the less advantaged households. The elite household, represented in *Enin*, consisted of parents, sisters and brothers, their caretakers, maids, cooks and slaves, and an abundance of female and male visitors. In Aliye's biography, these visitors were either relatives and friends or people like European intellectuals and administrators who visited the house for business. In contrast, the poorer households represented in *Refet* consisted of only a few individuals, sometimes just a mother and daughter. Although Aliye's focus was on one type of household in each novel, she always represented both types of households in relation to each other. For example, the mother and daughter of *Refet* lived in, worked for, and befriended women from rich households as well.

While evaluating Aliye's attitude toward the Ottoman harems, it is important to underline the fact that she did not isolate family life from public life in her novels. On the contrary, she situated the family in the mid of religion and education as pillars of public life. She placed women and religion side by side in the great household and criticized the isolation some marriages brought. While being an avid defender of monogamy, she did not desire that it should lead to isolation. Thus, she did not promote an isolated nuclear family as an alternative to polygyny.⁴⁰ Yet she did not pursue a collectivity of women to satisfy Orientalist fantasies of the harem that consisted of many wives and children. Aliye's collective family was based on a monogamous marriage with few children but it encompassed relatives and friends.

Through the family, Aliye integrated private and public spheres. In her novels, the family was synonymous with the great household that was governed by women. The social and cultural life of generations took place in the big houses with both physically and conceptually changing borders:

Walls were set between neighbours and the gardens of big mansions, and a considerable amount of money was spent on these walls which were higher than an average human being, so that neighbours who were strolling in their own gardens could not see each other. These yards were hilly and one had to stroll with proper covering and a head-cover (as she could be seen by her neighbours) on hilltops.⁴¹

This passage gives an objective view of the intricate balance between public visibility and invisibility in the intersection of private spheres.

Aliye's critical approach to marriage and her distanced and objective description of the behavior of her own class necessitates a thorough questioning of her alleged conservatism. In fact, she auspiciously opens new windows that are not apparent from outside the walls of big mansions, windows that make it impossible to "preserve the family from outside influences," the motto of self-declared conservativeness.⁴² She uses these windows to empathize with women from different classes and circumstances as well as with other elite women. For example, in her novel *Muhâdarât*, she first outlines class positions found in a large family, such as the place of slavery in the organization of the family and then deconstructs this layout.

***Muhâdarât* or Stories: Slavery and Marriage**

Muhâdarât opens with the description of a marriage ceremony in an elite household:

What a ceremony! (What chaos!) The guests are wearing their heaviest attire and jewelry. The skirts are trampled upon, the tulle and the laces are all torn up, but no one cares! This is the home of the wedding! . . . If you are curious, if you enter every room, then these things can happen (private and public converge). The bigger the home is, the more publicity the wedding will receive.⁴³

Aliye provides such particular moments of the marriage ceremony to readers who are oblivious to with most of the procedures involved in an upscale marriage ceremony. She represents the ugly as well as the beautiful in depicting marriage as the key moment that opens up new worlds before the spouses.⁴⁴

Muhâdarât describes how the new life that a marriage brings can turn into hell as well as heaven, both described in spatial terms. The protagonist, Fazıla, is the daughter of a rich man, who feigns death only to be socially reborn as a slave by selling herself to a Cypriot family. All of the sensible female characters agree that before Fazıla's alleged death, she leads a life worse than slavery because of the way her husband treats her. In that sense, Aliye regards wealth to be worthless when maltreatment is concerned. In the person of Fazıla, Aliye reveals that an unhappy marriage in which she cannot move can be a cage for a woman, while slavery can be a blessing as she can move up in its preexisting hierarchies. In *Muhâdarât*, Aliye presents the predetermined limits of Ottoman slavery and by doing so manages to critique men's treatment of women and to argue that when Islamic rules are followed, even slavery is a better alternative than marriage. Aliye was well aware that the application of Islamic principles to both marriage and slavery varied radically. Yet she drew attention to the fact that in reality the former case would occur less frequently than the latter. Toledano⁴⁵ evaluates Aliye's approach to slavery in the context of the post-Tanzimat conceptualizations where household slavery is almost validated. He believes that the Young Ottomans that she followed acknowledged the pains of Ottoman slavery but pretended that relations of slavery in Ottoman Islam were somehow better than those in the West.⁴⁶ It should be noted that when Aliye's compared slavery and marriage in the context of *Muhâdarât*, she defended neither institution.

Muhâdarât was written in 1892, in the mid of the apolitical atmosphere of the Hamidian Era (1878–1908), and was in many ways a product of its period. It was written by the daughter of a man favored by Abdülhamit,⁴⁷ and therefore first, it disregarded other religions besides Islam even though the Ottoman empire was still a multiethnic place, and second, it invested in a single interpretation of Islam, namely the Sunni interpretation. However, the novel also challenged the premises of its time by comparing slavery and marriage.

Aliye increased the dose of her challenge by writing stories of women's empowerment and by carrying the dynamics of the "great household" into public schools in *Refet*.

Refet: Chastity and Study

In *Refet*, Fatma Aliye moves her characters further away from the confines of a marriage. This time, instead of slavery, she concentrates on poverty as an escape from marriage. Here Aliye depicts the life of a young woman, Refet, who decidedly refuses to get married only to escape poverty and clings to processes of public schooling.

Upon the death of her father, Refet and her mother lose everything. They lose their home and are left without any allowances. However, despite the hardships they have to endure, Refet perseveres in her studies and becomes a teacher. She is then able to save the women who surround and support her during times of hardship. Aliye describes her as smart and weak, kind and ugly, and has Refet describe herself and her life with the words "There is poverty. There is necessity. There is no health. There is no beauty."⁴⁸ By the time she graduates from the Teacher's College (*Darülmuaallimat*), she has transformed the turn-of-the-century, average Istanbul family into a world of women strengthened with the ties of sisterhood, motherhood, friendship, and neighborhood.

This world is woven without men. Refet's mother who works in arduous jobs that she is not used to, the poor girls that Refet supports, the two rich sisters that admire and financially support Refet, and finally their neighbors and landlords who need and provide help constitute a kind of womanhood in which individuals come to fulfill themselves only via the support of the other. Refet does not owe her degree merely to her studious character but also to her kind nature that holds on to her mother, friends, and neighbors around.

When she graduates, Refet is ready to realize her true potentials as a teacher. Unlike many post-Tanzimat novel characters, she accepts herself as a poor, unattractive young woman. More importantly, she recognizes the fact that neither a husband nor a school can provide the intuition that one develops when she is surrounded with the perseverance of women in need. When Refet's mother dies when she is about to graduate and become a teacher to support her, her good friend Şule, as poor, as smart, and as desolate as she is, reminds her of the greatness of God.⁴⁹ In this thought they unite and fulfill their aims of self-sufficiency. Refet's story demonstrates that it is indeed possible to comprehend a family independent from the marriage of a man and a woman.

Aliye wrote *Refet* at a time when public schools for girls were increasingly established as a part of the modernizing efforts of Abdülhamit II. Abdulhamit sustained the achievements of the Tanzimat Era, such as the Girls' Rüşdiyesi (İnas Rüşdiyesi; initiated in 1859), the Girls' Industrial Schools (İnas Sanayi Mektebi; initiated in 1868), and the Teachers' Colleges for Girls (*Darülmuallimat*; initiated in 1870). Aliye, supports these developments in *Refet* and places her protagonist and many of her friends in the confines of a public school. In her novel *Enin* too, she combines the educative aspects of the private and public spheres and carries the curriculum of a public school to private forms of education.

Enin: A Feminist Utopia

In *Enin* (Lamentations), Aliye focuses on life in the great household once again. *Enin* is Aliye's unfinished novel, where she describes the pursuit of an upper class woman of a good marriage. In her pursuit, the protagonist Sabahat, from a rich and learned family of women is accompanied by two good friends—one a neighbor (Fehame) and the other a concubine (İtimat). Sabahat expresses feelings of respect and sisterhood toward both.⁵⁰ As İtimat never gets married and Fehame marries an immature man who betrays his wife, Sabahat is alone in her pursuit for a fine marriage with a mature, spiritual husband, who will be faithful to his wife. Sabahat is the most wealthy and powerful character among all the elite described in *Enin*.⁵¹ Thus, she has a chance to choose her husband. Sabahat's loneliness in her pursuit might be understood better when the fact that many elite women were married off to men they did not choose is considered. Sabahat was thus a woman who can choose but who does not know how to. Her worries were to come true and even a good-looking, well-educated man from a good family like Sabahat's relative and suitor Suat turns out to be vulnerable to seductions of other women.

Sabahat brings spirituality and monogamy together when she questions her British-French governess about one of her suitors: "Don't you think about spirituality? Isn't that the most important thing? I just want to know what Suat feels in his heart before we get married. I want to know if Suat is a husband who will understand and appreciate me, and be loyal to me."⁵² As she cannot find this man, Sabahat never gets married.⁵³ Her rich, educated, and beautiful neighbor Fehame, however, is informed that she is getting married only on the day of her marriage,⁵⁴ and to the man her friend Sabahat most fears. Fehame's husband systematically betrays his wife and is very much like the husband that Fazıla escapes from in *Muhâdarât*. Yet in *Enin*, Fehame partly escapes from her imprisonment in a bad relationship through the friendship of Sabahat. The two women together "progress more and more in the sciences" by taking classes from various tutors.⁵⁵ The novel ends with this

new pursuit, and as such it was declared unfinished by Aliye. The substitution of marriage with science seems to have been considered a proper end for a novel neither by Aliye nor by her analysts.

The ambivalent ending of the novel, where the two protagonists “dive into philosophy,”⁵⁶ represents Aliye’s approach to the relationship between Islam and the West. Sabahat and Fehame combine Arabic and French languages and Qoran teachings with Western philosophy and science with the classes they take and the books they read.⁵⁷ This combination is also reflected in the way Fatma Aliye describes space and attire. The dresses that Sabahat and Fehame wear are different representations of Western and Islamic tastes.⁵⁸ In this novel, one can tell her moral disposition of a woman, as well as her taste by looking at the way a woman dresses:

Sabahat was wearing an outfit of white cotton. If one looked at the dress, at the way it was sewn, she would understand that the needlework had cost more than the material itself and that it was made by a master tailor. The dress bore no other accessory but some heavy embroidery that covered the neckline and the wrists.⁵⁹

The dress is very fashionable in both European and Ottoman standards. Whereas Sabahat is appropriately covered, chaste and still tasteful according to Islamic standards, her outfit also has a Western touch in the ornaments and embroidery it holds. Her chastity is also revealed in the fact that she does not seek to show off, as the dress is a modest one. Only those who can appreciate the workmanship of the dress can understand that it is of exquisite taste.

Fehame, the character who cannot flee her husband despite his bad morals, is covered less as she is at the confines of her backyard and does not know that she is being spied on by Sabahat over the tall walls that separate the inner spheres from the outer world. Her natural charm is completed by the way she dresses.

Fehame was standing still. She wore a white muslin dress with indented flowers. One could see the embroidery on the shirt she wore inside the dress. It had short sleeves that reached the elbows. Her demi-décolletage that left her nape and bust partly bare, also exhibited other parts of her body, such as her white, crystal-like neck and chin.⁶⁰

In this description, the sensuality of Fehame, is woven into an Islamic concern for taste and modesty. Fehame’s outfit is more revealing than Sabahat’s dress but its embroidery is also a combination of Islamic and European tastes.

Such passages as above that describe the dresses women wore have been interpreted in various ways. Findley, for instance, argues that they are a reflection of both the eclecticism Aliye found in the Ottoman dress and her naturalism.⁶¹ Another interpretation is that Aliye’s combination of public and private spheres is also reflected in such passages, in the details—such as wedding ceremonies, attire, and of course, women’s relationships with each other—she provided about Ottoman women. While Aliye was able to discuss the place of women in a changing household, she also imagined alternative routes for escape, like working, taking private classes, or even slavery.

Aliye’s happy endings became increasingly more related to transforming the association of the family with marriage. While *Muhâdarât* ends with a happy marriage, Aliye’s later novels openly challenge the presumption that a marriage is a happy ending for a woman. The protagonist of *Muhâdarât* is able to find the ideal spouse, but the protagonist of *Refet* refuses all suitors even though she is described as ugly, poor, and sick. She rather becomes a teacher, and that is a happy ending for her, and her friends who have become her family when her mother passes away. Finally, the happy ending for the protagonist of Aliye’s last novel *Enin* is finding herself in science as she is unable to find an ideal spouse. She shares this self-designed education with her best friend whom she saves from an ongoing unhappy marriage. Her friend is saved as she now has another arena to channel her talent. Through this education, they sustain their family lives and continue to govern their affairs to their best.

Conclusion

Despite the growing interest in the life and works of Fatma Aliye and the fact that her authenticity is no more questioned by the public, neither her granddaughter nor her readers or government leaders that print her picture on the 50 Turkish Lira note fully appreciate her union of the public and private spheres and the depiction of the changing place of women in Ottoman family life.⁶² In other words, while different groups and people value her from different points of view, her integration of matters on Ottoman women, poverty, and family are not truly acknowledged. Because the issues that she dealt with at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century are still pertinent, listening to Aliye can provide different routes for rethinking the family in the Middle East.

Aliye redefined the family as a context where women could be an active part of public life. By developing a critical approach toward marriage and providing details of the Ottoman family, she also managed to reflect this family in transition and to provide new directions for such transformations. In her novels, she depicted the family as a large one, consisting of many women. This way, her protagonists were able to interpret the developments in Ottoman society to their own good, as when the women in *Enin* found refuge in science. In short, as a follower of the Young Ottoman thought, Aliye was “situated in a societal framework,” felt “responsible for the obligations that law brought,” and defended the good of Islam as well as that of women using their pens. In 1860 The Young Ottoman newspaper *Tercüman-ı Ahval* (Interpreter of the Times) started their first issue with these words, and Aliye remained loyal to this pursuit to be an aware citizen in her own way.

Even though the Young Ottomans liked to consider themselves as feminists, it was only with Aliye that real feminist concerns were added to the Young Ottoman agenda. During her battle against inequality, for example, she found education as a refuge for women. Women’s piety protected them from the damages of poverty and from the irresponsible men that surrounded them, but this piety could only be functional if it was accompanied by education. Aliye contextualized this education inside the home or in a school building; as her writings intentionally blurred the boundaries between public and private spheres while defining the family as the center of public life.

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39. *Hayattan Sahneler*, xii; *Ahmet Cevdet Paşa ve Zamanı*. As described repeatedly in her novel, *Enin*.
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46. Toledano, 482, 501.
47. Findley, "Fatma Aliye: First Ottoman Woman Novelist, Pioneer Feminist," 794.
48. *Refet*, 53.
49. *Refet*, 188.
50. *Enin*, 203, 257.
51. *Enin*, 210. It was an Ottoman practice of inheritance that women inherited from women.
52. *Enin*, 213.
53. *Enin*, 374.
54. *Enin*, 289.
55. *Enin*, 303, 376.
56. *Enin*, 303, 376. This expression is used to represent the combination of science, religion, and languages.
57. *Enin*, 374-5.
58. *Enin*, 375.
59. *Enin*, 234.
60. *Enin*, 265.
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62. Her granddaughter seems to have developed a conscious ignorance on her grandmother. Merve Erol, "En Azından Başı Açık," *Radikal Cumartesi*, November 11, 2008, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=HaberYazdir&ArticleID=902850>

Bio

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