

**THE REFLECTIONS OF THE OTTOMAN-TURKISH FEMINISM ON
THE LITERARY WORKS OF NEZİHE MUHİTTİN**

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ABSTRACT

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With the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, improving the status of Turkish woman and creating a new republican woman image turned out to be pivotal issues. Women's rights were considered as the indicators of the Turkish modernization, therefore were placed at the core of the agenda of the new republican regime. However, before the foundation of the Turkish Republic, there was a strong Ottoman-Turkish Feminism which came into existence in the late period of the Ottoman Empire and continued in the early years of the Turkish Republic. Although the Republican Reforms are considered as the unique source of equality between Turkish man and woman in the public sphere, the contributions of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism on the progress of the status of the Ottoman-Turkish women should not be overlooked. The Ottoman-Turkish Feminism aimed at ameliorating and improving the living conditions of the Ottoman-Turkish women. Gaining equal political, economic and educational rights with men were the crux of the movement, as they were in the Western First Wave Feminism. However, struggling for the abolish of the female slavery, forming a national family, creating a new woman image were the other issues that were discussed widely during the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. Women's associations and women's magazines were the two important vehicles of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism in the struggle of gaining equal rights.

Nezihe Muhittin was one of the leading activist woman who took part in the various activities conducted under the roof of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. Muhittin participated in the foundation of diverse women's associations and she was an efficient social worker. Besides her activism, Muhittin was also one of the eminent literary figures of the time. She contributed to the formation of the new woman image as she wrote various short stories, articles and novellas all of which touch upon crucial issues about Ottoman-Turkish womanhood.

In the light of this theoretical framework, this study focusses on the literary works of Nezihe Muhittin, analysing the reflections of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism on the novellas written between the years 1911 and 1944. With the aim of detecting the implications of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism on the literary works of Nezihe Muhittin, frequently referred themes are compared with the main tenets and discussions of the movement. By the same token, the good and evil woman characters in the novellas are compared with the appreciated and criticised woman types of the time. By doing so, it is aimed to demonstrate that Muhittin's literary works can be considered as the products of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism.

Keywords: Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, new woman image, Nezihe Muhittin's literary works

ÖZ

OSMANLI-TÜRK FEMİNİZMİNİN NEZİHE MUHİTTİN'İN EDEBİ ESERLERİNDEKİ YANSIMALARI

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1923'te Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kurulması ile birlikte, Türk Kadını'nı geliştirmek ve yeni bir cumhuriyet kadını imajı yaratmak çok mühim bir mesele haline dönüştü. Kadın haklarının kazanılması, Türk modernleşmesinin bir göstergesi olarak görüldü ve bu nedenle kadın hakları yeni cumhuriyet rejiminin en önemli gündem maddelerinden biri haline geldi. Fakat, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kurulmasından önce, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son dönemlerinde ortaya çıkan ve cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarında da devam eden güçlü bir Osmanlı-Türk Feminizminden söz etmek mümkündür. Cumhuriyet reformları kamusal alanda kadın erkek eşitliğini sağlamakta neredeyse tek etken olarak kabul edilse de, Osmanlı-Türk Feminizmi'nin, Osmanlı-Türk kadınının gelişmesindeki önemli katkıları gözden kaçırılmamalıdır. Bu çalışmada, Osmanlı-Türk Feminizmi, Osmanlı-Türk kadınının yaşam alanlarını iyileştirmeyi ve geliştirmeyi amaçlayan feminist bir hareket olarak kabul edilir. Hareketin en önemli çalışma alanları, aynı Batı'daki Birinci Dalga Feminizm'de de olduğu gibi, kadınlar için eşit politik, ekonomik ve eğitim hakları kazanmaktır. Fakat, kadın köleliği, ulusal aile oluşturma girişimleri ve yeni kadın imajı yaratma çabaları Osmanlı-Türk Feminizmi'nin diğer önemli çalışma alanları olarak kabul edilebilir. Bu dönemde, çeşitli kadın dernekleri ve kadın dergileri Osmanlı-Türk Feminizmi'nin kadınlar için eşit haklar kazanmadaki iki önemli mücadele aracı olarak kabul edilir.

Nezihe Muhittin Osmanlı-Türk Feminizmi bağlamında çeşitli faaliyetlere katılmış önemli kadın aktivistlerden biridir. Muhittin, farklı kadın derneklerinin kurulmasında katkıda bulunmuş ve bu faaliyetlerin etkin bir çalışanı olmuştur. Aktivizminin yanı sıra, Muhittin dönemin önde gelen edebiyatçılarından. Kadın hareketi içindeki mücadelesine ve yeni kadın imajının oluşturulmasına, her birinde önemli kadın sorunlarına değindiği çeşitli kısa öyküleri, makaleleri ve kısa romanları ile katkıda bulunmuştur.

Bu teorik çerçevede, bu çalışma Osmanlı-Türk Feminizmi'nin Nezihe Muhittin'in 1911 ve 1944 yılları arasında yazmış olduğu kısa romanlardaki yansımalarını ortaya çıkarmayı hedefler. Bu amaçla, incelenen edebi eserlerdeki sıklıkla değinilen temalar, Osmanlı-Türk Feminizmi'nin önemli tartışma konuları ile karşılaştırılmıştır. Aynı şekilde, eserlerdeki onaylanan ve eleştirilen kadın karakterler, dönemin takdir edilip örnek gösterilen ve eleştirilen kadın tipleriyle karşılaştırılmıştır. Bu çalışma, Muhittin'in romanlarının Osmanlı-Türk Feminizmi'nin ürünleri olarak kabul edilebileceğini göstermeyi amaçlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı-Türk Feminizmi, yeni kadın imajı, Nezihe Muhittin'in edebi eserleri

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Objectives of the Study

After the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the discourse concerning the improvements in the status of women in society focused solely on the contributions of the Kemalist Reforms. It is no doubt that such an approach ignores the contributions of a strong women's movement that emerged in the late Ottoman Period and continued in the early years of the Turkish Republic. However, the influence of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism on the progress of the status of Ottoman-Turkish women should not be overlooked. Emerged during the reign of the Ottoman Empire and continued in the early years of the Republican era, the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism aimed at ameliorating the status of women in society, therefore it was a progressionist movement. For that reason, the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism will be considered as a feminist movement in this study. Among the other Ottoman-Turkish feminists, Nezihe Muhittin was one of the activist woman who took part in activities and struggles of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism.

Nezihe Muhittin was born in 1889 in İstanbul into an wealthy and bureaucrat family. Muhittin dedicated a significant part of her life to improve women's rights in Turkey. She took part in the activities of diverse women's associations and founded the Women's Political Party in 1923 which later turned out to be the Turkish Women's Association in 1924. Muhittin worked as the head of the association until when she was accused of corrupting the association. After when

Muhittin was overthrown from the Turkish Women's Association, she spent her time at home, writing novellas¹ to gain money.

Nezihe Muhittin is significant for a study that focuses on the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism because she participated in the activities of variety of women's associations and wrote articles in diverse women's magazines of her time. This study reveals two different aspects of Nezihe Muhittin within the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism; her activism and her literature. Because the core of this study is literary works of Nezihe Muhittin, the reflections of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism on the literary works of Muhittin will be analysed in detail.

In this respect, firstly this study aims at describing the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism and Nezihe Muhittin's contributions to the feminist movement. That is why, a considerable part of this study includes elaborate information on the emergence of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism and frequently discussed issues in that feminist movement. Such an effort will facilitate to understand how Muhittin created a feminist world view of her own. Nezihe Muhittin was influenced by the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism and moreover influenced the movement with her activist ideas and writings. Not only did she participate in the various women's associations founded at that time, but she also wrote articles, short stories, novellas, movie scripts all of which touched important aspects of womanhood and women's issues. Apart from her articles and short stories, novellas that Muhittin wrote will be used as the primary sources within the scope of this study. Although each novella will be mentioned briefly in chapter four, this study focuses on an elaborate analysis of the four selected novellas which are respectively; *My Self Is Mine*, 1929 (*Benliğim Benimdir*), *Fireflies*, 1936 (*Ateş Böcekleri*), *A Vagrant Woman*, 1943 (*Avare Kadın*) and *The Morning is Coming*, 1944 (*Sabah Oluyor*). In this study it is argued that there are strong implications of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism in Muhittin's writings which reveals itself in the depiction of the life stories of women characters and the frequently used themes in the novellas.

¹ Novella is a literary term used to describe the narrative work of prose fiction which is longer than a short story and shorter than a novel.

Although Nezihe Muhittin is a very important woman figure in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, her contributions to the improvements of women's status in Turkey have been ignored along with the other Ottoman-Turkish Feminists. Moreover, Muhittin's literary works have been excluded from most of the literary anthologies which include the literary works published in the early republican Era. Yaprak Zihnioğlu conducted a comprehensive study on the political struggle of Nezihe Muhittin and published a book called *Kadınsız Inkılap: Nezihe Muhittin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası and Kadın Birliği* in 2003. Three years after publishing this book, Zihnioğlu also made a great contribution by introducing Nezihe Muhittin as an important literary figure of early republican era when she edited and published complete literary works of Nezihe Muhittin in May 2006. Ayşegül Baykan and Belma Ötüş-Baskett also studied Nezihe Muhittin and they published the book *Nezihe Muhittin ve Türk Kadını* analysed Muhittin's activism and struggle with references to feminist history telling. The book also contains a separate chapter on literary works of Nezihe Muhittin, asserting that the main aim of her novellas is to educate woman. Different from Zihnioğlu and Baykan, this study focusses on the literary works of Nezihe Muhittin, depicting them as the products of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. The significance of this study lies in the fact that it makes an elaborate analysis of both the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism and Muhittin's literary works by incorporating Muhittin's writing to the main tenets of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. As such, this study argues that there are strong reflections of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism on Muhittin's novellas, asserting that her literary works are the products of the movement.

1.2. Description of the Study

Following the objectives of the study, chapter two describes the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism in detail. An overview of women's movement in Turkey is explained which is later followed by a more focussed description of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. The Ottoman-Turkish Feminism can be said to have come into existence as a result of the First Wave Feminist Movement in the West, which is

also known as Liberal Feminism. Therefore, brief information about the First Wave Feminism in the West will be given and its main tenets will be examined. In subsequent to that, the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism will be described in detail along with an historical background that prepared the emergence of the movement. This study describes the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism by referring to Zihnioglu's classification which delineates a periodization as; (1) The Early Period Ottoman Women's Movement (1868-1908) (2) The Second Constitutional Monarchy Period Ottoman Feminism (1908-1922) (3) The First Wave Republican Feminism (1923-1935)² (2003: 21). This chapter also includes the depiction of new woman image in the eyes of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminists along with crucial debates which shaped the political agenda concerning women's problems in this period. This is of paramount importance in that, the following parts of the study which focus on the literary works of Muhittin, will delineate that the new woman image promoted by Ottoman-Turkish Feminists reflects itself in the formation of women characters of Muhittin's novellas. Moreover, the discussion points of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism are reflected in the themes of the novellas. Approaching Muhittin's writing from such a perspective intends to demonstrate that Muhittin's literary works are under the influence of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism that she took part in vehemently.

Chapter three focuses on Nezihe Muhittin's life story and her place in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. In this respect, after giving brief information about the life story of Muhittin, her activism in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism will be explained elaborately. The most important points of Muhittin's activism are (1) her struggle to form a Women's Political Party in 1923, just after the foundation of Turkish Republic and (2) her struggle to gain political rights for women under the roof of the Turkish Women's Association. In subsequent to Muhittin's activism, her understanding of feminism and the woman image she promoted will

² The significance of '1935' is that it is the date when Turkish Women's Association (Türk Kadınlar Birliği) was closed. Turkish Women's Association was first founded by Nezihe Muhittin as a political party; Women's Political Party. Because women were not allowed to form a party and take place in political space, it worked as an important women's association during the early years of Turkish Republic in the name of Turkish Women's Association. Elaborate information about Women's Political Party and Turkish Women's Association will be given in the third chapters.

be explained. Chapter three will set the scene to the social milieu in which Nezihe Muhittin was brought up and her life experiences which is influential in the development of her understanding of feminism.

Chapter four introduces Muhittin's literary works. Because Muhittin wrote during the late Ottoman and the early republican period, a brief information about the literature of the time will be explained. Within the scope of this study, the literary device that Muhittin frequently used is determined as novella. After a succinct explanation of the distinction among a novel, a short story and a novella, the summary of each novella will be given in chronological order by identifying the implications of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. Muhittin's literary works which will be mentioned are respectively; *Lost Youth, 1911 (Kaybolan Gençlik)*, *My Self Is Mine, 1929 (Benliğim Benimdir)*, *Beauty Queen, 1933 (Güzellik Kraliçesi)*, *The End of the Bandit, 1934 (Haydudun Sonu)*, *A Landro in İstanbul, 1934 (İstanbul'da Bir Landro)*, *Grandmother Kevser, 1934 (Kevser Nine)*, *Grey Wolf: The Novel of Little Mehmet, 1934, (Bozkurt: Küçük Mehmet'in Romanı)*, *Fireflies, 1936 (Ateş Böcekleri)*, *The End of a Love, 1939 (Bir Aşk Böyle Söndü)*, *It Was a Summer Night, 1943 (Bir Yaz Gecesiydi)*, *Nude Model, 1943 (Çıplak Model)*, *A Vagrant Woman, 1943 (Avare Kadın)*, *My Heart Is Yours, 1943 (Kalbim Senindir)*, *Rattlesnake, 1943 (Çingiraklı Yılan)*, *İzmir Child, 1944 (İzmir Çocuğu)*, *The Morning is Coming, 1944 (Sabah Oluyor)*, *You Will Come Again, 1944 (Gene Geleceksin)*, *A Love Ended Like That, 1944 (Bir Aşk Böyle Bitti)* and *Quiete My Heart Quiete, 1944 (Sus Kalbim Sus)*. The synopsis of each novella will be followed by the typology of women characters and frequently referred themes. By making a typology of women characters that Muhittin created in her literary works, this study aims at analysing whether the good women characters in the novellas are compatible with the the new woman image that is promoted by Ottoman-Turkish Feminists and the evil ones that are criticized by the same group. In the same way, frequently referred themes will be compared with the major debates in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism with the aim of deciphering the fact that Muhittin wrote under the strong influence of the feminist movement of the time.

Out of these novellas, chapter five will include a detailed analysis of the four of the novellas which are selected as; *My Self Is Mine*, 1929 (*Benliğim Benimdir*), *Fireflies*, 1936 (*Ateş Böcekleri*), *A Vagrant Woman*, 1943 (*Avare Kadın*) and *The Morning is Coming*, 1944 (*Sabah Oluyor*). The reason why these novellas are selected for a deeper analysis is that each of them includes significant implications of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism such as; female slavery as a form of subordinating women, importance of national family in the constitution of a proper society, importance of appropriate mothering as a crucial factor in the growth of healthy generations, threats of extreme Westernization and consequences of alienation to one's own culture and importance of education for women. By making an elaborate analysis of these four novellas, chapter four intends to demonstrate the representation of the women characters and the exposition of above-mentioned themes.

1.3. Method of the Study

This study is not based on an empirical research. Its primary sources are the novellas that Nezihe Muhittin wrote between 1911-1944. In order to detect the implications of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism in the novellas, the main tenets of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism are determined at first. In subsequent to that, with a close reading of the literary texts, this study questioned whether the content of the discussions of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism are similar to the content of the novellas.

Feminist methodology and content analysis is used in this study. Brunskell explains feminist methodology as:

Feminist methodology does not indicate any particular choice of one method over another. (qtd by Sandra Harding) Sandra Harding (1987: 2) argues all the methods, or evidence gathering techniques, within social sciences fall into one of the three categories: listening to or interrogating informants, observing behaviour, or examining historical traces or records. Feminist researchers use any or all of these. They

also draw on a variety of theoretical traditions through which the feminist perspective may then be expressed (1983: 38).

As for this study, none of the methods mentioned above is applicable except for “examining historical traces or records”. “Examining historical traces” paved the way for a clear understanding of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism along with the frequently discussed issues in the movement which is later followed by applying them to the literary texts written by Nezihe Muhittin. The original copies of the novellas were founded in the National Library. Although they were written in late Ottoman Period and early republican era, Muhittin wrote them in Latin characters which made it easy to read.

One other characteristics of feminist methodology is that it focuses on women's experience. In this study, Muhittin's life story and her experiences is attributed a considerable importance and a separate chapter is reserved for her life story and personal experiences. The aim is to decipher that Muhittin's personal experiences are influential in understanding her conceptualisation of feminism and the literary tradition she went through. This is significant in that life experiences are believed to shape the characteristics of literary texts is a shared opinion both in feminist methodology and feminist literary theory.

Other than feminist methodology, content analysis is also used to analyse the literary texts and the compatibility of the content of literary texts with the discussions shaped around the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. Whether there is a thematic inclination in the literary texts when related to a specific women question or any related topic can be detected with the help of content analysis. As such, content analysis intends to discover the general view of the author by making an elaborate analyses of the content of the literary text.

As Holsti puts it, the aim of content analysis is “to describe the characteristics of content, to make inferences about the causes of content and to make inferences about the effect of content”. This definition is truly applicable to this study in that the focus was the content of Muhittin's novellas with respect to the

representation of women characters and frequently referred themes. Synopsis of the each literary work is mentioned with the aim of identifying the common characteristics of each work. Analysing the presentation of each theme and women characters in the novellas will be followed by comparing them with debates in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism's main tenets. Such an effort intend to make inferences about the sources of the themes that the writer preferred to touch upon. In the same way, the effect of the content reflects itself in the didactic manner that Muhittin used in her writings. It is evident that the depiction of good characters are set as ideal women characters because Muhittin's sympathy for the good characters is felt explicitly. This stresses that Muhittin planned to create an effect by promoting one kind of woman character explicitly while denigrating the other. In this way, it can be argued that applying content analysis to literary texts is useful to describe the attributes of the content of the text. As Harris puts it:

Any analysis which aimed to find out whether certain words, selected by the investigator, occur in the text or not would be an investigation of the CONTENT of the text and would be ultimately based on the MEANINGS of the words selected (Harris qtd. in Pool: 1959, 201).

In a similar way, in this study, the content of the analysed literary texts is considered as a determinant of the message that is intended to be given to the reader. As such, the content of the literary texts and the language used by the writer is compared with the discussions that shaped the agenda of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism which is explained in detail in the first chapter. Analogy between the content of Muhittin's speeches, non-literary texts and the content of her novellas demonstrates the interaction and connection of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism and Muhittin's literary works.

CHAPTER 2

THE OTTOMAN TURKISH FEMINISM

2.1. An Overview of Women's Movement in Turkey

Women's movement is fragmented and appears in different circumstances in different time periods with various debates and controversies all around the world. That is why, there are different kinds of feminism referring to different issues. Nonetheless, the common point of all is that women are subordinated and in secondary status which hinders them from being a self-sufficient human being. Sirman stresses the same issue under the title of "various feminisms", saying that:

Feminism has to address an immense variety of cultural contexts that are shaped by a different configuration of social and political forces. As a particular kind of consciousness, feminism articulates the particular form in which women in specific social settings are defined and oppressed (1989: 2).

In the same way, the Women's Movement and the understanding of feminism in Ottoman-Turkish context should also be analysed in the social, historical and political milieu of the time period it aroused.

Different theorists describe the phases of Women's Movement in Ottoman-Turkish states with different classifications. Sirman assumes that, within the scope of political and ideological agendas of Ottoman and Turkish states, there are three crucial historical moments which play an important role in the changing status of women in Turkey. (1) The first period began in the midst of the nineteenth century Ottoman society when educated reformist men uttered their concern about the position of women in society (2) The second period, according to Sirman, should be embedded into the early years of Turkish Republic when a new image of Turkish women was constructed under republican ideology. This period is also known as "state feminism", because of the widespread notion that women were

granted their rights by the state (3) The last period was a reaction to state feminism and emerged after the military coup in 1980 (1989: 4-5). Different from Sirman, Tekeli makes another description, saying that the most meaningful periodization of the past would include; (1) the structure of the Pre-Tanzimat Ottoman society; (2) the process of the Westernization, starting with the Tanzimat and continuing until the end of the First World War; (3) the first years of the republic and the single-party regime; (4) the period of fast social change starting after 1950's and coming to the present (1986: 181).

Concerning the contributions of each phase on the improvement of the status of women, Sirman's classification is a more focussed one because the three phases that Sirman defines are clear-cut and witnesses significant changes concerning the status of women. Alternatively, Tekeli's classification refers to the general changes in social structure of Turkish society instead of referring to the changes in women's issues in particular. As an alternative to the classifications made by Sirman and Tekeli, Zihnioğlu's classification of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism will be taken as a reference point for the conceptual grounds of this study. Zihnioğlu describes the movement in three phases: (1) The Early Period Ottoman Women's Movement (1868-1908) (2) The Second Constitutional Monarchy Period Ottoman Feminism (1908-1922) (3) The First Wave Republican Feminism (1923-1935)³ (2003: 21). Zihnioğlu's classification does not include the Second Wave Feminism in Turkey, focusing merely on the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, therefore applicable to this study.

Because this study will take Nezihe Muhittin and her literary works at the core, theoretical background of the study includes the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism which was affected by the First Wave Feminism arousing from the West. The reason is that this period was the time when Nezihe Muhittin was an important

³ The significance of '1935' is that it is the date when Turkish Women's Association was closed. Turkish Women's Association was first founded by Nezihe Muhittin as a political party; Women's Political Party. Due the the fact that women were not allowed to form a party and taken place in political space, it worked as an important women's association during the early years of Turkish Republic in the name of Turkish Women's Association. Elaborate information about Turkish Women's Association will be given in the following chapters.

woman figure on the political sphere with her struggle for the achievement of women's rights in Turkey. Although this study will be dedicated to her selected literary works deciphering how her feminist world view was reflected in her writings, a historical background about the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism is very important in order to understand in which milieu Nezihe Muhittin molded her feminist world view. A significant part of the study is going to explain how Ottoman-Turkish women were considered and which aspects of womanhood were taken as debate issues within the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. Before that, discussing First Wave Feminism arising from the West would be useful in order to understand the significant implications of the Western First Wave Feminism on the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism.

2.2. First Wave Feminism in the West Which Paved The Way for the Ottoman Turkish Feminism

As cited in Balcı, according to the famous writer Müfide Ferid (1892-1971) there are two historical turning points which are influential in the emergence of the idea of feminism the first of which is the Renaissance period when women of all classes were allowed to go to school and be educated just as their male cohorts, and the second period is the French Revolution (1789) when the equality between men and women was declared (qtd. in Balcı: 1997, 16). However, the secondary position of women did not change and women continued to be oppressed in every sphere of life. As a result, inequality between men and women perpetuated. The reactions of women to their subordinated, oppressed and secondary situation aroused in different contexts in different parts of the world. Apparently, women's movements in different parts of the world were influenced by the special circumstances and conditions that were unique to the regions they emerged. For instance, Çakır makes a class based analysis saying that:

In England, with the leadership of middle class, the movement turned out to be the 'Suffragette Movement' which means the women's right to franchise, while in Germany and in France the leaders of the women's movement were the working class women. Meanwhile, in

America, women's movement were in cooperation with the abolitionist movement (1996: 20).

First Wave Feminism in the West is also known as 'Liberal Feminism'. Liberal Feminism, as a comprehensive term, encompasses the struggles within the First Wave Feminism and the Suffragette Movement. According to Wheleman "the chief aim of liberal feminism –a tendency whose history is almost as long as chequered as the history of liberal thought- has been to accord to women the rights that men hold naturally" (1995: 29). There were three crucial issues within liberal feminist thought in the eighteenth century; 1. equal education opportunities 2. equal political rights and 3. equal economic opportunities for women.

As Tong states (1998), one of the salient liberal feminists, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1799) believed that if women were given equal chance to be educated, they would certainly develop their capacities just as well as men. However, the eighteenth century belief supposed that rational thinking should be attached only to men, so it was not necessary to educate women. Contrary to this thought, as cited in Tong, Wollstonecraft's point was that women and men were equal in human potential and capacity, however, women were devoid of equal education opportunities (qtd. in Tong: 1998, 13). When educated, women were believed to be as successful as men in the same spheres of life that men had already taken part in for centuries.

Wheleman (1995) cites Wollstonecraft as an eminent eighteenth century liberal feminist, and put the emphasis on the concept of femininity since Wollstonecraft attributed a lot of importance to femininity as an important cause of the subordination of women. According to Wollstonecraft, the concept of femininity is a synonym of slavery. Not only were women seen far from being as rational as men, but they were also confined to domestic roles such as mothers, housekeepers, pleasure-giving creatures all of which are more or less related to the concept of femininity. Wollstonecraft analyses the position of men and women in the eighteenth century in her famous writing *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) in the following way:

Taught from their infancy that beauty is women's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adore its prison. Men have various employments and pursuits which engage their attention, and give a character to the opening mind; but women, confined to one, and having their thoughts constantly directed to the most insignificant part of themselves, seldom extend their views beyond the triumph of the hour (Wollstonecraft qtd. in Wheleman: 1995, 30).

The eighteenth century liberal feminists fought also for gaining equal political opportunities with men, referred to the right to franchise in particular. In America, where the women's movement was conducted in collaboration with the abolitionist movement, Seneca Falls Declaration (1848) was of great importance in that it asserted the following: "We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and pursuit of happiness..." (qtd. in Wheleman, 1995; 33). Wheleman asserts that this passage paved way for American and British Suffragists to demand suffrage (p.33). Likewise, in Europe, Suffragette Movement emerged when a group of women campaigned to gain parliamentary vote as it was granted to men.

Equal economic opportunities was another issue for liberal feminists. Uneducated women were dependent on men, which hindered them being self-autonomous citizens. Tong interprets the idea under demanding equal economic opportunities and says that "in order to be partners rather than servants of their husbands, wives must earn an income outside of the home" (1998: 17). Gaining equal economic opportunities included developing women's human capital. As such, developing women's skills which can be used in market would increase the number of women participating in working life.

2.3. Historical Backgrounds of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism

The nineteenth century in Ottoman period can be said to have witnessed many changes in society with respect to political, educational, judicial and economic issues. These changes emerged as important issues and were put to the Ottoman

agenda under the title of ‘Modernization/Westernization project’ and had their roots from ‘The Tanzimat Decree⁴’ in 1839. In fact, modernization also refers to urbanization, bureaucratization, and political mobilization. However, Ottoman elites were not satisfied simply with increasing rationality, bureaucratization, and organizational efficiency; they also professed a need for social transformation with the aim of achieving autonomy for the individual and the equality of men and women. Indeed, Westernization efforts had begun during the reigns of Mustafa the Third (1717-1774), Selim the Third (1761-1808) and Mahmut the Second (1785-1839). Nevertheless, with the Tanzimat Decree (1839) it turned out to be a significant project and paved the way for crucial changes in Ottoman governmental and social structure of the Ottoman Empire. Zürcher states that the post-1839 reforms covered significant changes with respect to the army, the central bureaucracy, the provincial administration, taxation, education, communication and judicial reforms (1994: 59). Turkish modernizers identified modernization with Westernization and the reference point for reforms was taken from the West. In parallel with the Westernization efforts in the Tanzimat Period, family life and the position of women in society began to be discussed and criticized widely.

The Tanzimat period was the first time when a number of selected male students were sent to Europe for education. On their return, these educated men contributed to the emergence of women’s questions in Ottoman society. Writers such as Ahmet Mithat Efendi (1844-1912), Namık Kemal (1840-1888), Sami Pashazade Sezai (1860-1936) and Şemzettin Sami (1850-1904) discussed the effects of these changes on Ottoman women via novels, plays, poems and articles. According to Berkes, the most serious and helpful analysis of women’s question was portrayed by Ziya Gökalp as he identifies three problematic areas concerning women’s emancipation: (1) the problem of women’s participation to social, economic life (2) the problem of women’s education (3) the problem of laws concerning marriage, divorce and heritage. In order to achieve equality between man and woman with regards to above-mentioned areas, there must be economic,

⁴ The major principles of the Tanzimat Reform Decree (1839) is that it laid the basis for the constitutional regime of modern Turkey and the realization of secularism.

educational and legal reforms (2004: 448). Along with the enlightened men who raised the issue of women's problems, educated women of gentry class who later turned out to be the activists of Ottoman Turkish Feminism were also included into the discussions.

As a result of the discussions of the Ottoman elite who questioned women's position in society, an Ottoman-Turkish Feminism came into existence. However, participants and followers of the movement avoided calling themselves 'feminist':

Ottoman Muslim feminists preferred to use the word 'woman', for example they identified the movement as a women's movement. Although they had knowledge about the term 'feminism' and feminist movements in Europe and America, they did not call themselves feminist. One of the main reasons was that some women who participated in the movements in other countries were criticized by conservative circles" (Os, 2001, 338).

Those women who called themselves 'feminist' may have received a notorious reputation which deterred Ottoman women from accepting the word 'feminism'. Although it is different from contemporary perceptions of feminism, the movement in Ottoman-Turkish society should be considered as a feminist movement because it aimed at changing the secondary status of Ottoman-Turkish women in society by improving women's status. Nicole Van Os classifies feminism in two categories:

The feminists in the first category questioned the basic inequality between man and woman in society and wanted to alter the patriarchal structure of society radically...the other group were familial feminists who accepted the patriarchal society and wanted to develop women within the prevailing patriarchal system. According to the feminists in this category woman and man were different but also complementary of each other (2001: 335).

Considering such a categorization, Ottoman Turkish Feminism can be included in the second group because it did not require a change in the situation of Ottoman women in the private sphere. However, they will be called 'feminist' in this study because their activities with the aim of developing and transforming Ottoman-

Turkish womanhood were progressionist activities which aimed at improving the status of women.

2.4. Phases of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism

In the analysis of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, Zihnioğlu's classification will be used as a reference point. Zihnioğlu identifies phases of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism as: (1) The Early period Ottoman Women's Movement (1868-1908) (2) The Second Constitutional Monarchy Period Ottoman Feminism (1908-1922) (3) The First Wave Republican Feminism (1923-1935) (2003: 21). This periodization is important in that in each phase, the emphasis on women's question and the discussions change.

2.4.1. The Early Period Ottoman Women's Movement (1868-1908)

The Early Period Ottoman Women's Movement, embraced the endeavours of a handful of women such as Makbule Leman (1865-1898), Poet Nigar and Fatma Aliye who wrote poems, short stories and novels about Ottoman women and womanhood. The fact that a number of elite women took place in Ottoman press with their writings was very significant in the emergence of Ottoman Women's Movement for that time. Their endeavours were followed by an era when women's magazines were very popular and influential in the debates shaped around the issue of Ottoman women's problems which facilitated the spread of the movement. Zihnioğlu evaluates three solutions that early period feminist thought evaluated to improve Ottoman women's status: (1) to take part in society and in public sphere in order to attain identity and liberty (2) abolition of inequality both in family and public life and women's existence in every sphere of life, their participating in any kind of profession with "total equality" (3) to spread the education of women in order to realise the former two targets (2003: 53).

2.4.2. Second Constitutional Monarchy Period (1908-1922)

The Second Constitutional Monarchy Period began with the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, shortly after Sultan Abdulhamid II was forced to restore the constitutional monarchy, in which the Sultan had reduced power. The series of elections resulted in the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) to gain the authority. The Second Constitutional Monarchy Period was also the time when women's demands were more passionately announced. In this period, the power of women's magazines and women's associations should be underlined as important tools to spread the effects of the movement. Requests such as women's independence, women's right to work outside the house and the importance of women's education were stressed and demanded under the title of the 'advance of women' (Zihnioğlu, 2003; 57). Sirman also argues that within this period, emancipation of women was regarded as a synonym of progress of society and it could only be attained through women's education (1989: 8). Nicole Van Os indicates the importance of Ottoman women's appearance in the public sphere of The Second Constitutional Monarchy Period saying that:

Women thought that they could contribute to the advancement of Ottoman government concerning both economic and military issues by individually or via forming associations and they expressed their demands explicitly... Although the first aim of these efforts had nationalistic concerns they facilitated changing women's status in society (2001: 336).

As Çakır (2003) states, in this period, *White Conferences (Beyaz Konferanslar)* were significant as feminist gatherings, conducted in İstanbul in 1911. The *White Conferences* were organized by a young Ottoman woman called P.B. and were held in the mansion of her. The conferences were significant for this period in that Ottoman women expressed their concern about the position of Ottoman women in society and women's problems were discussed from a feminist perspective. At first, Ottoman womanhood was defined in a striking way by one of the participants, Fatma Nesibe Hanım as: "What is a woman today? ...Is she more than a tool for pleasure, a child machine, a sweet body?" (2003: 43). This

definition is interesting because it is very radical for that time, emphasizing the exploitation of women's body. Çakır indicates that, in these gatherings, women's important roles in the future of the whole nation, the segregation in public transportations, oppressive attitudes concerning Ottoman women's clothing and the implications of the Western First Wave Feminism were other discussion topics (2003). *White Conferences* are important for this study because they indicate that there was a revival in Ottoman Women's movement during the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period when compared to the the Early Period Ottoman Women's Movement.

2.4.3. Republican Kemalist Feminism (1923-1935)

The last phase of Ottoman Turkish Feminism is Republican Feminism, which covers the early years of the Turkish Republic. The early years of the Turkish Republic can also be delimited as the reform years when every sphere of social life was reorganized under Republican ideology. Although there was a strong women's activism which began in the late Ottoman period and continued in the early years of the Turkish Republic, it was ignored by Kemalists during the early years of the Republic. As they ignored the strong women's activism of the time, they also argued that women did not gain but they were given equal rights with men by M.K. Atatürk and his followers. Turkish women were believed to be changed in the light of republican ideology. Therefore, improving the status of women was crucial, since the progress in the status of women was considered as an indicator of modernization.

Because she is the adopted daughter of M.K. Atatürk, Afet İnan's words about feminism can be a good example for the republican understanding of feminism:

“Our goal in feminism is equality of duties and rights before law. Turkish woman in villages does all the jobs done by man. In the cities, schools and all kinds of opportunities are open to her. She is a teacher, a judge, a pilot, a banker, an agriculturist, a doctor, a chemist, a professor, an engineer, an architect, an artist, a salient member of town council, a deputy in the parliament and finally the mother of the men

who saved and protected Turkish nation and a holy entity who is prepared to work for the country” (1958: 39).

It is evident from the speech that there are many responsibilities on the shoulders of Turkish women. She is granted equality with men in the public sphere, however, her primary duty is defined as motherhood. The attitude that exalts women’s motherhood and wifehood duties can be considered as the crux of the republican discourse talking about Turkish women.

Nezihe Muhittin was an important woman figure in the Republican period. The Women’s Political Party (1923), which was founded by Nezihe Muhittin and later turned out to be the Turkish Women’s Association⁵, was a crucial woman’s association in the republican period and spent a considerable amount of time for women’s suffrage. After a short period, when women gained their right to vote in 1933, the association was closed. The day when the Turkish Women’s Association was closed is considered as the end of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism by Zihnioğlu (2003:21).

Although it is called ‘Republican Kemalist Feminism’, there are some critics who argue that Kemalism and Kemalist reforms were far from being feminist in nature. For example, Arat asserts that Kemalist reforms did not aim at emancipating women or developing women’s consciousness and their own identity. On the contrary, the main target of Kemalist reforms pertaining to Turkish women was to make them perfect mothers and wives for the good of next generations (1998: 52). In the similar way, Ecevit interprets the Republican Turkish state’s approach with respect to women’s rights and the contradictory enforcements as in the following way:

“the state has been one of the most powerful actors affecting women’s rights. The position of the state, however, has been volatile and appears to be self-contradictory. On the one hand, the state has taken a para-feminist stance and opened up new opportunities for women through legislative and administrative reforms. On the other hand, it

⁵ Chapter 3 will be solely on Nezihe Muhittin’s life, activism and feminist world view.

has supported the traditional role of women within the family, pursued pro-natalist policies, and maintained women's dependency on men" (p.2).

Women were emancipated not for themselves but for the benefit of the whole nation. Yeğenoğlu explains the same issue emphasizing that women were considered as "signifiers of Westernization":

"It was enlightenment ideals of reason and progress which provided a framework for the progressivists who emphasized the emancipation of women as an indispensable precondition for the nations's civilization-a powerful signifier which came to be identified with modernization and Westernization. They argue that women, as mothers and wives, have a crucial role to play in the rejuvenation of the nation by actively participating in the creation and education of enlightened citizens" (1998, 128).

In a similar vein, Berktaş explains the approach of Republican Kemalists concerning the position of Turkish women in the nation-state as: "From now on it is the nation-state which determines the proper attitudes of women, not religion or tradition" (p.278).

Considering the discussion issues in all of the three phases of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, feminists' demands in Ottoman-Turkish society were similar to their Western sisters' with some reservations. Particularly during the first years, Ottoman Muslim women did not accept the aims and activities of the feminist movement appeared in the West and considered it as an unfamiliar movement. Berktaş (2001) indicates that the emergence of feminist movement in Ottoman-Turkish context was different from the movement in the West for two reasons. Firstly, Ottoman society was an Islamic society and was under the rule of Islamic Law, Sharia. Secondly, nationalism was considered as a remedy to save weak Ottoman empire and conflicts aroused because of the intercourse between Islamism and civilization (2001: 351). As such, the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism is a complicated and intricate one, should be differentiated from the feminist movement in the West considering these two points.

2.5. Different Circles Discussing Women's Status during Ottoman Turkish Feminism

There were three different circles in the nineteenth century Ottoman State which were adopted by Islamists, Westernists and Nationalists (Yosmaoğlu, 1996; Türe, 1997; Kadioğlu, 1998). These three circles were predominant particularly during the Second Constitutional Monarchy period. The educated elites of the time were clustered around these three movements, accepting the thoughts promoted by them. Due to the fact that women's questions were important issues on the agenda of Ottoman society, it was also discussed within these movements in some respects. Understanding the reasons of these movements coming on the scene and their approaches to women's problems are significant for this study because they will facilitate the understanding how of women's problems and feminism were perceived in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism.

2.5.1. Islamists

Islamists thought that for the salvation of the Ottoman state, the society should have been organized according to the Islamic rules; Sharia. They totally rejected the legal renovations concerning divorce, polygyny and veiling (Yosmaoğlu, 1996). Akşin defines Islamist movement as: "Islamism can be defined as a movement which stands for the feelings and thoughts of the Muslims who reacted colonization of countries as a result of Western Imperialism and which seeks remedies within Islam" (Akşin, 1998, 73).

Caporal states that "disobedience to Sharia was the main source of the fall of the family institution and the reason of all wicked conditions" (1982: 81). According to the followers of Islamist movement, women were already granted all rights by Islam and that is why there was no need for a women's movement. For that reason, Islamists did not support the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. Because woman's place was defined in the borders of family, they did not need to work outside the house for economic purposes. Therefore, struggling to earn equal

economic opportunities with men was a futile endeavour. If education was needed for Ottoman women, it was only for the good of the next generation of children that women were expected to look after. Seemingly, Islamists were far from understanding and supporting the Ottoman Women's Movement (Türe: 1997).

2.5.2. Westernists

As Akşin states, when the vital question 'how can this country be saved' was asked, Westernists were the ones who proposed 'resembling the West' (Akşin, 1998, 73). Westernists emphasized the importance of modernization which can be acquired through becoming Westernized. Change in the women's status was regarded as a prerequisite within the project of westernization. According to Westernists, a change in the status of women was a significant indicator of westernization. They dealt with women's status as a pivotal issue, that is why improving women's status was considered as a synonymous for a progress in society. Westernists stressed the importance of the education of women and abolition of polygyny. However, they also emphasized the significance of women's roles as perfect mothers and wives. Ottoman Women's Movement and endeavours about women's rights were supported by Westernists.

2.5.3. Nationalists

Nationalists considered old Turkish civilizations as an ideal model for Ottoman society praising the equality between the Turkish man and woman in the old Turkish civilizations. Nationalists tried to evaluate the situation of women by examining the women in the old Asian Turkish states. Ziya Gökalp can be considered as the leading figure of the nationalist movement. In *The Origins of Turkism (Türkçülüğün Esasları)*, Ziya Gökalp stresses the fact that the concepts of feminism and democracy were first uttered by Old Turkish Civilizations.

However, nationalists' approach to women's issues was not much different from the other two movements. They restricted the place of women in the borders of private sphere and believed that the progress in women's status would be

beneficial for making women perfect mothers and wives. The nationalist movement turned out to be a more prominent one among the other two movements after the War of Independence. The nationalist movement had also significant influences on Nezihe Muhittin's way of understanding women's issues. Affected by nationalist thought, Muhittin's feminism had strong nationalist aspects, praising Turkish womanhood in the same way as nationalists did. According to nationalists, including Muhittin, the progress in the status of Turkish women would mean breeding healthier, stronger and more doughty generations.

Although these three movements were different concerning their approaches to governmental and societal issues, their approaches to women's problems were similar. For instance, each movement stressed the importance of women's education as the basic measure of an improvement of women's status and by the same token they attributed great importance to women's traditional duties and glorified motherhood and wifehood roles of women. The common tenet that these three ideologies embraced for the status of women was that a woman should be a good mother, good wife and good Muslim, all of which could be attained through education (Türe, 1997; 43). Alternatively, Kadioğlu (1998) evaluates that there are two points upon which these three ideologies agree. Firstly, all of them consider women as the objects of grand societal projects. Secondly, although some of them encourage women to take place in the public sphere, all of them define women within the borders of family.

2.6. The Ottoman Turkish Feminism

After historical backgrounds and development of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, focussing on debates within the movement is crucial in that, this study will consider the reflections of these debates as popular agendas of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism on the themes and formation of women characters of Nezihe Muhittin's selected novellas. As an important woman figure of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, Nezihe Muhittin should have been influenced by the

discussions of the period in her writings which made her literary works as the products of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism.

2.6.1. Debates in the Ottoman Turkish Feminism

Müfide Ferid who was an eminent writer during the late Ottoman period, gave a conference called “Feminism” in 1919 (Ferid qtd. in Balcı, 1997: 17). Similar to the *White Conferences* in the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period, Müfide Ferid’s conference is also significant in that it is a strong indicator of a strong Feminist women’s movement in the Ottoman-Turkish society. First and foremost, Müfide Ferid’s conference is striking as far as the title is concerned because “feminism” as a title is assertive for that time when the word ‘feminism’ was avoided to be used by some circles. In this conference, Müfide Ferid defined feminism as in the following: “What is feminism? Feminism is the work of women to demand equality with men in civil rights, economic rights and political rights” (Ferid qtd. in Balcı, 1997: 17). According to Müfide Ferid, to attain these three rights was the initiative that launched Ottoman Turkish Feminist Movement just as the First Wave Feminism in the West.

Out of these three rights, political rights was the least concentrated one in Ottoman-Turkish context because a group of women thought that it was not an appropriate time to demand political rights. Struggling for political rights became an important issue in the early years of the Turkish Republic. Nonetheless, different from the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, within Western First Wave Feminism there was a very strong strife to gain equal political rights with men.

Ottoman-Turkish Feminists fought to gain equal opportunity for education and work which would make them economically independent. Nicole Van Os interprets the importance of education for Ottoman women saying that, women were mothers who guaranteed the continuity of the nation and also they were the first teachers of their children. When Ottoman women became more educated and

knowledgeable, they would be more conscious housewives who were good at economic management of the house (2001: 341).

Ottoman-Turkish feminists thought that the Ottoman family needed some reforms and regulations. In this respect, they were against traditionally arranged marriages, polygyny and divorce law which gave all authority to men, making women vulnerable to dangers. The efforts concerning transforming the Ottoman family system was a result of the urges to make women equal to men before law.

Within the discussions of Ottoman Turkish Feminism, the approaches towards the West were contradictory. Although the West was considered as the unique reference point concerning the changing status of Ottoman-Turkish women, it was also regarded as a threat to the conservation of religious and traditional values. As Yeğenoğlu indicates:

Westernization needs to be implemented without really eroding women's place in the home, and also the moral and spiritual values of the family...the overall moral fabric of society had to be protected while it was being protected...It was believed that utilization of Western technology might be necessary, but that this should not lead to the contamination of Islamic values by Western culture. Women came to symbolize the site which needed to be protected from such contamination (1998, 128).

Concerning the same issue, Berktaş argues that this situation is not unique only to Ottoman or Middle Eastern countries and that whether that country be eastern or western is of no importance. It is a product of patriarchal thought that women are considered as 'spirit of society' who are identified both with salvation or regression of a country.

According to Zihniöğlu's (2003) classification of Ottoman Women's Movement, the discussion points changed in each phase. For example, in the **Early Period Ottoman Women's Movement**, when generally high class women began to take place in press and various woman magazines were published, (1) resistance to western values/life styles, (2) importance of women's morality, (3) female slavery

were important discussion points among intellectual circles. During **Second Constitutional Monarchy**, (1) women's freedom, (2) importance of education for women, (3) women's participation to public issues, gained importance among educated and enlightened Ottoman elite. During **Republican Kemalist Feminism**, devoted followers of Kemalism imposed a new Republican woman image who is modest, altruistic and a devoted mother and wife. In the modernisation/westernisation project, the improvement in women's status was one of the significant targets. For that reason, women were attracted considerable importance by the Kemalist ideology and a separatist women's movement was considered unnecessary.

To sum up, Zihnioğlu (2001) summarizes the discussed issues and demands of Ottoman woman in Ottoman Turkish Feminism:

- (1) Women's education is of vital importance in order to attain power and social resources.
- (2) There must be equality in family institution and polygyny must be abolished as well as religious divorce. Nuclear family, which is the base of society, should be reinforced and civil legislation must rearrange women's rights.
- (3) Women should participate to reform efforts and re-organization of society as rational and modern individuals.
- (4) Pressures on women's clothing should be abolished and women's participating in public and social life should be provided.
- (5) Women's social duties should not be limited to motherhood and wifeness, but they should be educated in order to attain a "golden bracelet" that is; a job (p. 27).

2.6.2. The 'New Woman' Promoted by the Ottoman-Turkish Feminists

It is evident that a movement concerning equal rights for women demands significant changes in the position of woman in society. As for the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, the demands in woman's position can be divided into two periods considering the transformation from the Ottoman Empire to Turkish

Republic. The first period embraces first and second phases of the Ottoman Turkish Feminism which are the Early Period Ottoman Women's Movement (1868-1908) and The Second Constitutional Monarchy Period (1908-1922) because they emerged during the reign of Ottoman Empire. The main concern in this period was to develop the status of Ottoman women. The second period, concerning creating a new woman image, is the early Republican years after the foundation of Turkish Republic in 1923. The main concern in this period is to transform Ottoman women into new republican women.

Ottoman women, in the eyes of Ottoman feminists, should have been educated as their male cohorts. Secondly, Ottoman women should be socially active and working woman, contributing to the family budget. However, the most significant roles of Ottoman women were identified as motherhood and wifehood. As stated before, three dominant movements discussing the situation of Ottoman women put the emphasis on the image of an ideal woman who was, first and foremost, a perfect mother and wife. Therefore, it can be said that what was done for Ottoman woman was to transform her into a better mother and and a more helpful wife.

When the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923, a new woman image was promoted by Kemalists as a significant part of the modernization project. Their main concern was to transform Ottoman women into a modernized Republican woman. In terms of the modernization project, the new woman was no more a victim of traditional religious practices, unwanted marriages, polygyny and Ottoman divorce law. However, while republican intellectuals supported westernization efforts, they were anxious about the future of the society for fear that cultural and traditional life may be distorted. Their main concern was to modernize women without touching the traditional duties attributed to her. In the eyes of Kemalists, even though the new woman was educated, enlightened, independent and modern looking, she was expected to be loyal to traditional values.

According to Berktaş, the new woman of the Turkish republic is a family woman who is also socially active, altruistic and espoused her national duties (1998: 2). That republican women should be altruistic is significant in that it emphasizes the importance attached to her motherhood and wifehood roles. Women are expected to live for their children and husbands first whereas their own self comes afterwards, which perpetuates their being secondary status. Ayşe Durakbaşa (1998) also makes a similar definition of the new woman of the Turkish Republic which includes a modern femininity, educated working woman who was involved with society, participating in the activities of clubs and associations and who was also a well-educated mother and wife, a good dancer following fashion.

The Ottoman-Turkish feminists' new woman image was similar to western feminists' in that both considered progress in women's situation as a synonym to a progress in society. Within the first wave feminist movements, in order to understand the transformation that women were expected to go through, it is crucial to consider the woman image that Wollstonecraft depicted. In Tong's words Wollstonecraft claimed that:

“unlike emotional and dependent women, who routinely shirk their domestic duties and indulge their carnal desires, rational and independent women will tend to be ‘observant daughters’, ‘affectionate sisters’, ‘faithful wives’, and ‘reasonable mothers’. The truly educated woman will be a major contributor to society’s welfare. Rather than wasting her time and energy on idle entertainments, she will manage her household-especially her children-properly”(qtd. in Tong: 1998, 14).

It is also noteworthy that Wollstonecraft's woman image is very similar to the woman image that Ottoman-Turkish feminists promoted. It is striking that this is the same trap which makes women in Kandiyoti's words “emancipated but not liberated” (Kandiyoti, 1996, 72).

Berktaş (2001) interprets the roles attributed to women both in public and private spheres as a “double burden” on republican women. Berktaş asserts that “According to Westernist model, women were given ‘natural’ duties and

responsibilities within family and private sphere in addition to extreme devotedness to public spirit” (2001: 358). Seemingly such responsibilities both in public and private sphere might have created a double burden on Republican women. Moreover, women characters who failed in performing responsibilities in public and private spheres became prominent in the early republican Turkish literature and including Nezihe Muhittin’s writings.

2.6.3. Women’s Magazines and Women’s Associations as Important Vehicles for Women’s Activism in the Ottoman Turkish Feminism

Both women's magazines and women's associations in the late Ottoman period can be considered as crucial vehicles in understanding the development and spread of the Ottoman Turkish Feminism. When the contents of Ottoman women’s magazines and the agenda of Ottoman women’s associations were examined, the debate issues of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism would be more clear. As Çakır (1996) indicates, women’s magazines and associations are the best and most important resources which would show us women’s struggles, activities and demands. Çakır also attracts attention to the fact that changes in Ottoman society affected women who were confined to domestic sphere up till that time, and women demanded equal rights in order to be in equal status with men in social life. Ottoman press had the most effective role in this struggle. Ottoman Feminists endeavoured to enlighten and prepare Ottoman woman for changes through writing their problems and demands in various Ottoman newspapers and women’s magazines. They also founded diverse associations and took an active role within these associations and organized conferences (p. 22).

Women’s magazines and associations were of vital importance in that they enabled women to take part in the public sphere. Berktaş states that Ottoman women’s magazines and women’s associations that emerged during Ottoman Turkish Feminism created and developed a “public sphere” specific to women (2001: 351). Such a public sphere was a perfect place for Ottoman-Turkish

women to express their demands and spread new ideas concerning the future of Ottoman-Turkish woman.

2.6.3.1. Women's Magazines

Writing in newspapers and magazines was an effective way of expressing ideas during late Ottoman period. Particularly after the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period (1908), the outburst of women's magazines was significant concerning the development of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. At first, it was feminist men who expressed their ideas about the position of women in society and contemplated on the image of an ideal woman. Subsequently, this was followed by a considerable number of women writers who were educated daughters of elite families. This is significant because as Çakır (1996) indicates, the first time that Ottoman women expressed themselves was the time they began to write in newspapers and magazines.

Ottoman women's magazines and their contents are as follows; *Advance of Muslim Women (Terakki-i Muhadderat)* stressed the importance of education and published readers' letters; *Ladies (Hanımlar)* wrote about home economics, literature, history and the importance of learning second language; *Monthly (Ayine)* was about marriage and gave advice about how spouses should behave each other; *İnsaniyet (Humanity)* aimed at enlightening Ottoman women; *Şükufezar*⁶ aimed at announcing women's existence in the public⁷, *Joy*⁸ (Mürüvvet) put the emphasis on political news, literature and the rules of etiquette; *Newspaper Unique to Ladies (Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete)* was a magazine which was published continuously between 1895-1908 and aimed at educating women because women were the educators of new generations, stressed women's problems and various issues about employment, health and fashion; *Bouquet's (Demet)* target was to enlighten Ottoman women about scientific and

⁶ Proper Name

⁷ As Çakır (1996) indicates, the preface of this magazine is Quite striking saying that; "We, as women, were degraded by men having thought to have long hair, have no discretion. We will struggle to demonstrate the opposite" (p. 26)

⁸ Mürüvvet in Turkish. Mürüvvet is used as the familial joy.

political issues; *Beauties (Mehasin)* gave information about various woman activities and women's associations from all around the world and moreover literature, fashion were also touched upon; *Woman (Kadın)* published elaborate information about western women and how they gained their rights, *Woman* also included various discussions about women's subordination; *Women's World (Kadınlar Dünyası)* was published by *Association of Ottoman Women's Rights Defence (Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti)* which was an important association having the responsibility of gaining Ottoman women's rights; *Pearl (İnci)* was a magazine which described womanhood from a man's point of view and aimed at restricting Ottoman women to the roles of mothering and wifehood. There was also *Young Woman (Genç Kadın)*, *Work (İkdam)* and *Time (Vakit)* as other women's magazines of the time (Çakır, 1996: 22-42).

2.6.3.2. Ottoman Women's Associations

Women's associations in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism were also significant because they paved the way for the development of Ottoman women's activism and provided women with an opportunity to take part in the public sphere. Moreover, thanks to women's associations, individual demands were uttered as the demands of a large group of women which culminated in collective action. There were a variety of women's associations which can be clustered as; (1) charity organizations, (2) organizations which stressed the importance of women's education and employment, (3) cultural organizations, (4) organizations which tried to find solutions to the problems of the state, (5) women's associations of political parties, (6) feminist organizations, (7) country defense organizations and finally (8) political associations (Çakır: 1996, 43-57)⁹. Among these, the distinction of feminist organizations is that they solely dealt with the problems of Ottoman women, with the aim of improving the status of women. Ottoman women's associations are significant for this study because Nezihe Muhittin participated in the activities of various women's associations founded at that time such as, *Association of Navy Women's Branch (Donanma Cemiyeti Hanımlar*

⁹ Serpil Çakır explains the activities of Ottoman Women's Associations in detail in her book *Ottoman Women's Movement*.

Şubesi), *Association of Protection (Esirgeme Derneği)*, *Association of Progress of Women (Teali-i Nisvan Derneği)*, *Association of Ottoman Women's Rights Defence (Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti)* (Baykan: 1999, 133-141).

Out of these, feminist organizations are significant for this study such as *Women's Political Party (Kadınlar Halk Fırkası)* which was later reorganized under the name of *Turkish Women's Association (Türk Kadınlar Birliği)* and *Association of Ottoman Women's Rights Defence*. *The Turkish Women's Association* was a significant association during early republican period and will be examined elaborately in the following chapter under the title of 'Nezihe Muhittin's life, activism and her Feminist World View'. As another feminist association of the time, the aims of the *Association of Ottoman Women's Rights Defence* are identified as; (1) to design women's clothing (2) to facilitate women's employment (3) to make women socially active, participate in public issues (4) to spread special schools for women, publish newspapers and magazines and organize conferences (Çakır, 1996; 57-63).

With the increase in the number of such associations, Ottoman women were encouraged to appear in public space and integrate in social activities. The target was to create enlightened mothers who would in turn be the educators of the next generations. Ottoman women's identity as mothers and wives were the crux of all discussions. The progress in womanhood meant Ottoman women's being perfect mothers and helpful wives. This seems contradictory when the contemporary feminist debates are considered. However, such efforts should be considered as the flourishing of feminist consciousness because they, in the end, aimed at improving the status of Ottoman women.

In the following chapter, Nezihe Muhittin, as one of the activist feminist women figure will be presented in the light of historical development of Ottoman Turkish Feminism. This will shed a light on how Nezihe Muhittin was influenced by the Ottoman-Turkish feminism in shaping her feminist world view and also how she influenced the movement with her ideas.

CHAPTER 3

NEZİHE MUHİTTİN’S LIFE, ACTIVISM AND HER FEMINIST WORLD VIEW

3.1. Nezihe Muhittin’s Life

Nezihe Muhittin was born in 1889 in Istanbul into an affluent, bureaucrat family as the daughter of Muhittin Bey and Zehra Hanım. Her father Muhittin Bey was a retired member of the court of appeal¹⁰ and Zehra Hanım was the grand-daughter of the first minister of army¹¹ Hüseyin Pasha and the daughter of Ali Şevket Pasha. Nezihe Muhittin was born during the reign of Abdülhamit the Second and his monarchy period¹².

The reign of Abdülhamit the Second is known to be a “police state”. Akşin attracts the attention to the fact that the Ottoman press was under the strong control of the Ottoman government (1998: 37). Abdülhamit period is famous for *panislamist* movement which culminated in the police’s strict control of society. The control was conducted with regards to Islamic rules, Sharia. One other trait of Abdülhamit period was the strict resistance to Western values. Some circles were suspicious about the renovations of Western origin (Caporal, 1982, 66). During such a dictatorial and skeptic regime, Nezihe Muhittin was born and brought up among enlightened, educated elite people.

Nezihe Muhittin attended local schools for a short time. However, when the family complained about the incompetency and poor quality of schools, she continued her education at home with special tutors. For a short period, Muhittin attended Kumkapı School of Sir’s and developed her French to an efficient

¹⁰ İstinaf mahkemesi

¹¹ İlk serasker

¹² İstibdat dönemi

degree. As Zihnioğlu noted, Nezihe Muhittin was educated firstly by Nebi Efendi who was a graduate of law school and was interested in literature. During her education with Nebi Efendi, Muhittin learnt Persian, Arabic languages and literatures. Afterwards, she was educated by Ziver Bey who was also a graduate of law school (2003: 35).

Apart from her formal education; the milieu in which Nezihe Muhittin was brought up also had significant influences in the development of her intellectual world view. Muhittin was brought up in a period when social, political issues and Ottoman women's problems were discussed widely by the educated elites of the time. Muhittin spent much of her time among educated and intellectual cousins, who were also dissidents of the authority, discussing the social and political events of the period. Witnessing and participating such discussions affected the development of Muhittin's political and feminist world view to a considerable degree.

That Nezihe Muhittin introduced her cousin Nakiye Hanım as her "first and precious teacher" can be considered as an example of how she was affected by her educated and intellectual cousins (Baykan and Ötüş-Baskett, 1999;76). Zihnioğlu states that her cousin Hakiye Hanım who was fifteen years older than Muhittin was a perfect role-model for her (2000: 69). Nakiye Hanım was one of the enlightened women writers of that time who studied literature in detail. Influenced by Nakiye Hanım, Nezihe Muhittin was also acquainted with eminent literary works of salient writers of her time which might have contributed in the development of her interest in literature and writing. Apparently, Nakiye Hanım would have depicted an ideal womanhood in the eyes of Nezihe Muhittin.

Nezihe Muhittin's aim was to become a teacher. Although Muhittin did not graduate from teacher training college, she applied to the Ministry of Education with a petition stating that she would like to work as a teacher. After the examination offered by Ministry of Education, Muhittin began working as a teacher in *the Girls' College* (Çakır, 1997;10). Subsequently, Nezihe Muhittin

worked in diverse schools in different fields of study such as; natural sciences, gymnastics, playing the piano and sewing. When Muhittin was appointed as a science teacher to *Girl's High School (Kız İdadisi*¹³), she met with Halide Edip, Nakiye Hanım and Şüküfe Nihal (Zihnioğlu, 2000: 70). Meeting with eminent writers and poets of her time was important for Nezihe Muhittin because she was affected by them as salient literary figures. Apart from teaching in diverse schools, Muhittin worked as a headmaster of *Union and Progress Industrial School for Girls (İttihat ve Terakki Kız Sanayi Mektebi)* and *Selçuk Women High School (Selçuk Hatun Sultanisi*¹⁴). Other than teaching, Nezihe Muhittin was an active participant of various associations of the late Ottoman period. She was also the founder of the Women's Political Party which was later transferred to the Turkish Women's Association. She published the magazine *The Woman's Way (Türk Kadın Yolu)* as a product of the Turkish Women's Association to denounce and support the activities of the Turkish Women's Association to the Ottoman society. Zihnioğlu (2000) states that Nezihe Muhittin married two times and did not have prosperous and happy marriages. She had a son called Malik Tepedelenligil, who is not alive today.

Nezihe Muhittin's writing ability should not be overlooked. During the years of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, Muhittin wrote various articles to the magazines and newspapers about diverse women's issues, discussing the ways of improving women's status in society. Muhittin's articles and short stories were published in the following magazines; *Women's World (Kadınlar Dünyası)*, *Fleet (Donanma)*, *Literature Magazine of Public (Edebiyat-ı Umumiye Mecmuası)*, *Future (Atı)*, *Progress (İleri)*, *Time (Vakit)*, *Ornament (Süs)*, *Woman's Path (Kadın Yolu)*, *Morning (Sabah)* and *Work (İkdam)*. Muhittin was affected by authors of her time such as Halide Edip Adıvar, Süleyman Nazif (1869-1927) and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar (1864-1944), Reşat Nuri Güntekin (1889-1956), Sadri Ethem, Mahmut Yesari, Selami İzzet, Vala Nurettin, Peyami Safa (1899-1961) (Zihnioğlu, 2003:38).

¹³ 'İdadi' is the old name given to high schools in the Ottoman Empire.

¹⁴ 'Sultani' is the old name given to high schools founded after 1908 in Ottoman Empire.

Nezihe Muhittin wrote novellas which can be considered as popular romances of that time. Muhittin's literary works will be touched upon in the following chapter respectively; *Lost Youth, 1911 (Harcanan Gençlik)*, *My Self Is Mine, 1929 (Benliğim Benimdir)*, *Beauty Queen, 1933 (Güzellik Kraliçesi)*, *The End of the Bandit, 1934 (Haydudun Sonu)*, *A Landro in İstanbul, 1934 (İstanbul'da Bir Landro)*, *Grandmother Kevser, 1934 (Kevser Nine)*, *Grey Wolf: The Novel of Little Mehmet, 1934, (Bozkurt: Küçük Mehmet'in Romanı)*, *Fireflies, 1936 (Ateş Böcekleri)*, *It Was a Summer Night, 1943 (Bir Yaz Gecesiydi)*, *Nude Model, 1943 (Çıplak Model)*, *A Vagrant Woman, 1943 (Avare Kadın)*, *My Heart Is Yours, 1943 (Kalbim Senindir)*, *Rattlesnake, 1943 (Çingiraklı Yılan)*, *İzmir Child, 1944 (İzmir Çocuğu)*, *The Morning is Coming, 1944 (Sabah Oluyor)*, *You Will Come Again, 1944 (Gene Geleceksin)*, *A Love Ended Like That, 1944 (Bir Aşk Böyle Bitti)* and *Quiete My Heart Quit, 1944 (Sus Kalbim Sus)*. It is noteworthy that in each novella, Nezihe Muhittin dwells on important issues of womanhood which can be considered as an indicator that Muhittin continued her interest in women's issues via writing popular romance novels. As Zihnioğlu (2003) indicates, apart from her novellas, Nezihe Muhittin also wrote short stories, plays, movie scripts.

Nezihe Muhittin died in İstanbul on 10 February 1958 in an asylum. Since that time until 1990's, she was forgotten and isolated from almost all literary anthologies and works considering early republican period.

3.2. Nezihe Muhittin's Activism

Due to the fact that Nezihe Muhittin was born in a time when Ottoman women's movement began to develop through various women's associations and women's magazines, it was indispensable for her to be a part of the movement. Beginning from her childhood, Nezihe Muhittin became a part of the women's activism of the late Ottoman period. Eventually, during her adulthood she turned out to be one of the activist women struggling for the advancement of women's status in society.

Nezihe Muhittin was involved in the activities of various civil society associations. She took part in the activities of *Ottoman Turkish Ladies Protection Association (Osmanlı Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği)* which was founded just after the Balkan Wars in 1913. *Ottoman Turkish Ladies Protection Association* was founded with the aim of lending assistance to orphaned children and widowed women during war time. What is more, Muhittin also worked for various organizations such as *Association of Fleet (Donanma Cemiyeti)*, *National Defense Women's Committee (Müdafaa-i Milliye Kadınlar Heyeti)* and *Anatolian Women's Rights Defense Association (Anadolu Müdafaa-i Hukuk-i Nisvan Cemiyeti)*. Concerning Muhittin's activism in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, her activities under the roofs of the Women's Political Party and the Turkish Women's Association are significant because focussing on her activism would facilitate conceptualisation of Muhittin's understanding of feminism.

3.2.1. The Women's Political Party

Nezihe Muhittin's activism and her struggle for improving the status of Turkish women reveals itself overwhelmingly in the foundation of the The Women's Political Party and the The Turkish Women's Association. Just after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, with the leadership of Nezihe Muhittin, a handful of educated women, who were active participants of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, initiated to form a Women's Political Party which would consist of women and stand only for gaining equal political rights for women.

As stated before, the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism differs from the Western First Wave Feminism in the way it deals with gaining equal rights for women. Although it was affected from the First Wave Feminism that emerged in the West, the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism did not attract much attention to political rights since it was not an appropriate time for such a demand because of the intricacy of social and political milieu in the Ottoman Empire. However, after the War of Independence and the foundation of the Turkish Republic, demanding equal political rights for women turned out to be a crucial agenda of the last phase of the

Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, that is Republican Kemalist Feminism. With the coming of the Republican regime, elections became significant for the constitution of the parliament. For that reason, it can be said that the appropriate political milieu to demand equal political rights emerged after the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

The Women's Political Party was founded on 15 June 1923 in Istanbul. Zihnioğlu, emphasizes an important point that all of the founding committee members were once members of various Ottoman civil society associations and interprets the motivating factors of the foundation of the Women's Political Party as follows:

- (1) The first aim was to gain political rights of women.
- (2) The foundation aimed at reinforcing a participatory and collective action by calling enlightened women who vehemently supported gaining women's rights.
- (3) The foundation planned to unite all interested young people along with women and women's associations in a congress. The initiative aimed at calling enlightened women living in diverse regions all around the Anatolia.
- (4) The foundation thought that women would participate in a strong and resolute political rights struggle.
- (5) Evident from the title, the target was to form a political party for women (2003: 123).

As a unique initiative, the Women's Political Party's overall working area was compatible with the demands of the Western First Wave Feminists in that they required to acquire equal education, employment opportunities and political rights for women. As stated before, these three aims were the crux of the Western First Wave Feminism and they became the core of the activities of Ottoman-Turkish women in the Republican Era.

The statute of the Women's Political Party was consist of twenty seven articles. Out of these, the first nine articles focussed on the aims of the party:

- (1) The first article states that the party will be organized collectively for the achievement of the nine goals.

- (2) The second article introduced the aim of gaining political rights for women in Turkey.
 - (3) The third article announced that the party would work to encourage women to participate in the local elections of municipalities.
 - (4) The fourth article was about encouraging women to work who would develop national economy.
 - (5) The fifth article stated the regulations concerning orphans and the children of martyrs.
 - (6) The sixth article referred to the education of women. The Women's Political Party would work to regulate and modernize education of girls.
 - (7) The seventh article stated the need to support widowed women and families of martyrs.
 - (8) The eighth article stated that women could also be recruited to the army during the war times.
 - (9) The ninth article aimed at arranging the civil code in a perfect way to protect women concerning marriages and familial issues.
 - (10) The tenth article explains the final aim as to educate and enlighten all women in order to attain the above-mentioned goals.
- (Zihnioğlu: 2003, 134-135).

It was an extra-ordinary action to initiate such a Women's Political Party for the political milieu of the early years of the Turkish Republic. According to Muhittin, the Women's Political Party aimed at gaining women's political and social rights and defending women's rights in the parliament. In this respect, the Women's Political Party is a political organization which stands uniquely for gaining equal rights for women (Zihnioğlu: 1999, 134). After writing the statute of Women's Political Party, the founders of the party applied to the parliament. After waiting for eight months, from May 1923 to January 1924, founders were informed by the ruling party, Public's Party, that the Women's Political Party's program was improper and it was not an appropriate time to constitute such a party. Afterwards, the Women's Political Party was reorganized under the roof of the Turkish Women's Association on 7 February 1924.

According to Nezihe Muhittin, the government did not allow to form a Women's Political Party because of the fact that women did not have political rights for that time being. Zihnioğlu interprets the refusal of the Women's Political Party and the reasons why the program of the party was improper, that is, not compatible with the politics of Mustafa Kemal and his followers. Zihnioğlu's interpretation

concerning the refusal of the party focusses on two different reasons. Firstly, women's rights issue were the symbol of modernization project. The government was concerned with the symbolic representation of women and women's rights as vehicles to be used in the modernization project. Kemalists wanted to shape women's rights issues in the way as they like, without any intrusion. As such, the Women's Political Party was considered as an unwanted intruder to the women's rights projects of the government. Secondly, Kemalists argued that "women were granted their rights by the republican reforms" and did not want to share the profit that would come out of such a discourse (Zihnioğlu, 2003; 148-149).

3.2.2. The Turkish Women's Association

After the founders of the Turkish Women's Party were informed that the ruling government did not allow the foundation of a political party unique to women, they changed the second article of the statute. The second article of the statute referred to gaining political rights of women. Instead of this article, the founders wrote that the "association has no relation with politics" and changed the name of the foundation as 'the Turkish Women's Association'. Subsequently, the Turkish Women's Association was founded on 15th February 1924 (Zihnioğlu, 1999: 135).

The statute of the Turkish Women's Association did not strongly focus on gaining equal political rights as the Women's Political Party did. On the contrary, the Turkish Women's Association emerged as a charity organization with the following statute:

- (1) The Turkish Women's Association was founded on 7 February 1923 in İstanbul.
- (2) The association intended to work to inform Turkish women about their responsibilities concerning social and political rights.
- (3) The purpose of the association: To convey women to a modern and mature level by elevating them intellectually and socially. The association will work effectively to organize conferences and publish works in order to educate girls as real mothers, to ameliorate the social wounds of women's life, to help widowed women, desolate families

and children, to help poor children, to pay attention to physical and moral education of new generation, to encourage women to work outside the home (Baykan&Ötüş-Baskett, 1999; 149).

The Turkish Women's Association evaded dealing with gaining political rights during the early period of the association in order not to attract the attention of the government. As Bozkır (2000) presents, immediately after the foundation of the association, the Turkish Women's Association expressed its opinion about polygamy and divorce law. Members of the association showed their concern for orphan children and poor women. Moreover, members also worked against the abuse of children and established a workshop to collect clothes for poor children. Apart from such social activities, the Turkish Women's Association was also interested in economic issues and they encouraged society to use domestic products. In addition to that, the Turkish Women's Association paid attention to the intellectual development of women. The association organized various conferences to give information about Turkish women's social and forensic rights along with a series of courses to develop skills of women (Bozkır, 2000; 22).

The Turkish Women's Association organized a congress in 1927. The oppositionists in the association argued that there were wrong enforcements and that the association was corrupt. As a result of such complaints, the Turkish Women's Association was inspected by the policeman that was sent by governorship. Just after the inspection, it was argued that Nezihe Muhittin took association's money in an improper way to spend it for her own needs. This false accusation was published in the newspapers of the time which was later followed by overthrowing Nezihe Muhittin from the association (Zihnioğlu: 1999, 9-10). Latife Tekin, who was a member of the Turkish Women's Association, took over the association as the second head after Nezihe Muhittin. After Muhittin was forced to quit working at the Turkish Women's Association, with the leadership of Latife Tekin, the association turned out to be one of the charity associations of the time. After Turkish women gained their political rights, the association was closed in 1935. The association was re-formed in 1949 with the aim of improving the cultural development and lifestyle of 'Turkish women'.

3.2.3. Magazine: Woman's Path

Woman's Path was published during 1926-1927 as the product of the Turkish Women's Association. The magazine *Woman's Path* should be considered as another medium of women's activism like other women's magazines of the time. However, *Woman's Path* is of particular importance because it was published as the magazine of the Turkish Women's Association and can be conveyed as another vehicle of Muhittin's activism. For that reason, *Woman's Path* deciphers the debates, ideas, expectations and interest areas of the Ottoman Turkish Feminist Movement and particularly of the Turkish Women's Association. As Balcı states, *Woman's Path*, paid attention to and published various articles about the history of women's movement in the world. The magazine also showed concern for women's health and various aspects of womanhood. The magazine warned readers about the probability of a war and gave advice about wartime manners of both men and women. According to the magazine, women could also be recruited if a war emerged (Balcı, 1998, 34-35).

3.3. Nezihe Muhittin's Understanding of Feminism

There is a diversity of feminist thought and belief. The common point of all feminist theories is that they accept the inequality between sexes, women's subordination, oppression and disadvantaged position in society. However, feminisms try to explain and analyse the subordination and oppression of women in different perspectives, proposing different remedies. One should bear in mind the social and political environment Nezihe Muhittin lived in when considering and analysing the feminist world view she promoted. As Baykan and Ötüş-Baskett asserts, "The feminist movement of the period should not be evaluated only by looking at the vehicles that were used. First and foremost, this movement is incorporated with the new national-communal identity search, new secular and democratic ideology and constitution of 'new woman' and 'communal identity' (1999: 38)".

As an eminent, activist woman figure of the time, Nezihe Muhittin developed a feminist world view of her own. According to Baykan and Ötüş-Baskett , Muhittin's feminism has both national and western aspects (1999: 11). Although her feminism is similar to the liberal feminism of the Western First Wave Feminism in some respects, Muhittin shaped her feminist world view considering the social milieu in Ottoman-Turkish society. Muhittin's feminist world view was compatible with Western feminists in that she struggled to attain equal education and employment opportunities for women along with gaining political rights. For example, according to Nezihe Muhittin, the reason why women could not change their subordinate situation stemmed from the fact that they did not have economic forces. According to Muhittin, a person who was so despondent economically could only be called a slave (qtd. in Baykan and Ötüş-Baskett: 1999, 31). As stated before, these issues were the crux of the Western First Wave Feminism and accepted by Nezihe Muhittin as well.

The feminist world view that Muhittin promoted can be understood from her own book *The Turkish Woman* due to the fact that in her book Muhittin explained the evolution of the Ottoman Women's Movement in detail. In addition, she deciphered her own ideas about the Ottoman Women's Movement, the Turkish woman and womanhood. Feminism that Muhittin promoted may seem contradictory with current feminist debates. As a matter of fact, Muhittin was in favour of improving women's status in society, believed that man and woman should be equal in all spheres of life but she also emphasized the importance of women's domestic roles as mothers, wives and housewives. It is striking that while Muhittin struggled to improve women's status by promoting equality of men and women at the public sphere, she also prioritized the motherhood, wifehood, housewife roles of women. This is the conflicting point of Muhittin's feminism which is also the conflicting point of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism in general.

The paradoxical point of Muhittin's feminist world view lied in the fact that Muhittin attributed equal importance to women's participation to public sphere

via education and employment and women's performing domestic roles as ideal mothers and wives (Baykan&Ötüş-Baskett, 1999;34). This conflict can also be considered as an outcome of the fact that at that time women's rights were considered as a symbol for the progress in society not for the women themselves. In other words, Ottoman Turkish Feminism regarded women's rights as a necessity for the progress of the whole society rather than as individualistic demands.

Another aspect of Nezihe Muhittin's feminism was that it had strong nationalistic implications. Particularly after the formation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, women were given crucial roles as the leading founders of national identity. As Yuval-Davis and Anthies (1992) state, nationalist ideology attaches women significant roles in the formation of a nation. According to Yuval-Davis and Anthies, women in a nation-state are significant as "biological reproducers, ideological reproducers, signifiers of ethnic/national differences, participants in national, economic, political and military struggles" (1992: 7-12). Concerning the same issue Kandiyoti argues that:

Nationalist movements invite women to participate in public life as mothers, teachers, workers, warriors and national actors. However, it determines the boundaries of the acceptable women attitudes and forces women to utter their voices within the discourse which is identified by nationalist discourse (1997: 154).

3.4. Woman Image Nezihe Muhittin Promoted

In the introduction part of her book *The Turkish Woman*, under the subtitle of "How do I perceive feminism?" Muhittin talks about the importance of differences between man and woman (Baykan&Ötüş-Baskett: 1999, 69-74). Muhittin argues that man and woman should be equal but different from each other which would make society stronger. Muhittin's 'difference argument' emphasized the womanhood priorities of women which were related to the private sphere; motherhood, wifeness. Muhittin asserts that women should behave womanly, being away from particular men's sphere:

A Civilized woman endeavours passionately to demonstrate that she is equal with man concerning horse-riding, swimming and car-racing...What is this for? It is of no good for the country that a woman's body is as muscular as a wrestler. A woman like a wrestler hates breeding children. A woman's body should be strong and healthy enough to bring up healthy children. The old woman was devoid of appropriate environment, henceforth began to bring up unhealthy and unfit children. The new woman is expected to compensate this deficiency (Baykan&Ötüş-Baskett, 1999; 73).

As stated before, Muhittin worked in diverse schools as a teacher. In her book *The Turkish Woman (Türk Kadını)*, Muhittin put a copy of the education report that she wrote to the Ministry of Education when she was a teacher. This report is striking in that it deciphers the importance that Muhittin gave to women's motherhood, wifehood and housewife roles:

...For the renewal and improvement of our country, what we require from women is to be mothers who can give birth to healthy and robust children...to be talented wives and housewives who are good at managing family life which is fundamental for society (p. 96).

Evident from this passage that, Muhittin considered education of women as a vehicle to make them ideal mothers who can "manage a family life" more efficiently. She attributed family considerable importance in that conventional family was regarded as the basic unit of the society. Another example of the same issue can be found at the statute of Turkish Women's Association, in the article three which explains the purpose of association as:

The purpose of association: To convey women to a modern and mature level by elevating women intellectually and socially. The association will work effectively to organize conferences and publish works in order to educate girls as real mothers, to ameliorate the social wounds of women's life, to help widowed women, desolate families and children, to help poor children, to deal with both corporeal and moral education of new generation, to encourage women to work outside the home (Baykan&Ötüş-Baskett: 1999, 149).

At the end of her book *The Turkish Woman (Türk Kadını)*, Muhittin attached one of her speeches which was published in the magazine *Ornament (Süs)* (26 January

1340 issue). This speech is also crucial due to the fact that it demonstrated the importance that Muhittin attributed to women's domestic roles. Once again, Muhittin reiterates the same message, saying that:

In the 20th century civilization, it is no suspicion that the first and sacred duty of the Turkish woman is to be a mother. In the 20th century, the purpose of marriages is the continuity of generations...One other beloved duty of Turkish women is to be housewives (p. 155).

Muhittin's thoughts about marriage also served for the same purpose. Proper marriages were of vital importance for the future of the society. Muhittin's advice to the young women concerning marriage is remarkable in that sense:

Marriage is an issue of education...You; the beloved girls of the revolution! It is your duty to bring up new generations which would make Europeans convey the phrase 'As strong as a Turk'. You will be responsible for immorality, corruption and physical infirmity. For that reason, refuse to marry men who are *not*; good thinkers, sharpshooters, horse-riders, healthy, robust, vigorous, audacious and productive. And you; dear precious men! Please regard ten or fifteen-year-old girls as your sisters. A ten or fifteen year-old-girl can neither be a wife nor a mother. Let them complete their education so that they can contribute and assist you in every field of life (Baykan&Ötüş-Baskett, 1999; 157).¹⁵

Muhittin promoted a new woman image who was an altruistic, modest and devoted follower of her national heritage. She was strictly against the image of a woman who misunderstood westernization and forget her national identity. The similar message was given by the salient magazines and newspapers of the time such as *Woman's Path* and *Pictorial Moon (Resimli Ay)* and *New Man (Yeni Adam)*. As Balcı states, there were two kinds of women image frequently illustrated in *Woman's Path*; "flighty woman" and "family woman"¹⁶:

¹⁵ This passage was a part of her speech and taken from Muhittin's book *Türk Kadını* under the title of "Türk Ocağı'nda ilk kadın toplantısında Nezihe Muhittin Hanım Efendi tarafından verilen söylev aynen".

¹⁶ 'Süs kadını' and 'Aile kadını' in the original text.

The flighty woman has no function in society, she does not want to marry, she does not want to breed children. She is a captive of material pleasures. Societal rules are not important for her...On the other side, the family woman has a function which is breeding children for the country and remaining in the borders of the sacred family (1998: 33).

Pictorial Moon began to be published by Sabiha Sertel in 1924. The magazine was eminent in promoting the new woman image in the early years of the Turkish Republic and was widely read as a family magazine. The issues concerning Turkish women constituted a considerable place in every issue of the magazine. In the *Pictorial Moon* a modest woman image was idealized while flighty and the inconstant woman image was strictly criticized. “One of the criticized woman models was the flighty woman who was the slave of luxury and lust, devoted her whole life to beauty and fake fashions” (Baran, 1999; 8).

New Man was published between 1934 and 1979 and delineated the new cultural and social frames of the Turkish Republic. Woman, sexuality and family were the important issues frequently touched upon in the magazine. The reason may be that these issues are crucial determinants in the formation of the identities of women and men in a new nation-state. Due to the fact that *New Man* was published in a very long run, the ideal woman image depicted in the magazine is as important as the other magazines. “New woman is not an house wife but she is at first an educated woman. A woman who consumes a lot can not be accepted both economically and ethically. New woman should be the educator of her children...should be complementary of man in nature” (Köksal, 1998; 32).

Seemingly, Nezihe Muhittin’s ideal woman image was compatible with the prevailing ideology of the time. Muhittin’s understanding of feminism and the woman image she promoted for Turkish woman is crucial for this study, because Muhittin continued to express the similar ideas about womanhood through her writings. This study focuses on deciphering the traces of Muhittin’s feminist world view and the ideal woman image she promoted for women in her selected

literary works. Before making an elaborate analysis of selected novellas, it is appropriate to examine Muhittin's writing in general.

CHAPTER 4

AN OVERVIEW OF NEZİHE MUHİDDİN'S WRITING

In the previous chapter it was mentioned that Nezihe Muhittin was also famous for her writings besides her activism in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. Nezihe Muhittin appeared to be one of the prominent women writers of her time when daughters of elite families began to write in various women's magazines and newspapers during the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. Muhittin wrote short stories, articles, and scenarios, some of which were published in the widely read magazines and newspapers of the time such as *Woman's Path*, *Fleet*, *Women's World*, *Literature Magazine For Public*, *Future*, *Progress*, *Time*, *Ornament* (Zihnioğlu: 2003, 320). Not surprisingly, all of these writings dealt with an aspect of Ottoman-Turkish womanhood. After Nezihe Muhittin was overthrown from the Turkish Women's Association and ended her struggle concerning gaining equal political rights for the Turkish women, she spent the rest of her life at home writing.

The core of this thesis is a comprehensive analysis of four of Nezihe Muhittin's novellas which are; *My Self Is Mine* (1929), *Fireflies* (1936), *A Vagrant Woman* (1943) and *The Morning is Coming* (1944). The analysis of these four novellas will include thematic criticism and character analysis with the aim of finding parallelism between the main tenets and debates of Ottoman-Turkish feminism and Muhittin's writings. However, before that this chapter will be dealing with general characteristics of complete literary works of Nezihe Muhittin. A short summary of each novella will include strong references to frequently used themes in each novella and the way Muhittin presented good and evil woman characters. Such a synopsis will delineate the fact that there are strong implications of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism in Muhittin's writing.

4.1. Nezihe Muhittin in The Early Republican Turkish Literature

The Early Republican Turkish literary tradition was the continuation of the late Ottoman novel tradition with respect to their emphasis on changing aspects of womanhood and family issues. Concerning the writers of the late Ottoman and Early Republican period, deterioration of women was the main cause of collapse of the family institution and the fall of a nation. That is why, the literary works of that time had strong implications with regards to the significant issues of woman and family.

Nezihe Muhittin wrote eighteen novellas between the years 1911 and 1944, all of which followed the same tradition. Although Muhittin was not included in most of the anthologies of the Turkish literature of the Early Republican Era, her writings should be analysed in terms of the Early Republican literary tradition. Before categorizing Muhittin's writing, a categorization of early republican Turkish literature would be appropriate in order to decide in which category Muhittin should be incorporated. Alemdar Yalçın formulates four categories of Turkish novels written between 1920 and 1944: (1) social and political novels (2) anatolian novels (3) historical novels (4) romantic love novels including detective and adventure novels (2002: 23-24).

Although Muhittin's novellas can not be strictly included in one of these categories stated above, they can loosely be clustered in similar categories. For instance, *Grey Wolf: The Novel of Little Mehmet*, (1934) and *İzmir Child* (1944) can be considered as historical and Anatolian novellas which were written in epic structure. Through these two novellas, Nezihe Muhittin depicts the years of the War of Independence. *My Self Is Mine* (1929) and *Quiete My Heart Quiete* (1944) can be considered as social and political ones in that they raise the issues of Ottoman palace and female slavery along with strong implications concerning the disapproval of the prevailing social structure of the Ottoman Empire.

However, the rest of Muhittin’s novellas can be considered as romantic love stories as advertised on the cover pages of some¹⁷.

The reason why Muhittin chose to write love novellas may be closely related to the rise of “love theme” in the literary works of the Late Ottoman period. Due to the fact that Nezihe Muhittin was educated among enlightened and educated women, she was aware of the important writers of her time. Reading crucial works of important writers such as Poet Nigar, Fatma Aliye, Halide Edip Adivar, Süleyman Nazif, and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, Reşat Nuri Güntekin, Sadri Ethem, Mahmut Yesari, Selami İzzet, Vala Nurettin, Peyami Safa might have affected Nezihe Muhittin in a similar way. However, the fact that Muhittin frequently wrote love novels should be a consequence of the emergence of the ‘love between man and woman’ as a frequently referred literary theme in the late Ottoman novel. The grounds of such a change was strongly related to the influences of the Western literature on the Ottoman writers.

As stated by Taner Timur (1991), the concept of *love* in the Ottoman literature was generally used in Divan Poetry which was accepted as a high-class literature. That was a mystical love¹⁸ which includes a strong devotion to God. It was after the Tanzimat period when the concept of love between man and woman began to be used by the writers. Timur interprets this change with respect to the increase in the Ottoman elite people who learnt European languages. With the efforts of the educated, enlightened elites of the period, prominent literary works of European countries were translated into Ottoman language. Among them, there were important literary works of famous Romantic European writers such as Fenélon’s *Telemak*, Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, Chateaubriand’s *Atala*, Saint Pierre’s *Paul and Virginie*. Seemingly, “that first Ottoman translations include typical examples of romantic love stories indicates the inklings of evolution of Ottoman thought” (Timur, 1991: 21). It is not surprising that most of the translated literary

¹⁷ The covers of novellas reflect the content of them as in the following way: “aşk ve ihtiras romanı”, “aşk ve his romanı”, “aşk ve macera romanı” “Esrarengiz ve heyecanlı cinai bir roman”, “edebi aşk ve his romanı”.

¹⁹ Tasavvufi aşk

works belonged to romantic tradition because of the fact that it was the time when romanticism as an important literary movement emerged in Europe.

Muhittin's novellas can be considered as a part of love novels and share some common traits which are applicable to her writings. General traits of love novels have been enumerated by Yalçın as in the following way:

Love novels are said to be action based. There are no related interest and logic among displayed conflicts, plot and characters...In the love novels, acts, relations and development of novel is given roughly. There is no correlation between ambiguous love-hate relations and no explanations are given concerning the logical, social, psychological reasons of such relations. Actually both the writer and the reader are not very sophisticated. The aim of the writer is to meet the expectations of emotional desires of the reader. Sometimes, events follow each other within an implausible plot formation (2002: 223).

Although Muhittin's literary works have similar traits, they also have important contributions to the understanding of different aspects of womanhood and problems of women. What differentiates Muhittin's writing from above-mentioned definition of love novels is that her writing is discernable in the way she approaches women's problems of her time.

4.2. Feminist Literary Tradition and Nezihe Muhittin's Literary Works

Before talking about general characteristics of Nezihe Muhittin's novellas, it is appropriate to discuss whether her literary works can be considered as a part of feminist literature or not. At this point, it is important to identify the word "feminism" when related to a literary work. How can we define a feminist literary work when it is impossible to identify a unique definition of feminism? Although there is not one definite answer, this question is widely discussed by various theorists within feminist literary criticism.

Mary Eagleton discusses the different ways of defining feminist work with respect to the opinions of diverse theorists. As cited in Eagleton, Rita Felski's definition of feminist literature is as follows:

My definition of feminist literature is thus a relatively broad one, which is intended to encompass all those texts that reveal a critical awareness of women's subordinate position and of gender as a problematic category, however this is expressed (Felski qtd. in Eagleton, 1996: 14).

Due to the fact that there is not one form of feminism, there is not one definition of a feminist literature. Toril Moi's argument about the definition of feminist literature is also striking:

Given the feminist insistence on the dominant and all-pervasive nature of patriarchal power so far in history, feminists have to be pluralist: there is no pure feminist or female space from which we can speak. All ideas, including feminist ones, are in this sense, 'contaminated' by patriarchal thought (1986, 205).

With the aim of defining women's writings, Toril Moi makes a clear classification and differentiates *female tradition*, *feminist tradition* and *feminine tradition* within women's literature. According to Moi, female tradition includes writings by women; nevertheless one should "bear in mind that this label does not say anything at all about the nature of that writing". For the second category, that is feminist tradition, Moi says that, "feminist writing takes a discernable anti-patriarchal and anti-sexist position". Alternatively the last one, feminine tradition "seems to be marginalised (repressed, silenced) by the ruling social/linguistic order" (1986: 220).

There is no relevance between the sex of the writer and the type of the literary work that is produced. As Moi puts it, "if feminist criticism is characterised by its political commitment to the struggle against all forms of patriarchy and sexism, it follows the very fact of being *female* does not necessarily guarantee a feminist approach" (1986: 206). However, it is evident that critical approaches towards patriarchal society and sexist attitudes, as well as emancipatory writing and

reading for women, can be considered as crucial indicators of feminist literature. Another determinant used in defining a feminist text is whether the text mentions women's subordination by attacking patriarchal and sexist notions. For the same issue Moi argues that "what is important is whether we can produce a recognisable feminist impact through our specific use (appropriation) of available material" (1986: 205).

The concern of this thesis, considering Nezihe Muhittin's writing, is whether her novels include feminist characteristics or not. Although Nezihe Muhittin's novellas can not be considered as perfect examples of feminist literature in the way contemporary feminists understand today, it is certain that they include significant feminist implications. As analysed in the previous chapter, Muhittin's feminism has contradictory aspects in the way she prioritizes women's domestic roles while expecting them to take part in the public sphere as social women who also contribute to the national economy. Bearing in mind that feminist thought is diverse, the Ottoman-Turkish feminism and Nezihe Muhittin's understanding of feminism is unique to the time they emerged. However, Muhittin's writing can still be said to include feminist implications due to the fact that she reflects various forms of subordination of women in her literary works. That is why, it can be argued that the novellas of Nezihe Muhittin can be considered as feminist literature in the way they reflect the debates and crucial discussions of the feminist movement of the time.

4.3. Literary Device

Nezihe Muhittin wrote eighteen novellas. Novel, short story and novella can be considered as important devices of prose fiction, all of which differ from each other with respect to formation of plot, characterization and the use of time and space in the literary work. A short story consists of a few characters and one central event. It is accepted that there should be one single effect in a short story which is connected to the central event in the short story. The scope of the plot is restricted in a short story as well as the development of characters. As stated by

Head “if the short story is not a ‘full-length’ narrative it cannot narrate a full-length life: it can narrate a fragment or excerpt of a life” (Head, 1992: 5). However, a novel should be differentiated from a short story due to the complexity of plot and characterization as well as the use of time and space. A novel may consist of plenty of characters and various stories which are organized within a well-developed plot. A novel is appropriate for deep character development over a long period of time.

Muhittin’s literary works should be called “novella” instead of “short stories” or “novels”. As an alternative to short story and novel, a novella is known as a literary device of prose fiction which is longer than a short story and shorter than a novel. Head makes use of Judith Leibowitz’s definitions of short story, novel and novella in the following way:

Judith Leibowitz in her *Narrative Purpose in the Novella* is concerned with ‘the functions served by techniques in specific contexts’, and establishes a scale of technical function for the three prose forms: she claims that the narrative task of the novel is ‘elaboration’ while that of short story is ‘limitation’. Narrative purpose in the novella , characterized as ‘compression’, combines the two in such a way as to give a double effect of intensity and expansion (Leibowitz qtd. in Head, 1992: 6-7).

The following synopsis of each novella of Nezihe Muhittin will consist of themes and characterization of woman types. Each novella will be examined in chronological order as stated by Baykan and Ötüş-Baskett (1999: 39). Such an overview will enable us to decipher the increasing voice of the new women in Muhittin’s writings with respect to the changing social circumstances emerged as an outcome of the struggles and debates of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism.

4.4. *Lost Youth*, 1911¹⁹

Lost Youth is the only literary work of Nezihe Muhiddin which is narrated by a male character. In this novella, Muhiddin tells the story of an intricate and secret love affair which causes the death of the female protagonist, Süreyya. The story is told in retrospect and the reader is informed about the death of Süreyya from the very beginning. Fazıl and Süreyya are close friends since their childhood and a lovely intimacy develops between them up till the time Süreyya's cousin Necip comes from Selonika to spend his life in Istanbul with them. Necip's coming results in his marriage with Süreyya and after the marriage, Süreyya and Necip move to a remote district. One day, they write a letter to Fazıl, inviting him to spend the next six months with them. Fazıl accepts the invitation with excitement which culminates in the beginning of an illegitimate and secret love affair between Fazıl and Süreyya. Some time later, Fazıl returns to Istanbul but receives letters from Süreyya, telling the misery and suffering that appeared with the departure of him. Süreyya also warns Fazıl about the danger of her feelings and asks him not to return back once more. The story continues with the coming of other similar letters informing Fazıl about the illnesses and misery in their house. The story ends with the death of Süreyya. Muhiddin does not refer to any theme other than the dangers of an illegitimate love affair and its consequences. Death of the female protagonist, conveys the message that illegitimate love affairs which are not accepted by the society may result in death.

4.5. *My Self Is Mine*, 1929²⁰

My Self Is Mine, is the story of a young woman, Zeynep, who is sold to Ottoman palace at the age of thirteen by her own mother and father. Seemingly, Muhittin

¹⁹ The original title of *Lost Youth* is *Şebab-ı Tebah* which is published in 1911, before the use of Roman Letters. That is why, the original copy was written in Arabic language and translated by Ferit Ragıp Tuncor . (ed. Zihnioğlu, 2006: xi).

²⁰ *My Self Is Mine* is a very significant title, when the year 1929 is concerned. The title attracts the attention to the awareness about the authority over women's body. The analogy between the message conveyed by the title of the book *Our Bodies Our Selves* and the title of Muhittin's *My Self Is Mine* is quite striking. *Our bodies Our Selves* was first published in 1973 became very prominent in the West particularly during the Second Wave Feminist Movement.

considers female slavery as a crucial issue to be discussed and touches upon female slavery as the main theme in one of her first novellas. What makes this work important for this study is that Zeynep, the protagonist in *My Self Is Mine*, is an anarchist, rebellious woman who is not submissive to her destiny. Although she is thirteen years old, Zeynep is aware of the importance of freedom and emancipation for women and struggles to be an independent woman. Zeynep's evolution from a young teenager into an enlightened and emancipatory woman character is striking for this study. Zeynep is different from other female slaves in the Ottoman palace and questions and contemplates on the concepts of slavery, sexuality, sexual violence, prostitution, women's emancipation, importance of education for women. Especially after Zeynep meets the son of Nustetullah Pacha, Feruh bey, the importance of education of women turns out to be one of the important themes in the novella, just as in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. Thanks to Feruh bey, Zeynep reads various books by Namık Kemal, Abdülhak Hamit and Tevfik Fikret who can be considered as the enlightened elite of the time. References to salient literary figures of the time demonstrates that Nezihe Muhittin has a strong devotion and respect for the educated, enlightened writers of the late Ottoman period.

My Self Is Mine is significant for this study because with this novella Nezihe Muhittin emphasizes the importance of education for the emancipation of women and criticises female slavery as a way of exploitation of women. *My Self Is Mine* is one of the four literary works of Nezihe Muhittin which are selected as the core of this study, and will be analysed in a more elaborate way in the following chapter.

4.6. *Beauty Queen*, 1933

Beauty Queen is the story of a young woman, Belkıs, who is famous with her beauty. Belkıs is the daughter of an affluent family whose mother dies when she is a little child. Because she is deprived of a woman role-model, Belkıs is brought up in a mannish manner by her father. Belkıs discovers her womanhood when she

and her father are invited to a ball organized by a beauty contest. Belkıs attracts the attention of all the guests in the ball as well as the jury of the beauty contest. Belkıs is invited to join the beauty contest as another contestor but she refuses their request although she has a strong urge to join. Moreover, she meets with a journalist at the ball and finds herself in an intricate love affair, although she has a fiance, Nedim Münir, who is in Paris for education. The rest of the novella tells the story of Belkıs who turns out to be a melancholic, confused woman. The next year, when she sees the advertisement of the new beauty contest, she decides to join. Belkıs wins the beauty contest as the queen of the country. However, at the very last moment she is informed about the illness of her fiance. That is why, she resigns from the contest, goes to her fiance and marries him. The last scene of the novella gives a picture in which Nedim Münir embraces a little girl and gives the child to her mother, Belkıs.

In this work, Muhittin tells the story of a self-sacrificing woman, Belkıs. It is striking that although Belkıs is presented as the queen of the country, at the very last moment she decides to live a modest life and goes back to her fiance who is very ill. At this point, it can be argued that Nezihe Muhittin promoted a modest, family life instead of a famous, popular life.

It is evident that Muhittin was affected by the first beauty contest held in Turkish Republic in 1929 after when organizing the beauty contest turned out to be a tradition. These contests were signs of the integration with Western cultures during the early years of the Turkish Republic. As Duman and Duman asserts, the purpose of the beauty contests was to prove that “The Turkish nation was not different from other civilized nations” both socially and culturally (1997: 26). Once again the republican woman was considered as a vehicle to demonstrate that the transformation of Turkey was proper and acceptable.

4.7. *The End of the Bandit, 1934*

Considering Yalçın's (2002) classification, *The End of the Bandit* can be considered as an Anatolian novel because it presents the ordinary life of a peasant family. One night, the life of the family changes with the raid of villain men, who are introduced as Bandits. Bandits kill the father of the family, leaving the mother and son in a desperate situation. One of the Bandits is captured by the police and executed with death penalty while the other is put in jail. The rest of the story depicts the growth of the son of the peasant family. Years later, on one cold gloomy night, the family has come up with a miserable overnight guest. The unexpected guest is a shabby looking and extremely poor man, begging for help and shelter. Surprisingly, the overnight guest is one of the bandits who ruined the family and killed the father years ago. Although the mother recognizes the villain, she is attentive to the unexpected guest and accommodates him, giving food and shelter. The fact that the woman character, the mother of the peasant family is a forgiving, altruistic, compassionate and modest woman is important. The guest apologizes for the crime he committed years before and dies in misery. Belma Ötüş-Baskett interprets the *The End of The Bandit* in a feminist approach saying that:

Here what is striking from a feminist point of view is that the woman writer and woman readers have not been satisfied with the imprisonment of the bandit and wanted to see him suffering all through his life and die in misery (1999: 44).

Another crucial point in this novella is the part when the son of the family goes for his military service. This part is totally independent from the ongoing story in the novella and should be interpreted separately. Muhittin diverges from the main story and jumps to another one talking about the War of Independence. Muhittin depicts a merry scene where the son goes to join the army at the time of war years:

I came to an age to go for military service; thanks to my chance that it was independence war years. I was the happiest, the most cheerful

soldier in the world. While I was doing my duty in a joyful way, my old mother was carrying ammunition with the other neighbours. I returned to my country in great happiness when the war ended in a big victory (p.12).

Seemingly, Nezihe Muhittin attributes strong importance to the War of Independence and the coming of new Republican regime afterwards. What is striking at this point is that Muhittin does not ignore the contributions of the Turkish women to the victory of the War of Independence. In this part of the novella the effects of nationalism on Muhittin's writing can be detected easily.

4.8. *A Landro in Istanbul, 1934*

A Landro in Istanbul is a detective novella. The story of the novella is that the Turkish princess Nazlı meets with a mysterious Danish painter, Nils, when her husband goes to Europe for three months. Although Nazlı is married, she dares to have a secret love affair with Danish painter Nils. However, at the end of the novella, it is revealed that the Danish painter Nils is a stabber who kills women after having half an hour of love affair with them. The issue of sexual violence, femicide as the extreme form of violence against women and the threats of the West can be considered as the main themes of this novella.

That the serial murderer is a Western man is striking because of the fact that it implies the probable threats that might come from the West and affect the society in a devastating way. In the former chapters it is told that the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism emerged during a time when Westernization turned out to be a big project for the Ottoman-Turkish society. Although feminist women of that time advocated modernized women, they were also cautious against the dangers that might come from the West. Concerning *A Landro in Istanbul*, Muhittin warns women readers, implying that not everything coming from the West should be treated as adorable and acceptable. This can be regarded as the influence of Ottoman Turkish feminist thought on Muhittin's writings.

4.9. *Grandmother Kevser*, 1934

Grandmother Kevser, is the life story of Kevser who is a young factory worker. Kevser's tragic story begins when she gives birth to a son out-of-wedlock. Kevser is the victim in the novella who is deceived by a male foreman who works in the same factory she works. Kevser has a sexual relationship with the foreman and she gets pregnant. She gives birth to her child but she is treated in a merciless way by the foreman of the factory who is the father of the baby. The foreman does not marry Kevser as he has promised before and he does not take the responsibility of the baby either. Kevser sells her baby because it is unacceptable to bring up a child as an alone woman, without a father. With the feelings of revenge, Kevser attacks the foreman and arrested, finds herself at the court. It is remarkable that Kevser defends herself alone at the court and she is acquitted. Ötüş-Baskett stresses that the judge evaluates the story of Kevser from "women's point of view" that is why Kevser's acquittal is significant for feminists (1999:46). Although she has a illegitimate sexual relationship with a man, Kevser is not depicted as a immoral woman. On the contrary, she is depicted as a victim who is deceived by the foreman in the factory. It is significant that the father of the baby is the foreman in the factory who is in a superior position than Kevser which might force her to submit his sexual demands. That there was no romantic relationship between Kevser and the foreman implies the possibility of rape as well although Muhittin does not utter any word implying rape.

The court scene indicates that Republican reforms are reliable and works for the benefit of vulnerable women. Muhittin's reliance on the new founded law system reflects itself in her literary works particularly in the court scenes. The court scenes can be considered as the reflection of devotion and blessings to Kemalist reforms. In this novella, Muhittin stresses the importance of family as an institution and how tragic consequences may occur if sexuality is experienced out-of-wedlock. As stated in the former chapters, Turkish women's morality and modesty were important merits attributed to women by the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism and for that reason marriage was considered as the destiny for women.

That is why, in Muhittin's literary works, relations out of marriage generally pave the way for the doom of women characters and turn their life into a tragedy, just as in the case of Kevser.

4.10. *Grey Wolf: The Novel of Little Mehmet, 1934*

Similar to *The End of the Bandit*, *Grey Wolf: The Novel of Little Mehmet* can be considered as an epic story, written just to depict the War of Independence years. It is not possible to talk about a well-organized plot for this work. Nezihe Muhittin writes about the life story of the protagonist Mehmet, beginning from his childhood. However, the story of Mehmet is not developed in harmony with other events in the novella due to the fact that the work is devoid of a well-formulated plot. When his mother dies, Mehmet goes to İstanbul to live with his father who is married to another woman. Expectedly, Mehmet is not welcomed by his own father and step mother. Mehmet's father also dies and Mehmet finds himself a protector, Hacı Nuriye Hanım, whose son Sermed is said to have died in the Çanakkale Wars. However, in the end of the story it is revealed that Sermed has not died. The former dramatic life story of Mehmet has no relation with the rest of the novella which talks about the war years. The story continues when Mehmet grows up and goes to join the army with Sermed during the War of Independence.

It is no coincidence that Muhittin refers to War of Independence so frequently in her literary works. In the same way, *Grey Wolf: The Novel of Little Mehmet* is telling the misery during the war years from the eyes of a young boy, Mehmet, who has a strong urge to join the army to meet with the enemies. Nezihe Muhittin does not include a remarkable woman character in this work. However, Muhittin stresses the assistance of Turkish women to the Turkish soldiers.²¹

²¹ The following part of the novella is representing a so-called speech of Halide Edip Adivar which indicates Muhittin's admiration to Adivar. The speech also emphasizes the contributions of Turkish women to the victory of the War of Independence: "Men! You are not alone in the defense of the Turkish Nation and the soil which is polluted by the feet of the enemy....Turkish women is with you! (1934: 104).

4.11. *Fireflies*, 1936

Fireflies, is an interesting novella in that it depicts two contradictory women characters and a male character in between them. Nejat is the son of a middle class family who is an unknown poet trying to become eminent, popular literary figure in high class society. Hacer is a modest girl who studies at the law faculty and lives in the same neighbourhood with Nejat and she is in love with him. However, Nejat despises the life style in his own district and look down on Hacer.

Fireflies is important for this study because it depicts two contradictory women characters. Hacer is the modest and educated family woman who becomes the first woman lawyer in the Turkish Republic. On the contrary, Suzan is a flighty, flirtatious, temptress woman who is a singer in a pub. Nejat falls in love with Suzan and his life turns out to be a tragedy afterwards. Muhittin's attitude towards these two women characters is striking in that she praises Hacer's modesty and intelligence stressing that she manages to become the first woman lawyer of the country while implying that Suzan is an immoral woman character who accepts the Western values in the wrong way and becomes alienated from traditional values. *Fireflies* will be analysed more elaborately in the next chapter.

4.12. *It Was a Summer Night*, 1943

It Was a Summer Night is a typical love novella, telling the story of Nermin, Sermed and Ferda. Seemingly, the story in love novellas reiterates itself, depicting a man in between two women. The story begins when Sermed runs away with his cousin Ferda on the wedding day of Sermed and Nermin. As a result of the inconvenient relation between Sermed and Ferda, Sermed's father dies abruptly and Nermin suffers from loss of memory. Such tragic events force Sermed to return to Nermin who turns out to be a psychologically ill, nervous, sinewy woman throughout the rest of her life.

In *It Was a Summer Night* Muhittin does not create striking good and evil women characters as she does in *Fireflies*. Neither Ferda nor Nermin are depicted as evil women characters. However, Muhittin stresses the importance of education of women by creating a woman character who goes to Berlin for education. A woman character going to Europe for education reminds the reader of the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period when Ottoman male students were sent to Europe for education while female students were not allowed to be educated even in their own countries. In the second chapter, it is told that The Second Constitutional Monarchy Period is the second phase of Ottoman Turkish Feminism when the importance of education of women was considered as one of the crucial discussion points. Affected by this, as she stresses in *Fireflies* with Hacer character, Muhittin once more highlights the importance of women's education by sending Ferda to Europe for education.

4.13. *Nude Model*, 1943

Nude Model is another novella which touches upon the issues of women's sexuality, women's morality, prostitution and distorted family relations. The story begins when two friends, Selim and Reşat, go to a brothel. The boss in the brothel, Lady Şehime, presents her own daughter Nuran to Selim even though Nuran is reluctant to such an immoral intercourse.

The first time Selim and Nuran meet is significant in that Nuran attacks Selim, accusing him of being a monster dying for buying a woman's body.²² Although Nuran and Selim fall in love with each other, Selim's mother does not allow them to get married and the rest of the work tells the dramatic story of Nuran who turns out to be a famous oriental dancer in Europe.

²² "Nuran: Don't come near to me! I am not a sheep for sale!...

Selim: Who said you so?

Nuran: Why do you come here? You evil creatures...Of course, to buy women flesh, don't you? You monsters! Monstrous, brutal critters" (1943: 19).

Nude Model, is the story of another victim girl, just like Zeynep in *My Self Is Mine*, whose life turns into a tragedy because of distorted family relations and a vicious mother. The stories of Zeynep in *My Self Is Mine* and Nuran in *Nude Model* are similar in the way that these two girls are sold to men as prostitutes by their own mothers. Creating such stories, Nezihe Muhittin stresses the importance of forming a good family and reflects the probable consequences of dysfunctional family relations.

4.14. *A Vagrant Woman*, 1943

A Vagrant Woman, is the story of another victim girl, Mehpare, who grows up in a completely dysfunctional family. Mehpare is the illegitimate daughter of a prostitute. Just as Nuran in *Nude Model*, Mehpare is forced to prostitution by her own mother. Mehpare considers herself as the victim of her destiny because she is born in an evil environment as the daughter of a notorious woman. For that reason, it is inevitable for her to live as a mighty and modest ordinary woman. The importance of mothering and the consequences of distorted family relations are the main themes in this novella. *A Vagrant Woman*, will be analysed in detail in the next chapter.

4.15. *My Heart Is Yours*, 1944

My Heart Is Yours is another intricate love story of a man and two women characters. Muhittin once more creates two contradictory women characters both of whom are in love with the same man. Gönül is the modern, rich and flighty woman and Bedia is the ordinary middle class woman who is modest and educated. Throughout the novel, Muhittin's negative attitude towards Gönül is detected while she praises Bedia and her merits. It is striking that Muhittin stresses that Bedia is a high school graduate who cannot continue her education because of economic problems. Muhittin gives importance to women's education just as other Ottoman Turkish Feminists and emphasizes information about the

education of the woman character who is promoted as the model for the women readers.

The main male character in the novella *Ferhat*, chooses Bedia as a spouse for himself, praising the modesty and morality of her as a contrast to Gönül who is a temptress and flirtatious woman. This does not mean that Nezihe Muhittin is not in favour of modern looking women. On the contrary, Muhittin promotes modern women characters but continuously reminds the reader that a Turkish woman should be loyal to traditional values. That is why, Muhittin represents a negative image of woman who misunderstands westernisation and forgets her national identity. Such an approach was common among Ottoman Turkish Feminists which affected Muhittin's writings in the same way.

4.16. *Rattlesnake*, 1943

In this novella, Muhittin reiterates the issue of conflicting women characters within an intricate love affair. In this novella Tevfik and Asude are newly married couple who go for a holiday. During the holiday, they meet with Princess Beyza, who is a cross-bred Indian-English woman. It will be later revealed that Beyza is actually a gipsy and a secret agent. However, the marriage of Tevfik and Asude becomes depraved when Tevfik's secret love affair with Beyza is revealed. Asude is depicted as a victim woman whose happiness is distorted because of a temptress, flirtatious woman, Beyza. The contradiction between Beyza and Asude reveals itself in the modest versus evil dichotomy which is used by Nezihe Muhittin so frequently in her literary works. The reason Muhittin refers such a dichotomy so frequently in her writing is that she might have tried to set good and evil women models for women readers of the time. Such an effort is remarkable and understandable for the time when the new woman image is promoted by the early republican elite as well as the Ottoman-Turkish feminists.

4.17. *İzmir Child*, 1944

İzmir Child, is an ideological novella which represents the nationalist thought of the early republican period depicting the conflict between a mother, Fűrüzan, and her daughter, Feriha. Fűrüzan Hanım is a woman who adores and appreciates European culture and wants her daughter to be educated in a French School. On the contrary, Feriha is a completely different from her mother. When Ferihe is attending to a French college, an American woman comes as a visitor lecturer to the college. That Muhittin depicts American lecturer as a missionary is interesting, implying that not everything coming from the West should be welcomed. In a conference organized in the school, one of the Turkish teachers, Leyla Hanım, responds to the speech of the American lecturer, extolling Turkish people. Feriha later choses to change school and attends Erenköy High School in which “people were talking about principles of Mustafa Kemal instead of Wilson Principles” (p.32). At the end of the novella, Feriha refuses to get married with an old, rich man from high-class society and marries with Yener, İzmir Child.

İzmir Child reflects the influence of nationalism on Nezihe Muhittin’s understanding of feminism. Praising Turkish culture as opposed to European culture was a popular attitude among Ottoman-Turkish Feminists. Influenced by the same attitude, Muhittin reflects the same issue in *İzmir Child* by using a conflict between a notorious mother and enlightened daughter. Such an illustration also implies that Muhittin is hopeful about the new generation.

4.18. *The Morning Is Coming*, 1944

In *The Morning Is Coming* Muhittin presents the dramatic life story of Necla who is an ordinary modest girl, continuing her education at the university’s chemistry department. Necla quits her education because of the strong oppressions of her family and she is forced to marry with a rich man, Tayfur. However, Necla never dares to have any sexual relationship with her husband and feels distressed. When talking about Muhittin’s understanding of feminism, it is emphasized that she

attributed a strong importance to the breeding roles of women and that is why, Necla's frigid personality is considered as a threat concerning forming a real family. It is evident from a speech with Necla and doctor that the motherhood role is regarded as an inevitable priority for woman. That is why, Necla has to have sexual relation with her husband, as expected from every woman. Upon the request of the doctor, Necla goes for a holiday alone and falls in love with another man, Ferhat. However, her husband Tayfur suffers from a deep depression and Necla returns to Tayfur, presenting an altruistic woman character who thinks her husband more than her own self. *The Morning is Coming* will be analysed in detail in the next chapter.

4.19. *You Will Come Again*, 1944

You Will Come Again is another love novella which presents the story of Semra who is married but falls in love with another man. In *You Will Come Again*, Nezihe Muhittin does not represent a salient, emancipatory woman character or any important theme with respect to women's issues. However, it is noteworthy that Muhittin creates a woman character who is married but loves another man. For the sake of her love, Semra makes lots of intricate tricks and at the end finds herself at the court defending herself. As told in the summaries of previous novellas, there are lots of court scenes in Muhittin's literary works. Muhittin's purpose in putting court scenes in literary works can be considered as a demonstration that Republican Reforms work efficiently for the good of the Turkish society.

4.20. *A Love Ended Like That*, 1944

A Love Ended Like That is another intricate love story. Similar to the above mentioned works, in this novella, there are two women fighting for the same man. Different from the other novellas, Muhittin does not create conflicting woman characters. However, it is worth telling that one of the women in the story is married and has a love affair with the main character Suad. Muhittin uses this

story frequently, making married women characters disloyal to their husbands. Interestingly, Muhittin does not question such a forbidden love affair as an immoral attitude if the love story in the novella is a pure and sacred one. Immorality in Muhittin's literary works are associated with prostitution and not with illegitimate love affairs.

What is striking in this work is that, the married woman Bedia is the mother of two children and when her husband discovers that she is disloyal to him, he kidnaps the children to Germany. From this point, Bedia forgets her love affair with the other man, Suad, struggling to have her children back. With such a story, Muhittin emphasizes the priority of motherhood for women as she stressed the same issue in various speeches that have been mentioned in the third chapter.

4.21. *Quiete My Heart Quiete*, 1944

The story told in *Quiete My Heart Quiete* is similar to the one in *My Self Is Mine* because both of them present the issue of female slavery in the Ottoman Palace. In *Quiete My Heart Quiete*, Zermisal (who will be called Zerrin in the following parts of the novella) is sold to Ottoman palace and forced to live as the other concubines in the Harem. However, just as Zeynep in *My Self Is Mine*, Zermisal refuses to serve to the Sultan as a female slave. As a result, Zermisal is punished and forced to marry Firenk İlyas Pacha who is very old and famous for his ugliness. Thankfully, Firenk İlyas Pacha considers Zermisal as a daughter and educates her. At this point, Zermisal's friendship with Matmazel Fransuvaz, who is also living in the Ottoman palace, is interesting. Ötüş-Baskett interprets their relationship as: "Nezihe Muhittin explicates dichotomies of Ottoman-Turkish, French-Turkish, East-West via the lives of these two women...The friendship between these two women is striking with respect to the concept of sisterhood which is introduced by Anglo-Sakson feminists..."(1999: 51-53).

In this work, Nezihe Muhittin treats female slavery as an important way of subordinating and exploiting women. Creating women characters who refuse to

become female slaves indicates that Muhittin is strongly against the issue of female slavery.

4.22. Typology of Women Characters and Frequently Referred Themes

Considering the complete literary works of Nezihe Muhittin mentioned above, a categorization of women characters may include:

(1) Seductress, temptress women, who are depicted as evil women characters such as Suzan in *Fireflies*, Gönül in *My Heart Is Yours*, Beyza in *Rattlesnake*. These women in Muhittin's literary works are depicted as extremely westernized women who are flighty, flirtatious, spoiled and alienated to their national, traditional values.

(2) Modest, ordinary women: The women in this category are represented as the opposite of the seductress women. Hacer in *Fireflies*, Bedia in *My Heart Is Yours*, Ferda in *It Was a Summer Night*, Asude in *Rattlesnake*, Feriha in *İzmir Child*, Necla in *The Morning Is Coming* can be considered as modest women that Muhittin sets as ideal models for women readers. These women are modest, ordinary women, who are educated, and manage to blend modern values with traditional values just as expected from the new republican woman.

(3) Rebellious female slaves in Ottoman Palace: Zeynep in *My Self Is Mine* and Zermisal in *Quiete My Heart Quiete* are typical examples for this category. These woman characters are sold to palace and forced to become female slaves out of their will. However, Muhittin depicts them as emancipatory and enlightened women who refuse to serve to the male members of the Ottoman palace.

(4) Evil mothers: Şehime Hanım in *Nude Model*, Mehpare's mother in *A Vagrant Woman*, Füzuran Hanım in *İzmir Child* can be considered as vicious women characters of this category. These women are notorious because they act as wrong role models for their daughters. They are presented as the sole responsible of the doom of their daughters. Muhittin's negative attitude is felt towards these woman and they are depicted as completely evil characters.

(5) Victimised daughters: Nuran in *Nude Model*, Mehpare in *A Vagrant Woman*, Feriha in *İzmir Child* are depicted as victims of distorted family relations,

particularly of notorious mothers. The tragic life story of these characters is considered as the inevitable destiny for them because they are devoid of a proper role-model.

(6) Altruistic Anatolian woman: Mother in *The End of the Bandit*, Kevser in *Grandmother Kevser* are depicted as self-sacrificing rural women.

It is evident that Nezihe Muhittin created good and evil women characters as role-models to Turkish woman readers. As an overall analysis of woman characters in the novellas, it can be argued that the modest republican women characters are approved while evil woman characters are depicted as the victims of “excessive westernization”. Yeğenoğlu touches upon the same issue while talking about Tanzimat and early republican novels saying that:

...the woman in modern households who neglected the duties of childhood, homemaking, and who led an idle existence in decadent Europeanized İstanbul, represented the corruption caused by “excessive” Westernization. Moreover, the woman who is too liberated and denies her essential nature and duties in the name of civilization is the theme of several novels. Woman thus became a convenient signifier for the representation of the moral decay caused by ‘excessive’ Westernization (1998: 129).

Considering the complete literary works of Nezihe Muhittin, frequently referred themes can be enumerated as: female slavery, prostitution, being sceptical towards the West and Western values, marriage and illegitimate relations, significance of mothering, references to Kemalist reforms with a sense of adoration, references to the War of Independence, violence and sexuality. Remarkably, all of these themes can be considered as the crucial debate issues discussed during the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. In this respect, it can be argued that Muhittin transfers the debates in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism to her literary works which also highlights the fact that she continues to struggle for the same problematic women’s issues in her novellas.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF FOUR NOVELLAS: *MY SELF IS MINE* (1929), *FIREFLIES* (1935), *A VAGRANT WOMAN* (1943), *THE MORNING IS* *COMING* (1943)

In this chapter, four of Muhittin's novellas will be analysed in detail with respect to the reflections of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism in the themes and women characters. The four selected novellas are, respectively; *My Self Is Mine* (1929), *Fireflies* (1935), *A Vagrant Woman* (1943) and *The Morning is Coming* (1943). There are three reasons why these novellas are selected for a deeper analysis. Firstly, these four literary works demonstrate that Muhittin was strongly influenced by the debates of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism that she participated as an activist feminist woman. Secondly, these novellas reflect feminist implications which prove that Muhittin's writing can be considered as a part of feminist literary tradition. Thirdly, in these selected novellas the voice of certain social types of the late Ottoman period and early republican period can be heard distinctively, which proves that Muhittin is affected by the struggles of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism in her writings.

5.1. *My Self Is Mine*, 1929

My Self Is Mine (1929) can be considered as a product of early republican literature which is produced under the influence of the Ottoman culture. The story in *My Self Is Mine* takes place in the last period of the Ottoman Empire. This novella is quite striking in that Muhittin touches upon the issues of female slavery, importance of women's education and revolutionist movement emerged in the last period of the Ottoman Empire.

A brief introduction about the plot overview and characters in *My Self Is Mine* will be useful in understanding the feminist implications in the story. *My Self Is*

Mine tells the life story of a young Ottoman girl Zeynep, who is sold to Ottoman palace as a female slave by her own family at the age of thirteen. Actually, Zeynep is sold to an interceder called Mustafa at first, then she passes through several hands until she is selected as a concubine for the Ottoman palace. Although Muhittin talks about Ottoman palace, she avoids giving the name of Ottoman Sultan of the time. However, at the end of the novella, Muhittin talks about a revolution that saves and emancipates Zeynep, which indicates that the Sultan in the novella is the last Ottoman Sultan, Vahdettin. It is striking that Muhittin does not utter any word about the last Sultan of the Ottoman Empire due to the fact that, Zeynep is sold to the palace in order to serve the Nustetullah Pasha who is introduced as the vizier of the Sultan. For that reason, the story of Zeynep takes place in a mansion which is described as the house of Nustetullah Pasha, which is within the borders of the huge Ottoman palace.

Zeynep is a Circassian girl who is sold to interceder Mustafa by her own mother and father. Because of that reason, throughout the story Zeynep has a hostile attitude against her family and accuses them for dragging her into such a doom. That Zeynep is a victim of a distorted family is striking due to the fact that it attracts the attention to the importance attributed to the national family during the early years of the Turkish Republic. In the previous chapters it is told that, according to Muhittin forming a good family is of vital importance for the progress of Turkish society. Therefore, Muhittin creates victimized women characters whose doom are depicted as a result of dysfunctional families.

Zeynep's story begins when she changes hand from the interceder Mustafa and his mother to the Nustetullah Pasha. Interceder Mustafa and his mother appear only at the beginning of the novella as tyrant people who gain money from female slave trade. Nustetullah Pasha is the vizier of the Ottoman Sultan who is married to an ill and bedridden wife. There is no more information about the wife of Nustetullah Pasha. Pasha has three children; one daughter and two sons. The elder son and daughter are married and there is no more information about them either. They are said to live outside the mansion of Nustetullah Pasha and they do not appear in the

novella. However, the smallest child, Ferruh, becomes one of the eminent characters. Ferruh turns out to be a significant male character particularly in the last part because he is an active participant of the revolutionist movement in the Ottoman Empire. Ferruh will also have significant contributions to Zeynep's enlightenment in that he shares the books of significant writers with her secretly.

Dilşat and Mehveş are the two other women characters in *My Self Is Mine*. They can be considered as secondary women characters who are on good terms with Zeynep. Dilşat is an old woman who lives in the mansion and assists with the daily housekeeping chores. When Zeynep is sold to the mansion of Nustetullah Pasha in Ottoman Palace, she is accompanied by Dilşat to be orientated to the new mode of dressing and new life style in the mansion. Mehveş is another female slave whom Zeynep has met in interceder Mustafa's house. When Zeynep is sold to the mansion of Nustetullah Pasha, Mehveş is sold to another man, so they depart for a long time. However, Mehveş and Zeynep are going to meet in different circumstances in which Mehveş turns out to be an enlightened woman who is sold to the house of an intellectual man to help him with daily housekeeping chores. Mehveş is a lucky girl who has not been sexually abused. As will be told in detail in the following parts of this chapter, Mehveş is another key person who paves the way for the enlightenment of Zeynep.

In *My Self Is Mine*, Muhittin uses a first-person narrative. The whole story is told by the protagonist, Zeynep, in a rebellious manner. That the story is told by the protagonist Zeynep is important in that while Zeynep tells her story, she also deciphers her feelings, thoughts and interpretations which can be considered as the reflections of the thoughts of an Ottoman woman in the last period of the Ottoman Empire.

The story in *My Self Is Mine* is told in retrospect. From the first paragraph, the reader encounters with the end of the story. At the very beginning, Zeynep introduces herself to the reader as in the following:

I am a Circassian girl. I do not know where I am coming from. I even do not know whose child I am. But everyone calls me a lady...Because I have jewelry, a huge summer house in Büyükkada, a beautiful palace in Erenköy, a perfect mansion in Şişli. I am a prostitute”.

...

I am a thief, a murderer!!... However, instead of moist, cobwebby, dark prisons, I am living in luxurious dwellings...Am I clever, strong willed, and too intelligent? I am suspicious about it. Nevertheless, they call me lady, if there is a bigger title for women, they would call it to me first. But I am a Circassian girl, whose descent is not clear (p.3).

It is noteworthy that Zeynep deciphered herself as a prostitute from the first paragraph. A prostitute can be defined as ‘a person who is paid in return for a sexual service’. Although Zeynep does not work as a prostitute, she introduces herself as such because she is forced to meet the sexual demands of the Nustetullah Pasha and she is offered considerable amounts of jewellery in return. At this point a prostitute and a concubine should be differentiated. While a prostitute gains money in return for a sexual service, a concubine is a woman who cohabits a man without a bond of marriage. After Zeynep was sold to the mansion of Nustetullah Pasha as a female slave, as a concubine, she is not forced to meet the sexual demands of Pasha immediately. She is handed to Dilşat in order to be oriented to the new life in the Mansion.

According to Zeynep, her doom is a consequence of irony of fate. Immediately after beginning her confessions, she talks about the evil tricks of fortune and thinks the inevitability of fate as an inevitable reason of her evil life:

I am going to tell everything accurately. I even started intimate confession from the first sentences. I am so natural and happy while writing these sentences. Because I struggled a lot so as not to do those things, to be like that. It is my destiny!

...

I think that I used my intelligence. I have a completely strong will. However, I couldn't save myself from the deadlock to which I was thrown by my destiny (p.4)

It is evident that Muhittin tries to demonstrate that the female protagonist Zeynep is a victim. She is a victim of a distorted family in particular and of fate on the

whole. A victimized woman character creates a feeling of sympathy because she is neither a wrong-doer nor an evil character. Muhittin talks about the importance of will in determining the destiny of a person. However, she also prioritizes the inevitable power of fate over the power of will. Seemingly, according to Muhittin there is nothing Zeynep can do to turn fortunes's wheel and emancipate herself.

Although, inevitability of fate is stressed as the sole responsible for the doom of Zeynep, there is no doubt that her family impelled her to lead such a life. As indicated before, Zeynep has a hostile attitude towards her family. She is aware of their wicked action of selling her in return for gold and accuses them for doing so in a harsh manner: "Even at that age, I did not get on well with them, I was laughing at their weird attitudes secretly, perhaps the blood in my veins did not belong to them. Perhaps I was not one of them!..." (p.5).

Seemingly, Zeynep criticizes the moral values of her family in a harsh way. Introducing her family in such a venomous way and claiming that she does not belong to them creates a contradiction. Creating such a contradiction, Muhittin makes one part evil while presenting the other as innocent. Such an endeavour emphasizes the fact that even though the protagonist leads an undesirable kind of life, she has no guilt at all. Here, once again the influences of distorted families on the emergence of evil conditions is stressed.

As explained in the second chapter in detail, the condition of the Ottoman family was of paramount importance for the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. The endeavours to reform Ottoman family was transferred into forming a sacred national family during the early years of the republic. In that period, family was considered as the basic and the most important institution of society which would lead a progress in the whole nation as long as Turkish women and men manage to form a sacred and well-managed family. Concerning the opposite cases, it was believed that corrupted families would lead to a moral corruption in the society.

As Zeynep considers herself different from the other family members, she is also different from the other girls around her. The following quotation indicates that all other friends of Zeynep internalize and accept the total control over their bodies. However Zeynep's reaction against domination over women's body and subsequent captivity is striking:

Every nightfall we come together by the fountain with the girls of our village. For them, to be sold, to be kidnapped were the events which were expected to come through...For those who are still beautiful, the dreams consisted of such cases. Obtaining mansions, palaces, horses, cars, diamonds could only come through when they were sold. To be the favourite of the Sultan was their biggest dream...Nights turned out to be dark cells when I thought of being sold (p.5-6).

While other girls seem to be dying to be sold to an affluent mansion, Zeynep is aware of the captivity awaiting for her. It is significant that without having any education at all, Zeynep is a sentient girl who is aware of the meaning of domination. The above quoted part is the first time Zeynep deciphers her thoughts about her body. This part is crucial not only because it emphasizes that the protagonist is different from the other girls in the village, but also because it reveals the fact that she is aware of the consequences of domination over a women's body. Zeynep talks about so-called domination in distress and reveals her fears about the probability of such a captivity. She wants to be the unique authority over her body, which is the crux of the novella, as it is understood even from the title *My Self Is Mine*. Zeynep is a decisive woman character who does not bow to slavery which is considered as an inevitable destiny of women. She opposes that destiny: "I was the owner of this body and this life. One day I will certainly use them as I want" (p. 7). Zeynep attempts to commit suicide twice after she is sold to interceder Mustafa. That Zeynep prefers death to slavery is very important and indicates that she is determined to find ways to be the sole authority over her own body.

Zeynep reveals her thoughts to Mehveş, another slave girl in the house of interceder Mustafa, as; "Don't you own your own body? You can not give in!..At

the end they kill you, what else they can do?" (p.14). Mehveş and Zeynep become close friends in one day, but they are sold to different places and departed on the following day. However, Mehveş will appear in the last part of the novella as a completely different woman. Mehveş leads a different life from that of Zeynep's in that she is sold to the house of an intellectual man as a caretaker. Muhittin does not give the name of that old intellectual man but he is said to write important books. Mehveş's duty is to write the books as the old man dictates. For that reason, Mehveş turns out to be a different woman who is educated, strong and aware of the reasons of the corruption in Ottoman society and women's captivity as well.

When Zeynep sees Nustetullah Pasha in the mansion, she thinks she is going to be the grand daughter of him because Pasha is very old. Zeynep is curious about her duties in the mansion and asks Dilşat: "What is my duty in this mansion?" (p.22). Such a question indicates that Zeynep does not even consider herself as a female slave and thinks that she will be working in the mansion in a position which best fits her age. However, Dilşat replies her saying: "You will eat, drink, wear nice clothes up till the time Pasha requests your service" (p. 22). Dilşat's answer makes Zeynep anxious about her future in the mansion but she distracts herself from such anxieties by focussing on her education.

Zeynep becomes very happy when Dilşat informs her that she is going to receive training on reading, literature and music. Zeynep is very enthusiastic about being educated and asks whether she will attend to a school or not:

(Dilşat) - 'Oh I forgot! You will begin reading courses.' I was very happy for her last sentence. I asked with a glitter in my eyes:

(Zeynep)- 'When will I begin?...'

(Dilşat) - 'Oh my girl! Why do you feel so happy about it?...You were even not happy when we bought things for you. You can start today if you like.'

(Zeynep) - 'Will I go to school?'

(Dilşat) - 'Girls of such mansions can not go to school. We can go outside rarely. Teachers come here' (p.23).

Zeynep receives a special training which is popular for girls. That kind of indoor education was the only way of educating girls at that time. As mentioned in the third chapter, Nezihe Muhittin had also a similar indoor education after her family became dissatisfied with the quality of the local school she had attended. For the last period of the Ottoman Empire, it was quite unusual for girls to continue their education at schools. Similarly, Zeynep receives an indoor education which includes reading, literature and music lessons. Zeynep is aware of the importance of education for girls and confesses that although she is ignorant and illiterate at the age of thirteen she has a strong urge to read and learn (p. 23). Zeynep's interest in reading will attract the attention of Ferruh who is the smallest son of Nustetullah Pasha and lives in the same mansion with them. Their interaction will develop Zeynep's understanding of the outside world. However, before meeting with Ferruh, Zeynep's first interaction with Nustetullah Pasha is quite interesting.

When Zeynep is asked to massage to Nustetullah Pasha every night, she becomes a close concern to Pasha. Although her massage duty does not seem to have sexual connotations, Zeynep is reluctant to do massage and dislikes the way Pasha looks at her. However, rumours about Pasha's deep love for Zeynep makes her conscious about the meaning of these massages. Expectedly, one night Pasha asks to make love with Zeynep. As a result of that request, Zeynep is appaled and runs away from the room of Pasha. However, the requests of Pasha continues and one day Pasha rapes Zeynep:

Pasha who frightens everybody with his rage was weak in front of me. From now on, I was the one who dominated the mansion!...Do you understand the price of this notorious authority? I became a prostitute!...In return, I had the most gleaming jewelry, the most valuable furs (p.42).

Zeynep does not set a great value on the goods and jewelry presented to her and rejects having sex with the Pasha consistently. Her intercourse with Pasha makes Zeynep contemplate on the concepts of body and the torture of domination over her own body. Every time, she repeats that her body is her own and she is the unique authority over her body: "What an awful insistance?! What a heavy

domination over the body which is mine?! How would I be saved from this torture?" (p. 50).

Such a rebellious attitude is new for Pasha who has a lot of female slaves of his own in the mansion. However, only Zeynep raises difficulties and refuses to obey his demands. Because Zeynep is one of the female slaves in the mansion, Pasha thinks that he owns every thing within the borders of his mansion; including female slaves. Nevertheless, Zeynep refuses his ownership everytime:

- 'Oh', he said, 'How beautiful you smell, I am so exhilarated. Say! You are mine, aren't you?'

I was keeping myself away from him.

- 'I am nobody's!! My Self Is Mine!..'

- 'You are mine Zeynep! You even do not have a right on you!! You are mine with your whole existence.'

- 'Even a grain of myself was not yours and I won't be yours.'

Pasha grew violent with jealousy:

- 'To whom would you like to be? To whom do you save yourself?!'

- 'Whoever I would like to!! Do you understand me? But never to you!..' (p.55).

Such a constant refusal is an extra-ordinary attitude concerning female slaves. Zeynep does not give in anytime she is offered precious jewelry and she does not submit to Pasha's superiority. Zeynep consistently reiterates that her body is her own and she is free concerning the decisions on her body: "I was going to surrender this body of mine, which belongs to me and myself, to the arms of a man whom I like" (p.56). This saying can be considered as a hint on the emergence of another man whom Zeynep wants to make love with.

Although Pasha forces her to marry him, she refuses his marriage proposal and makes love with a man who is in love with Zeynep. Zeynep becomes pregnant which is revealed at the very end of the novella. There is not much information about the identity of the new man, but it is said that he lives within the borders of the same mansion. At this point, the identity of the man is of no importance. What is significant is that Zeynep chooses the man to share her body which indicates that she wants to be active concerning the sexual issues and her body. Such an

attitude is unexpected for that time which makes Zeynep a feminist and progressive woman character.

Apart from Zeynep's relationship with Nustetullah Pasha, her relation with Ferruh is also significant. Zeynep meets with Ferruh by chance, in the hall of the huge mansion. Ferruh wants to introduce himself and shares an important book with Zeynep:

(Ferruh bey) –‘I have heard that you are keen on reading a lot. Come to my room, I will give you a book. But let nobody see you reading this book, he said.

(Zeynep)-‘Why?.. Is it so evil?..’

(Ferruh bey)-‘No...Because the writer of this book was a patriot man who died in exile.’

(Zeynep) –‘Was he an evil man?’

(Ferruh bey)- ‘Quite the contrary! They exiled him because he was a very nice man. I am going to give you the other books of that important man!’ This book was Namık Kemal's touching book which is called *Poor Child* (p.29).

Different from his father Nustetullah Pasha, Ferruh symbolizes the renovation of the corrupted Ottoman way of life. Ferruh is in contact with the revolutionist movement outside the Ottoman palace. The importance of Ferruh in Zeynep's life is that he makes her aware of the existence of an outside world which is too much different from the life in the mansion of Nustetullah Pasha. Thanks to the books that Ferruh shares with Zeynep, she becomes enlightened day by day. Zeynep is a quick reader and becomes accustomed to the secret library of Ferruh in a short time:

That night Mr. Ferruh gave me three-four volumes of books. Thus, I was reading the works of Namık Kemal, Abdülhak Hamit and Tevfik Fikret. At the same time, I was trying to read the books, Poul et Virginie, Graziella, Raphael²³ that Madam Lüsyen brought. Under the influence of these books, I turned out to be a romantic dreamer emotionally and a rebellious fighter ideally (p.34).

²³ In the text Muhittin writes; Pole Virjini, Graziyella, Refael.

There is no romantic relationship between Ferruh and Zeynep. However, there are bonds of shared experiences and thoughts which make them close friends. Moreover, Ferruh is important for Zeynep in that he is a medium between Zeynep and the outside world. Through reading books that Ferruh gives her, Zeynep's understanding of the tyranny and captivity over women develops. She also becomes aware of the revolutionist movement outside the mansion. Zeynep defines her relationship with Ferruh as follows:

He made me feel the existence of another world out of the walls of this gilded cage that I was kept in. We resembled each other concerning the same issues. We were complaining about the same anguish. I was a slave who was sold and he was a condemned person. Both of us were cursing to the same things: cruelty and slavery. Both of us were dreaming about the same things: freedom and independence (p.35).

A similar dialogue develops between Mehveş and Zeynep who were once slaves in the house of interceder Mustafa. Mehveş's story is somewhat different from Zeynep's because she is sold to a house of an intellectual man as a caretaker. In her new house, Mehveş has the opportunity to develop herself. One day, Mehveş finds out the place where Zeynep lives and visits her. Their dialogue is quite striking in that it heralds the revolution which would provide an end to the captivity of women and bring renovation in the whole country:

I know the reason of our slavery and all the evil enforcements in our country...I am going to tell you something which will make you so happy!...there are lots of men working to save us from slavery... and one of those men is the one I am living with. They are working day and night secretly...One day, there will be a bright sun in this dark country...But my sister, do not ever tell anybody anything! (p.31).

It is important that Mehveş and Zeynep develop into enlightened women who are ready to support the secret revolutionist movement in the Ottoman society. They are also aware of the fact that the revolution will also save and emancipate them. As a matter of fact, Muhittin talks about the coming of the new Turkish Republic,

because the novel ends with a unexpected raid of the revolutionists to the mansion of Pasha. With that raid, Pasha dies and the foundation of a new nation is implied.

There is not much information about the future lives of Mehveş, Ferruh and Zeynep, except that Zeynep turns out to be one of the salient figures of the time. It is striking that Zeynep becomes an important woman who is asked to write articles for the important newspapers and magazines of her time or give conferences to women. Although she defines herself as a prostitute who leads an affluent but immoral life, at the end of the novella, Zeynep is depicted as one of the intellectuals of her time.

My Self Is Mine should be considered as a product of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism because it has strong implications of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. Again for the same following reasons this novella should be considered as a feminist piece of production:

1. Female slavery and the domination over the woman's body are the main themes represented as crucial mediums of subordination of women. Disapproval of female slavery is felt vehemently throughout novella.
2. The protagonist woman character Zeynep is an anarchist, rebellious woman who is not submissive to her destiny. Although she is thirteen years old, Zeynep is aware of the importance of freedom and emancipation for women. Zeynep's evolution from a young teenager into an enlightened woman character is striking for this study. Zeynep is different from other female slaves and contemplates on the issues of slavery, sexuality, sexual violence, prostitution, women's emancipation and the importance of education for women. Because she requests to be the sole authority over her body, she can be considered as a progressionist woman who knows the meaning of domination and captivity. Zeynep does not internalize the domination over body which makes this novella a feminist piece of literary production.
3. Moreover, education of women is attributed a paramount importance. Especially after Zeynep's relation with Ferruh and Mehveş, the importance of

education of women turns out to be one of the important themes in the novella, just as in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. Thanks to Feruh bey, Zeynep reads lots of books by Namık Kemal, Abdülhak Hamit and Tevfik Fikret, who can be considered as the enlightened elite of the time. References to salient literary figures of the time demonstrate that Nezihe Muhittin has a strong devotion and respect for the educated, enlightened writers of the late Ottoman period.

5.2. *Fireflies*, 1935

Fireflies is another novella which will be analysed in detail with respect to other crucial discussion points of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. Different from *My Self Is Mine*, the time period of the story in *Fireflies* is the early republican period. For that reason, in this novella Muhittin touches upon the issues which were frequently referred to during this period. In the second chapter of this study, it is mentioned that the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism has three phases, the last of which is the Republican Kemalist Feminism. In this respect, *Fireflies* can be considered as a literary product which reflects the agenda of the last phase of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, that is the Republican Kemalist Feminism. As will be analysed in detail, importance of the education of girls, dangers of extreme westernization and good and evil contradictory woman models are the main stresses in this work. Following a short plot overview and character presentation, these points will be analysed respectively referring to the story in *Fireflies*.

In *Fireflies*, Muhittin tells the story of two contradictory women characters living in two contradictory social settings. There are three main characters and various sub-characters. Sub-characters will be defined when necessary in terms of the story because it is not eligible to make an elaborate definition and analysis about each person who takes place in the story. As told in the fourth chapter, there are not deep character developments in Muhittin's novellas which is actually a general feature of her literary works. However, the main characters can be said to display certain original traits which are unique to the social settings in which they live. That is why, it is important to deal with each main character in this novella

which will reveal the contradictions better. The main characters in *Fireflies* are Necat, Hacer and Suzan.

Necat is the main male character who is fond of literature. He writes poems, a few of which are published in some literary magazines. Necat is the only son of a middle class family and his dream is to become an eminent and popular literary figure in high social circles. Necat is a university student in the literature department of the university²⁴. He looks down on his family and the middle class milieu in which they live. “He did not think that this ordinary district and ordinary people are worth living with. He was waiting respect from the people in this district for the sake of his holy being” (p.10). His admiration to the high social circles will make him despise his life and the district he grew up. As a result, a series of unfortunate events will emerge.

Hacer is the modest girl who was born in the same district with Necat. She is the childhood friend of Necat. As a matter of fact, the families of Necat and Hacer are very close. They desire and plan to marry Necat and Hacer off. Hacer has a strong love for Necat, however she does not receive any response in return for her love and devotion. Hacer is a student of law in the law faculty of the university. That is very striking for that time and she will be the first woman lawyer of the country in the following parts of the novella. However, it is important to emphasize that she is not encouraged as a law student in her district. There are some voices who disdain her in that they think a girl attending a law school is ridiculous. One of them is Necat’s father, Şaban:

The old court crier likes every aspect of Hacer who will be his bride but he can not believe in the possibility of her being a lawyer. A woman lawyer or a judge seemed as ridiculous as a man in the shape of a woman in theatre... this twenty years old girl’s being a lawyer was so disgraceful and unbearable (p.21).

Hacer is depicted as an ideal woman type and Muhittin’s sympathy for her can be felt when she is talking about her. Muhittin praises Hacer’s modesty, silence,

²⁴ Muhittin does not identify the name of the university.

intelligence, loyalty and self-sacrificing nature very frequently. Hacer is a typical republican girl who is modern and clever attending to university. However, she is also a modest girl who is loyal to the traditional way of life in the district they live. It is important to indicate that Hacer is a typical character who best fits the new woman in the eyes of Ottoman-Turkish Feminists, including Nezihe Muhittin. Hacer's favourable characteristics are glorified by Muhittin as a contrast to Suzan's.

Suzan is a woman whom Necat meets at a friends meeting. She is from the high class circles which Necat wants to be a part of. It is noteworthy that Suzan's first words to a friend of Necat, Selim is "Bonjur" (p. 26) which indicates the aspiration to Western life style in the milieu she lives. French words or the names of salient French poets such as Boudleaire are frequently uttered by Suzan and her friends which impresses Necat in the same way. However, their lifestyle will be depicted as degenerated and corrupted which is the inevitable result of extreme westernization and alienation from one's own traditions and culture. It is told in the second chapter that dangers of extreme westernization had always been an important issue in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism which also affected Muhittin's writings.

Suzan is a married woman who is on the verge of ending her marriage. Although she is married, she acts as if she is open to new romantic relations. Suzan is presented as a very beautiful, attractive and showy woman. That she is a flirtatious and temptress woman is stressed very frequently as opposed to Hacer's modesty. Necat's intimate relationship with Suzan and her friends makes him alienated to his own social circles. By the same token, he begins to disdain Hacer: "After Necat began going to the cafes in Beyoğlu with his friends frequently, he began not to take Hacer seriously. He considered her modest, unfriendly being as the deficiencies of an ordinary soul" (p. 22).

Expectedly, Necat feels attracted to Suzan and falls in love with her which is culminated in the emergence of the evil events. As a matter of fact, every trait of

Suzan's character emphasizes Hacer's being an ideal woman. Therefore, it can be argued that Muhittin created Suzan as an opposite woman character who re-emphasizes the glorified traits of Hacer.

The novella begins depicting the conflicts between Necat and his family. Necat is the only son of the family who can not cling to a job even though he is in his twenties. He is trying to be a popular poet which would open the doors of a more desirable life. Necat aspires for fame more than anything else which paves the way for evil conducts. Although he does not earn money, he spends much money in order to be accepted to high class circles. A set of unfortunate events begin when Necat steals his father's money in order to be more eligible for the high class people he is in touch with. However, that stealing culminates in the death of his father Şaban, who has already been very ill.

After his father's death, Necat moves to a boarding house which is near to his new friends' district. He spends much of his time wandering idly with his friends, spending the money he has stolen from his father. Meanwhile, Necat's mother is left alone by his only son and she is accompanied by Hacer as she helps Necat's mother in every way. Here, Muhittin tries to depict Hacer as a faithful, honest girl.

Following his residence in the boarding house, Necat's relationship with Suzan is revealed. After Suzan and Necat get engaged, they begin to live together without having been married. Such a conduct is inadmissible for that time, particularly in the social milieu of Necat. When Necat becomes closer to Suzan's social milieu, he is alienated to his own district day by day. Just as he is alienated to his own district, he is also alienated to his own culture and traditions which engenders an evil spirit and evil conducts. For instance, because Necat spends too much time with Suzan, he disregards his own family and Hacer. Necat compares two different social milieus and two different women within these milieus. When Necat visits her mother some time later, he comes across with Hacer and compares her with Suzan in the following way:

Hands of the woman which move within the night shadows remind him of the saucy and vivacious hands which are thin, white and pink nailed. He dreamed of this hands along with Hacer's short and colorless nailed hands, Suzan's hands may smell more beautiful than a flower. However, it is certain that in Hacer's hands there were the harsh signs of the laundries she washed this morning (p.40).

Such a comparison of two women, also includes a class based comparison in that Suzan and Hacer are from different social classes as Hacer is a middle class girl while Suzan comes from upper class. Moreover, such a comparison also includes a dichotomy of traditional way of life versus extremely westernized lives. Not only Suzan and her social milieu are wealthy people, but they also seem to be extremely westernized. It can be understood from their use of language in that French words are frequently uttered by them. Alternatively, their lifestyle is nothing to do with traditional Turkish lifestyle.

However, Necat is too fascinated by the flamboyant life in Suzan's milieu. It is not only Suzan who represents a showy and amusing life. There are so many women who accompany Suzan to parties and balls who resemble fireflies. The novella takes its title from a firefly metaphor: "Necat is fascinated by the night dresses of these beautiful blonde woman. He resembled them to fireflies which spreads light beams where ever they touch" (p.78).

As Necat spends more time with Suzan and her friends, he is faced with the truth that he will never belong there. He starts to spend time with bad companies and finds himself in gambling tables, losing money day by day. At the same time, Suzan becomes a popular singer in one of their friend's pub. Although Necat is strongly disagrees with her decision, Suzan ignores what Necat thinks. Necat wants to marry Suzan but it is not approved by Suzan's uncle and friends because they do not think Necat would be an appropriate husband and a good companion to her. Hereafter, the fall of the male pratagonist becomes evident because of moral corruption and Necat's evil conducts.

Meanwhile, Hacer completes her education and graduates from the faculty of law as the first woman lawyer of the country. It is inevitable that such an extraordinary occurrence is published in the newspapers. As Necat sees the newspapers his disillusionment is felt as he throws the newspaper:

He opened the newspaper on the table. As he ran an eye over the first page, he stopped when he saw a picture of a woman. He knew this face. This was the picture of Hacer. His face turned red as he read the news. The newspaper was talking about the competence exam of law faculty that the young girl passed with a matchless success as it was also talking about the first literary work of her called "Uncontrolled Ships". Hacer was smiling with a charming smile in this picture. Necat could not put up with his shame and he turned the page. In the advertisements part of the newspaper there was another picture. This was the photograph of Suzan. She resembled the beautiful but coarse women he saw in the mirrors of night clubs with her exaggerated décolleté dress and flirtatious face with painted blonde hair and flirtatious smile. The young man threw the newspaper with hatred and went out (p. 95-96).

Seemingly, Necat's opinions about two different women swings right round after he sees the news about Hacer in the newspaper. Not only has Hacer become the first woman lawyer of the country but she has also written a novel which is the biggest dream of Necat. He understands his wrong-doings and mistaken opinions. By the same token, the way he views Hacer also changes as he no more disdains her. On the contrary, Suzan's display in the newspaper seems awful to him. In this contradiction, Muhittin tries to emphasize the difference between two women while taking side by glorifying Hacer as an ideal Republican woman and denigrating Suzan as a degenerated and immoral woman.

Necat's thoughts about high class woman changes. As he goes to his home, he encounters with a party arranged by Suzan. The image of beautiful, flirtatious women who are once resembled to fireflies turns out to be degraded creatures in the eyes of Necat as he thinks, "These woman bodies for sale concealed in transparent, colorful, silk dresses, look like rotten fruits which are covered with colored paints" (p.103).

The last part of the novella is also interesting for the depiction of Hacer as the ideal woman of the republic. The climax of the fall of Necat occurs when he fights and injures a man in the pub who is too close to Suzan. After the chaos in the pub, they find themselves in court. Hacer comes to the scene as the lawyer of Necat:

The court was full of audience. The first woman lawyer of Turkey was going to make her first defence in assize court. This was a very important event. The people who knew the event were very interested in it, all of the enlightened people in the country came to the court in order to see and hear the first practice of our reforms (p.119).

The court scene is very significant for two reasons. Firstly, it indicates that the reforms of republican regime work and the newly founded country is a state of law. It can also be considered as an evidence that the republican reforms are beneficial for Turkish society. Secondly, it demonstrated an ideal republican woman type who is educated and the symbol of the transformation in the republican era.

At the end of the novella, without having been sent to the jail, Necat goes to complete his military service and Hacer forgives him. Muhittin continues to glorify Hacer in the same way, “Hacer, whose story is told in newspapers as a legend is now a woman of her heart only. An innocent young girl waiting for love in her modest house” (p.122).

In *Fireflies*, there are strong influences of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism such as:

1. *Fireflies* is significant in that it has strong implications about the threat of extreme westernization and its consequences such as alienation. Necat is depicted as the victim of degenerated social circles. No doubt, degenerated and corrupted lifestyle is represented as the inevitable consequence of extreme westernization which at the end culminates in immorality and evil conducts. It is told in chapter two that Ottoman-Turkish feminists promoted Westernization but they were also cautious about The West. It is evident that Muhittin wrote *Fireflies* in a didactic

manner in order to show the inevitable consequences of alienation of a person to his/her culture.

2. Another implication of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism in *Fireflies* is the depiction of good and evil women characters. In this novella, Muhittin creates the clash of two different social settings on the whole and the clash of two different women characters in particular. Hacer is presented as an ideal republican girl whose characteristics are compatible with the new woman image in the eyes of Ottoman-Turkish feminists including Nezihe Muhittin. She is a modern looking woman who is also a devoted carrier of traditions in the way she helps Necat's mother during their mourning period after the death of Necat's father Şaban. Moreover, she is loyal to Necat as a devoted lover even though Necat chooses a corrupted life, ignoring her love. As a contrast to Hacer, Suzan is a woman belonging to a completely different social circle. Muhittin depicts Suzan as a temptress, flighty woman who is the cause of Necat's fall. Considering two contradictory woman characters, the newspaper scene is striking in that the picture of two women is published with different sub-titles. While Hacer is announced as the first woman lawyer of the country, Suzan is depicted as a singer in a pub. Such an approach demonstrates that Muhittin wants to attract the attentions to the clash between the two women. What is significant about the representation of Suzan and Hacer is that, while Muhittin promotes and exalts Hacer, she disdains and denigrates Suzan which indicates that Muhittin wants to create appreciated and evil role models for the readers of the time.

5.3. *A Vagrant Woman*, 1943

A Vagrant Woman is another novella which is significant for this study when the implications of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism are considered. Different from *My Self Is Mine* and *Fireflies*, *A Vagrant Woman* is salient in that it puts the emphasis on the importance of national family formation for the good of society and the significance of mothering for a proper development of girls. After a plot outline along with a short character introduction, the implications of the importance of forming good families and the priority of the mothering roles of women will be

analysed in detail by giving references to the debates of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism.

In *A Vagrant Woman*, Muhittin creates another victim girl, Mehpare, who is dragged into prostitution by her own mother. The story in *A Vagrant Woman* is told in retrospect just as in *My Self Is Mine*, from the voice of the woman protagonist, Mehpare. That Muhittin used first-person narrative in both novellas is crucial because both protagonists of the novellas try to acquit themselves by telling their own stories as a way of confession. By this way, they try to demonstrate that they are the victims of their vicious families.

The story begins when Mehpare comes to the restaurant of old Viktuvar, feeling miserable. Viktuvar is an old non-Muslim woman who is an old prostitute. After a while, Tayyar comes to the same restaurant with a drunk man, Kerim. Tayyar is a crude and impolite man who is in love with Mehpare, however, she does not want to be with him per se. According to the story told by Kerim, he has gambled with Tayyar which results in with the loss of all of Kerim's money. Kerim falls in love with Mehpare after spending one night with her however he is in a dreadful situation because he has lost all of his money as a result of gambling with Tayyar. Because she is an altruistic and compassionate woman, Mehpare makes a trick and tells Tayyar that she is going to be with him if Tayyar gambles with Kerim once more and give Kerim his whole money back. Tayyar accepts, without telling Kerim anything about the tricky agreement he has made with Mehpare. Tayyar loses the game and gives Kerim's money back as agreed.

After Kerim leaves, Tayyar wants to be with Mehpare as she has promised before the gambling, but Mehpare refuses Tayyar because he acts in an aggressive manner. All of a sudden, Kerim comes back to the restaurant to take Mehpare with him and sees her with Tayyar in an improper situation. As Kerim misunderstands what he sees, he thinks that Mehpare is a vicious woman who has lied to him. Tayyar attacks Kerim and as they fight, Mehpare shoots Tayyar which results in the death of Tayyar. The first part of the novella finishes with the

coming of the policeman as they catch Mehpare with a gun in her hand just after murdering Tayyar.

The rest of the novella consists of memories of Mehpare which are written from the prison in the form of an autobiography of her life. Mehpare addresses Kerim in her memories and tells how she becomes a fallen woman. Muhittin does not give any explanation about how Mehpare is sent to prison, just as she does not give any information about the life conditions in prison. The story hereafter is told as the miserable life story of Mehpare which are depicted as the conditions and reasons of her leading such an immoral life.

Mehpare begins her memories from her childhood and delineates the social milieu in which she was born. Such an approach intends to show that both the environment and the social conditions in family life have considerable effects on the growth of a child. Mehpare defines her environment as a vicious one by saying: "I fell into this disgusting hollow when I was a small baby" (p.33). Once again the protagonist, Mehpare, has a strong hatred towards her family, accuses them as the responsible for her degenerated, immoral life.

Firstly, Mehpare introduces her family and says that there is not a bond of familial love among them as neither part loves each other: "I did not love my mother and father who were the responsables of my adventure that is full of lies, prostitution, greed and cruelty. They did not love me either" (p.34). After introducing her family, Mehpare introduces herself to Kerim and tells the story of her coming to the world, including how her mother and father has met. This detailed story of Mehpare's mother and father may seem irrelevant to the story of Mehpare, however it is not. Even the way her parents meet is connected to the destiny of Mehpare in the following way: "Know who I am!.. I am not a victim who fell into evil after being born in good and virtuous district. Destiny brought me up in the middle of the social evil. I was born out of an illegitimate relation..." (p.35).

Mehpare stresses the fact that she is an illegitimate child who is born out of wedlock. This is significant for the analysis in that it highlights the importance of good families for the growth of healthy generations. The notion that Mehpare introduces herself as an unlucky child whose destiny is determined by the evil social milieu of her family is significant because, by this way, she presents herself as the victim of vicious life conditions. According to Mehpare, she has had no other options other than living an immoral life because her family is not a proper one. She is not coming from a well-descended family which inevitably culminates in a degenerated life. As told in chapter two and three, reforming the Ottoman family and forming a national Turkish family are the significant discussion issues of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. As an activist participant of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, Nezihe Muhittin was in the same line, arguing that family was the basic and the most important unit of the whole society which constitutes a prosperous future for the whole nation or degenerated generations. In *A Vagrant Woman*, Muhittin intends to show what would happen if the family structure is corrupted.

In addition to the importance of a good family as a determinant of the future of children, the roles of mothers as the caretakers and carriers of culture are also stressed explicitly in *A Vagrant Woman*. Mehpare's mother gives birth to her without having been married with the father. In addition to that, she is an alcoholic who works as a prostitute. The idea that mothers are the first role-models for girls is significant for the case of Mehpare as she tells her story implying that she took a sample of her mother's attitudes which affected her in a completely awful way:

Drunk and excited men forced my mother to dance. My father resented as a result of this situation but he did not say a word, remaining indifferent. My mother, who is beautiful and young, stood up as she behaved coquettishly...After my mother, I was also interested. I drank the glass of raki in front of my father, and began to dance with my mother. I have to confess that the first signs of womanhood appeared in me when I saw the neighbour men applauding and cheering for me with appreciation (p.37-38).

It is striking that although Muhittin illustrates Mehpare as an honourable victim woman in essence, she illustrates her mother as a symbol of all evil things. Mehpare becomes a notorious woman because of evil life conditions which are out of her control. For that reason, it is easy for the readers to sympathise with her. However, the same is impossible for Mehpare's mother who is also a prostitute. Mehpare's mother is depicted as such an evil woman that it is almost impossible to understand her behaviours and sympathise with her. There are all kinds of vicious characteristics of her all of which have no reasons. For instance, she is an alcoholic, a liar, a merciless woman who even causes the death of her little child because of starvation and neglect. What is stressed in the case of the death of the small brother of Mehpare is that, her mother did not even cry: "My mother tried to cry. She couldn't" (p. 40). This scene indicates that the mother is not even a compassionate woman who can not cry when her son dies as a result of rough nursing.

It is interesting that the mother has no reason to be notorious and immoral. Vicious and evil behaviours are delineated as the innate characteristics of the mother. Muhittin may intend to place stress on the mother, being a completely wrong role-model for Mehpare which results in her being a notorious prostitute. The attitudes of the elder people around Mehpare turn out to be amusing role-plays among the friends of her as she says: "...I was practicing the things that I saw and heard from the elder people around me with the naughty boys of our district" (p.44).

The most striking scene in *A Vagrant Woman* is the part when Mehpare's mother encourages and forces her daughter to work as a prostitute. It sounds implausible that a mother would encourage her daughter for such an immoral action yet, Muhittin prepares enough reasons for the readers not to be surprised when faced with such a dreadful attitude. Depicting a totally vicious mother character at the beginning of the story may intend to prepare a background for readers considering the following scene, otherwise it would sound non-sense and inconceivable:

One night my mother prodded me:

-Come on!...Let's go out.

-Can we go out at this hour of the night?... And I am hungry.

-I am hungry too...that's why we will go out. So as not to remain hungry!..

I was surprised...then she explained:

-I am an old woman my daughter. Nobody looks at me. But you grew up, and you are so beautiful. Everybody likes you.

I immediately understood what my mother was trying to say:

-I am afraid!, I said.

-Why are you afraid? I will show you the street. You will wander there freely, sing songs, laugh loudly, call the coming men to you.

-I am afraid, I repeated.

-I told you...there is nothing to be afraid of! Is it better if we remain hungry? Will I be in misery although I have a beautiful girl like you? (p.54).

Muhittin stresses that the reason of their evil conducts is that the family is economically poor and they have to make ends meet. Otherwise, they would not even find any food to eat. Due to the fact that Mehpare's mother is old and not attractive or desirable anymore, it is Mehpare who is supposed to work. When her mother understands that Mehpare fails to act in the flirtatious manner as she was advised by her own mother, the mother herself introduces her daughter Mehpare to a demander:

I stayed in the street for a long time...began to make improper remarks to men but they did not pay attention to me...I returned home hopelessly. My mother was so angry with me. We went out again:

-Wait here, she said. I will come back right away...My mother returned back with an old man beside her.

-Look! What a beautiful girl!, she pointed me out to the old man.

The man examined me under the dim street light and returned to my mother:

-Good! I like her!... How much do you want for her?

They began bargaining. They agreed. We came to our room all together. When we enter to the room, my mother took my little brother out and left us alone (p.55).

After this case, Mehpare gets used to doing the same work everynight and an intricate train of events follow each other. She meets with lots of vicious men and women all of whom are introduced as bad companies for her. At the end of the novella, Mehpare finishes her story because she is very ill. She requests that the

notebook in which she has written her memories be given to Kerim and she dies afterwards.

Apart from the intricate story line, *A Vagrant Woman* is significant because of the following crucial implications of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism:

1. It is told in the previous chapters that family was considered as the most important unit of the society particularly during the first years of the republican period. It is believed that healthy and well-arranged families are prerequisites for the development of a prosperous society. Muhittin is also in the same line with those who attributed great importance to family. It is striking that in *A Vagrant Woman*, the protagonist Mehpare is born out of marriage as an illegitimate child. For that reason, Mehpare's evil fate is considered as an inevitable outcome of the fact that she does not come from a proper family.

2. As a part of the proper families, the significance of women's mothering role is the other emphasis in *A Vagrant Woman*. According to Muhittin, women are the causes of prosperity but they may also be the cause of immorality and corruption. For the case of Mehpare, her mother has the sole responsibility of the notorious life of her own daughter. Not only she is a bad role-model, she also encourages and forces her to work as a prostitute which is quite unthinkable. Therefore, it can be argued that in *A Vagrant Woman*, Muhittin illustrates in a didactic manner that what would happen if a woman can not perform mothering roles in a proper way. As stated in the former chapters, in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, the discussions considering the creation of a new woman model included a woman who is a proper mother and devoted wife. Nezihe Muhittin is strongly in favour of a similar thought, saying that a Turkish woman's prior duty is to be a good mother.

5.4. *The Morning is Coming, 1943*

In *The Morning is Coming*, Muhittin tells the dramatic life story of Necla. In this novella, Muhittin lays a stress on the importance of education for girls, women's

sexuality and its relationship with the continuation of a family, glorification of the altruistic woman who sacrifices herself for her husband.

The Morning is Coming consists of two parts with respect to the narration. The first part is written in third-person narration and the second part includes the long letter that Necla writes to her friend Güler, telling her story in detail. The second part of the novella is called “Letter from Necla to Güler” and therefore the remaining part of the story is told from the voice of Necla. The first part prepares a background for the forthcoming intricate train of events, introduces the characters and ends with the marriage of Necla to Tayfur. The second part tells the changing life of Necla after the marriage. What follows will delineate the important themes Muhittin refers to in the *The Morning is Coming* and their relationship to the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism.

The story begins with the visit of a guest who comes to Necla’s house. One of the guests is an old friend of Necla’s mother Dürdane Hanım. They come to spend a night in their house as they do not know Istanbul very well and prefer not to stay in a hotel. As the old friends talk, they begin to imply how they would like to see their children’s get married. The actors of this dreamed marriage is Necla and Tayfur. Necla is a clever, intelligent girl who attends to the chemistry department of university even though she is not supported by her own family and Tayfur is the rich and handsome son of the visitors.

Before dealing with the marriage story, it is important to indicate that Necla does not come from a family in which girls are encouraged to be educated. As a matter of fact, during the early years of the Turkish Republic, girls’ education was very important. But this does not guarantee that every household would be supporting the same opinion. For the case of Necla, she is alone in her decision to be educated instead of a quickly arranged marriage. The following dialogue between Necla’s mother Dürdane and the mother of Tayfur who is also an old friend of Dürdane indicates that Necla is not supported by her own family considering her university education:

- How is your little Necla? Where is she?
- She is a beautiful, very beautiful girl now...But...
- Did she get married?
- How can she get married?..University or so..She is going there..I keep talking to her continuously, but what can I do more? (p.9-10).

Seemingly, Necla's mother is not aware of the importance of university education for girls and she wants her daughter to get married as soon as possible. Here, Necla's own decision to continue her education demonstrates that she is a clever girl who is conscious about the vitality of a higher education which would make her a professional woman. However she is supported by the daughter-in-law in the family, Melek. Melek wants to convince her mother-in-law:

Today's girls want to be educated and be important people. All of the neighbouring girls, friends of Necla, go to university. Some of them will be doctors, some will be chemists, some will be teachers (p.10).

The mother of Necla is not convinced and replies in a harsh manner: "Are they making a good thing? More and more there will be no jobs for men. Women should stay at home" (p.10). This dialogue is striking since it unfolds the fact that new generation of women are aware of the importance of educating women while old generations stick to old way of thinking.

Although Necla is determined to continue her education and refuses to marry anytime she is asked to do so, she gives in at the end. Necla's marriage with Tayfur brings disillusionment and dissatisfaction with it. Hereafter, different problems related to their sexual relationship emerge because Necla does not love Tayfur. This is not the first time Muhittin creates a woman character who refuses to make love with a man because she does not love him. Zeynep in *My Self Is Mine*, and Mehpare in *A Vagrant Woman*, are also the determined woman characters who dare to say no to the men who demand forced sexual relations. The fact that they do not submit to men's demands is significant. This emphasizes that woman have the right to choose even though they are not allowed to do so in some cases.

After they are married, the following dialogue between Necla and Tayfur explains that Necla's cold behaviour towards Tayfur is considered as an illness:

(Tayfur)-I knew that you were not a flighty and spoiled girl. This is an honour for me. I will be your first love and first man. What a happiness!"

...

(Necla)-Yes but, I am afraid of men and love, I whispered.

(Tayfur)-What?!?!? Are you afraid of men and love?

(Necla)-Please do not ask me anymore. I have told you the most private feelings of mine.

(Tayfur)- But Necla.. This is an illness my baby. You should be cured (p.50).

Although Tayfur considers Necla's chilly behaviour as an illness, it has nothing to do with a psychological disorder. The fact that Necla is not ill, will be revealed when she meets another man and falls in love with him. However, in her marriage with Tayfur, her distanced and cold behaviours are not acceptable for the sake of the continuation of the family because as they act in this way, it is impossible for Necla to be a mother. As mentioned before, being a mother is considered as the primary duty of women. That is why, it is unthinkable that Necla keeps away from his husband Tayfur, refuses to have sex with him. Such an action would be dreadful for the future of the family as they can not breed. Motivated by such thoughts, Tayfur and Necla demand assistance of a doctor. Necla can not sleep the night before they visit the doctor and thinks of the most appropriate ways of explaining her feelings. As she explains her feelings and confesses that she does not love Tayfur, the doctor confirms that she has no illness at all. However, the words of the doctor are interesting in that it emphasizes the importance of the reproductive roles of women in the growth of next generations: "First and foremost, our profession is to assure the proliferation of the generations. You are a woman. Can't you dominate yourself thinking that your first duty is mothering? (p. 56).

In the previous literary works which have been analysed in detail, women characters who were mothers and the carriers of culture and traditions are

important. Both prosperous and corrupted societies are regarded as the products of women who are the mothers that would mold the character of the society. Different from such an approach, in *The Morning is Coming* the importance of the biological reproduction of a woman is prioritized. For that reason, Necla's refusal to have sex with her husband Tayfur emerges as the most important theme in the novella because of the fact that such an attitude would threaten the future of the family.

Upon the advice of the doctor, Necla goes for a holiday on her own. Such a holiday is planned to give her the opportunity to think about her feelings and inner conflicts in tranquility. However, on holiday, Necla comes across with Ferhat whom she falls in love with. As Ferhat and Necla spend time together, Necla understands that she is neither ill nor psychologically problematic. Her distanced attitudes towards her husband Tayfur stems from the fact that she does not love him. At this point, Muhittin attracts the attentions to the dangers of arranged marriages, supporting the marriages based on romantic love affairs. Because marriages and proper families are considered as the core of a prosperous society, they should be constituted on romantic relationships instead of forced marriages.

What is striking about Necla is that, although she finds the deepest love on holiday as she meets Ferhat, she returns back to her husband Tayfur because she feels sorry about Tayfur's depressive and evil conducts. Such an action indicates the necessity and priority of saving the family and the role given to women in such cases.

In *The Morning is Coming* the implications of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism can be enumerated as:

1. The importance of educating women. In the first parts of the novella, before Necla marries Tayfur, she is depicted as a girl who is too enthusiastic about attending to university although she is not supported by her family. Necla is the second woman character who receives a higher education. Such women

characters indicate that republican reforms concerning woman are enforced in an effective way.

2. One other important issue in *The Morning is Coming* is the vitality of marriages concerning the future of society. At this point, the importance of sexuality is raised as another important aspect because it provides the continuity of generations. It can be argued that in every literary work Muhittin touches upon the issue of motherhood and mothering as the most important priority in a woman's life. Different from other novellas, in *The Morning is Coming* the vitality of the reproductive role of women is stressed as Necla refuses to have sex with her husband Tayfur which would threaten the continuation of the society.

Seemingly, there is always a woman's issue in Nezihe Muhittin's literary works which are closely connected to Ottoman-Turkish women. What is significant in the way she talks about women and womanhood is that she refers to the discussion areas of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism very frequently. Such implications of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism in the literary works of Nezihe Muhittin indicate that she has continued attracting the attentions to women's issues via writing which makes her novellas very important products of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study has focused on analysing the reflections of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism on the literary works of Nezihe Muhittin written between 1911-1944. Before discussing the reflections of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism on the literary works of Nezihe Muhittin, the dimensions of the Western First Wave Feminism and its repercussions in Ottoman-Turkish societies have been introduced and discussed in detail. Such a beginning facilitated conceptualisation of (1) the evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism (2) the sprout of the idea of 'feminism' in Ottoman-Turkish societies and (3) the transformation of the Ottoman-Turkish women in the light of discussions shaped around the issue of women's problems.

In subsequent to the theoretical background, Nezihe Muhittin's struggles and activism in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism have been examined in detail. Nezihe Muhittin was one of the important figures who took active part in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, both as a participant of various women's associations and as a writer of several articles, short stories, novellas all of which dealt with women's issues. That is why, Muhittin's life story and her activism during the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism enabled a comprehensive understanding of the way she molded her feminist world view and the new woman image she proposed. In the light of debate issues of the feminist movement in the Ottoman-Turkish societies and Muhittin's understanding of feminism, a critical reading of Muhittin's literary works have been done with the aim of detecting the implications of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism in the themes and women characters of the novellas.

A comprehensive analysis of the implications of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism in Muhittin's writing included the following four novellas: *My Self Is Mine*, 1929 (*Benliğim Benimdir*), *Fireflies*, 1936 (*Ateş Böcekleri*), *A Vagrant Woman*, 1943

(*Avare Kadın*) and *The Morning is Coming*, 1944 (*Sabah Oluyor*). Through a critical reading and analysis of these novellas, it is observed that Muhittin's writing is a product of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. This argument is supported by three findings which are shared aspects of both the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism and the literary works of Nezihe Muhittin: (1) The first of them can be stated as the correlation between the debate issues of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism and the frequently referred themes in Muhittin's novellas (2) The second finding is the correlation between the appreciated and criticised women in the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism and the good and evil woman characters in Muhittin's novellas (3) The third finding is the contradictory aspect of Ottoman-Turkish feminists' understanding of feminism and the reflection of this contradiction in Muhittin's novellas.

1. Ottoman-Turkish Feminists discussed the following issues concerning the improvement of the status of women in society: that women should have equal educational, economic and political rights with men, that the Ottoman-Turkish family needs reforms because family is considered as the core unit of the society, that women should be perfect mothers and wives who have a vital role in the development of healthy generations, that women should be "modern but modest"²⁵ at the same time, that women should take part in the re-organization of society by participating the activities of various women's associations in public sphere and that female slavery should be abolished since it is considered as an extreme form of exploitation of women. Moreover, although the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism emerged along with the Western First Wave Feminism, Ottoman-Turkish feminists were cautious about the influence of the West on the cultural heritage of Ottoman society. For that reason, extreme Westernization was considered as a threat to the cultural continuation of the Ottoman-Turkish societies.

²⁵ This phrase is used by Kandiyoti as a definition of new republican woman (1997).

After a thematic analysis is applied to the novellas of Muhittin, it is observed that all of these issues which were once on the agenda of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, later emerged in the novellas of Nezihe Muhittin. For instance, female slavery, importance of women's education, implying the probable threats of extreme Westernization, sexuality and violence, marriage, illegitimate relations and the importance of forming a healthy family for a healthier society as well as the importance of proper mothering can be enumerated as the usually preferred themes of Muhittin's novellas. The similarity between the agenda of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism and Muhittin's literary works demonstrates that Muhittin's writing developed under the influence of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism and her literary works are the products of the strong women's movement of her time.

2. Considering women characters in the novellas, it is detected that they are remarkably compatible with the appreciated good women and criticised evil women types of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. Appreciated new woman type is supposed to be educated, modern and modest who is also a dedicated carrier of national and cultural values. In this respect, the new woman is, first and foremost, a devoted mother and wife who has strong responsibility on the continuation of a prosperous society. For example, Hacer in *Fireflies* is a typical new women type who is glorified during the early years of the Turkish Republic as a modest girl, aware of the importance of education and becomes the first woman lawyer of the country. That Hacer's altruistic character is emphasized is also significant in that it conveys the message that an ideal women should be altruistic, tolerant and devoted. Muhittin shows her appreciation for Hacer with the scene when Hacer's success was published in the newspaper. That is striking because by doing so, Muhittin affirms that Hacer is a collectively-approved character.

In the same way, revolutionary women characters can also be considered as the products of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. As far as Zeynep and Mehveş in *My Self Is Mine* are concerned, their evolution from female slaves to intellectual women characters is striking. Although Zeynep is sold as a female slave, she is

aware of the evil consequences of being sold and she wants to be the unique authority over her body.

On the contrary, evil characters in the novellas are generally the ones who misunderstand Westernization and are alienated to their own cultural values. For instance, Suzan in *Fireflies*, is an evil woman character who is depicted as flighty, spoiled and a temptress woman just as the opposite of glorified family woman. By the same token, evil women characters are evil mothers who victimize their own daughters as a result of being wrong role-models. Mehpare in *Avare Kadın* is a typical victimized woman whose doom is depicted as the inevitable consequence of distorted family relations and vicious mothering.

3. In addition, it is also observed that although Ottoman-Turkish feminists struggled to emancipate women, at the end, they defined woman in the borders of family, prioritising the domestic roles such as motherhood and wifehood. Such an approach reinforces the fact that women's rights were not perceived as individual rights, but on the contrary improving women's status was considered as a necessity for the continuation of the family and society. Ottoman-Turkish feminists did not overcome the contradiction that emerged out of overloading woman by attributing her crucial roles both in the public and the private spheres. In this regard, women were encouraged to be educated just as their male counterparts and be employed which was proposed as a remedy to emancipate them. Nevertheless, women were also expected to be perfect mothers and wives which created an inextricable conflict. As Baykan and Ötüş-Baskett indicate, overloading women in this way was a paradox that Ottoman-Turkish feminists could not overcome, as well as Nezihe Muhittin (1999: 33). The implication of this contradiction on the formation of new woman can best be explained in Kandiyoti's words as she interprets the situation of Ottoman-Turkish woman as "emancipated but not liberated" (1997: 65).

The same contradiction can be detected in Muhittin's writings, particularly in the creation of appreciated and criticised women characters. For instance, Muhittin

created evil women characters who are transgressors of determined social rules while she praises women characters who are stereotypical role-models as ideal family women who do not act out of socially accepted code of conduct. However, this contradiction does not denote that Muhittin's writing is far from feminist writing. As Felski defines, feminist writing should include a "critical awareness of women's subordinate position and of gender as a problematic category" (Felski qtd. in Eagleton, 1996: 14). Considering Muhittin's writing, it is evident that each novella includes a critical issue concerning Ottoman-Turkish womanhood. That Muhittin creates emancipatory and revolutionary women characters is another indicator of a feminist writing. In a patriarchal society which underestimates the power of women, Muhittin attributes women characters a big power to make their voices heard. The contradictory aspects of Muhittin's writing can be compensated by Toril Moi's argument which says that all ideas, including the feminist ones, are contaminated by patriarchal thought (1986:205). As stated by Moi, it is difficult to be totally differentiated from the patriarchal thought. Concerning Muhittin's writing, it is observed that her literary works can be considered as the flourish of feminist consciousness in the Ottoman-Turkish societies.

One other important point is that, although Nezihe Muhittin was an active participant of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, none of her literary works directly expresses the endeavors, struggles of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. Throughout this study, it is observed that Muhittin evaded giving direct information about the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism. This may be a consequence of Muhittin's resentment emerged out of her being overthrown from the Turkish Women's Association which culminated in a notorious reputation for her. As the founder and the head of the Women's Political Party and the Turkish Women's Association, the reaction Muhittin faced with seems unbearable. Moreover, that she is attacked by her women friends makes the situation worse. Such an experience may have engendered a deep dissatisfaction for Nezihe Muhittin. That is why, experiencing such outrageous events may resulted in an unbelief concerning the 'sisterhood and the solidarity among women', for which she struggled vehemently. For that reason, she may have avoided dealing with the Ottoman-

Turkish Feminism in her literary works. However, crucial feminist implications can be felt which demonstrate that Muhittin continued dealing with women's questions implicitly in her literary works. Alternatively, Muhittin preferred to write romantic or didactic novellas, not dealing directly with the women's question as she dealt with during the period of the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism, just for economic purposes in that such books were preferable as they are easy reading and adventurous.

One way or another, Nezihe Muhittin's novellas should not be considered merely as romantic love novellas. Her literary works are the products of both the Ottoman-Turkish Feminism and the feminist literary tradition when the themes as well as her approach and presentation of women characters are concerned.

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APPENDICES

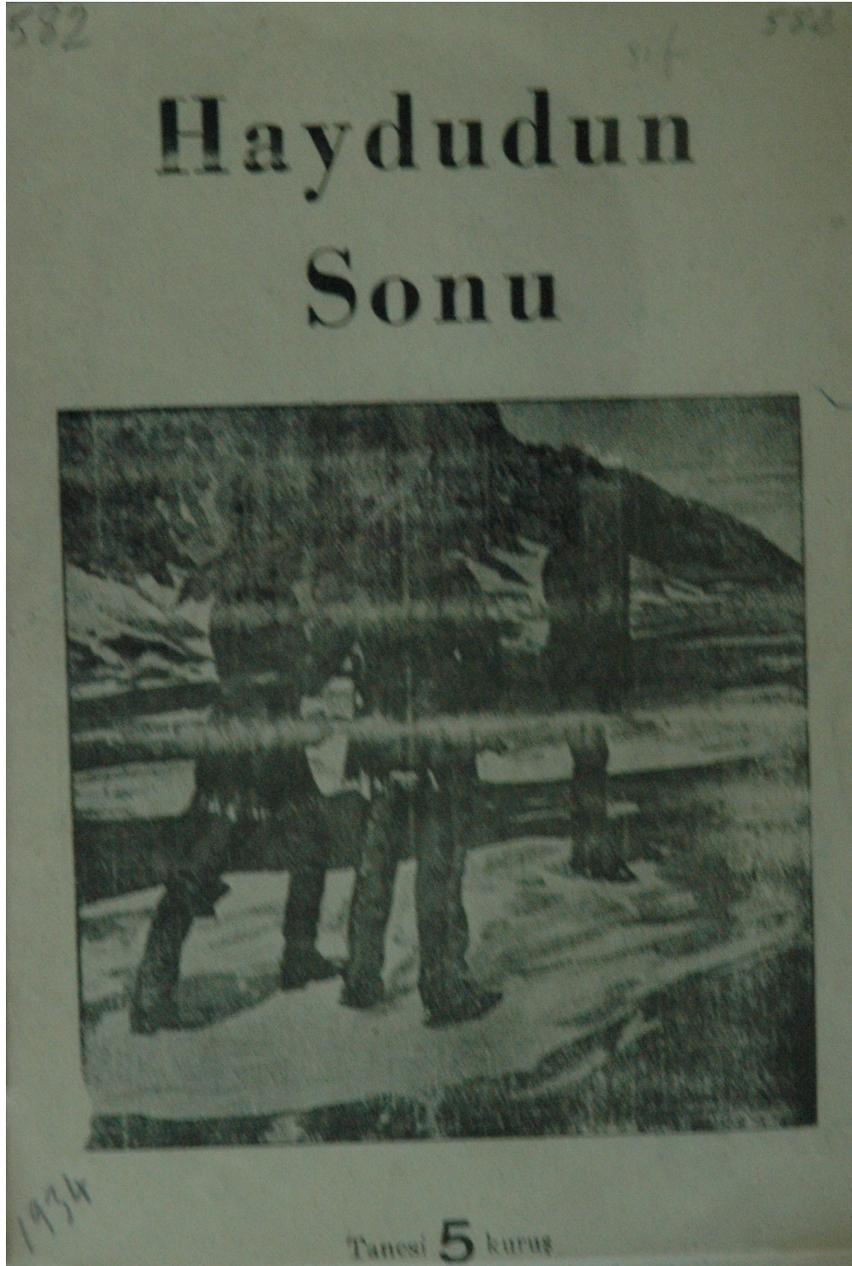
APPENDIX A: THE COVER PAGES OF LITERARY WORKS OF NEZİHE MUHİTTİN

The cover pages of the existent novellas have been reached from The National Library in Ankara. Unfortunately, cover pages of some novellas have been distorted as a result of rebindings over time. Those which have been attained from the National Library have been attached at the appendix part of the study by means of microfilming photography.

1. My Self is Mine (Benliđim Benimdir), 1929



2. The End of the Bandit (Haydudun Sonu), 1934



3. A Landro in İstanbul (İstanbul'da Bir Landro), 1934



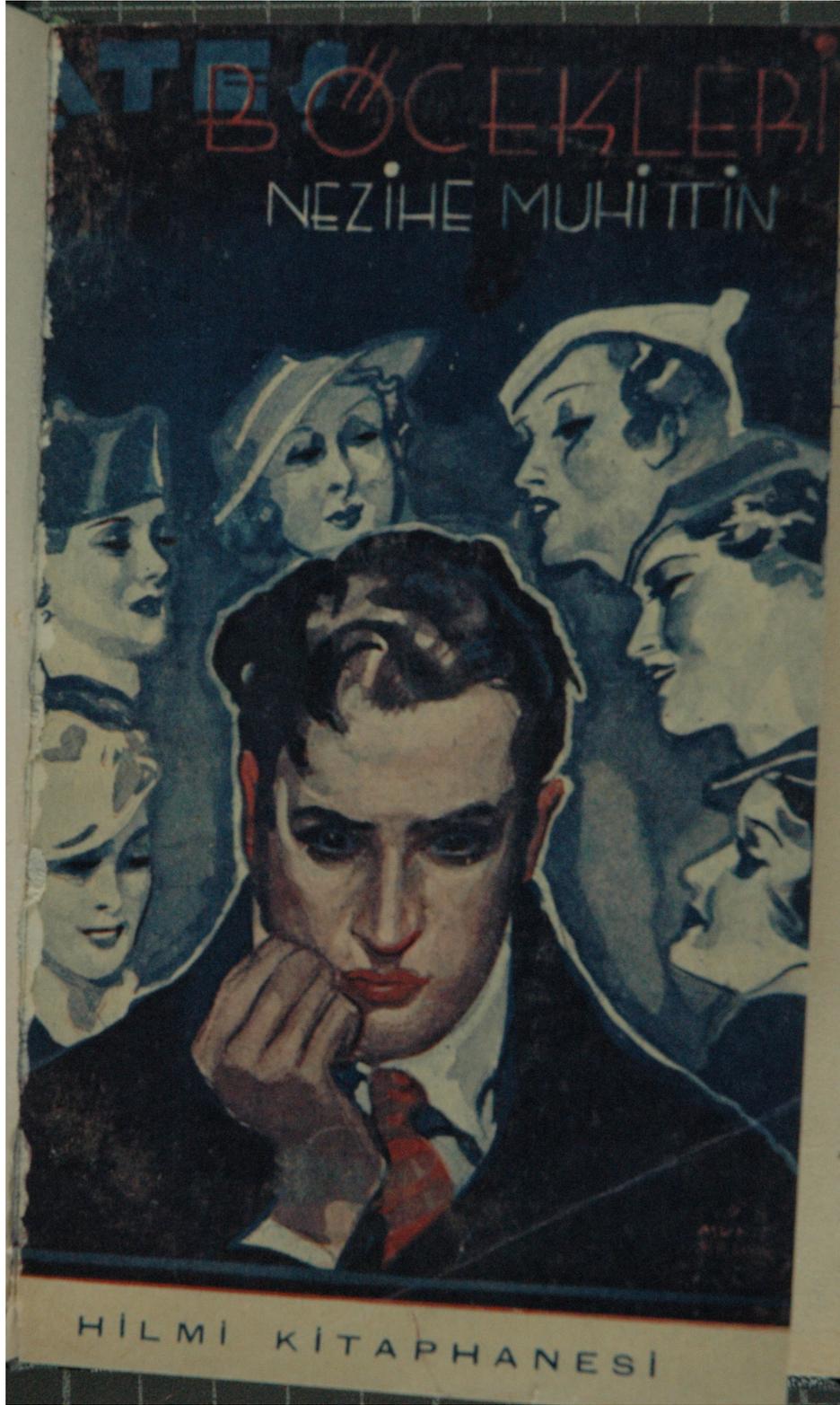
4. *Grandmother Kevser (Kevser Nine)*, 1934



5. *Grey Wolf: The Novel of Little Mehmet (Bozkurt: Küçük Mehmet'in Romanı), 1934*



6. *Fireflies (Ateş Böcekleri)*, 1936



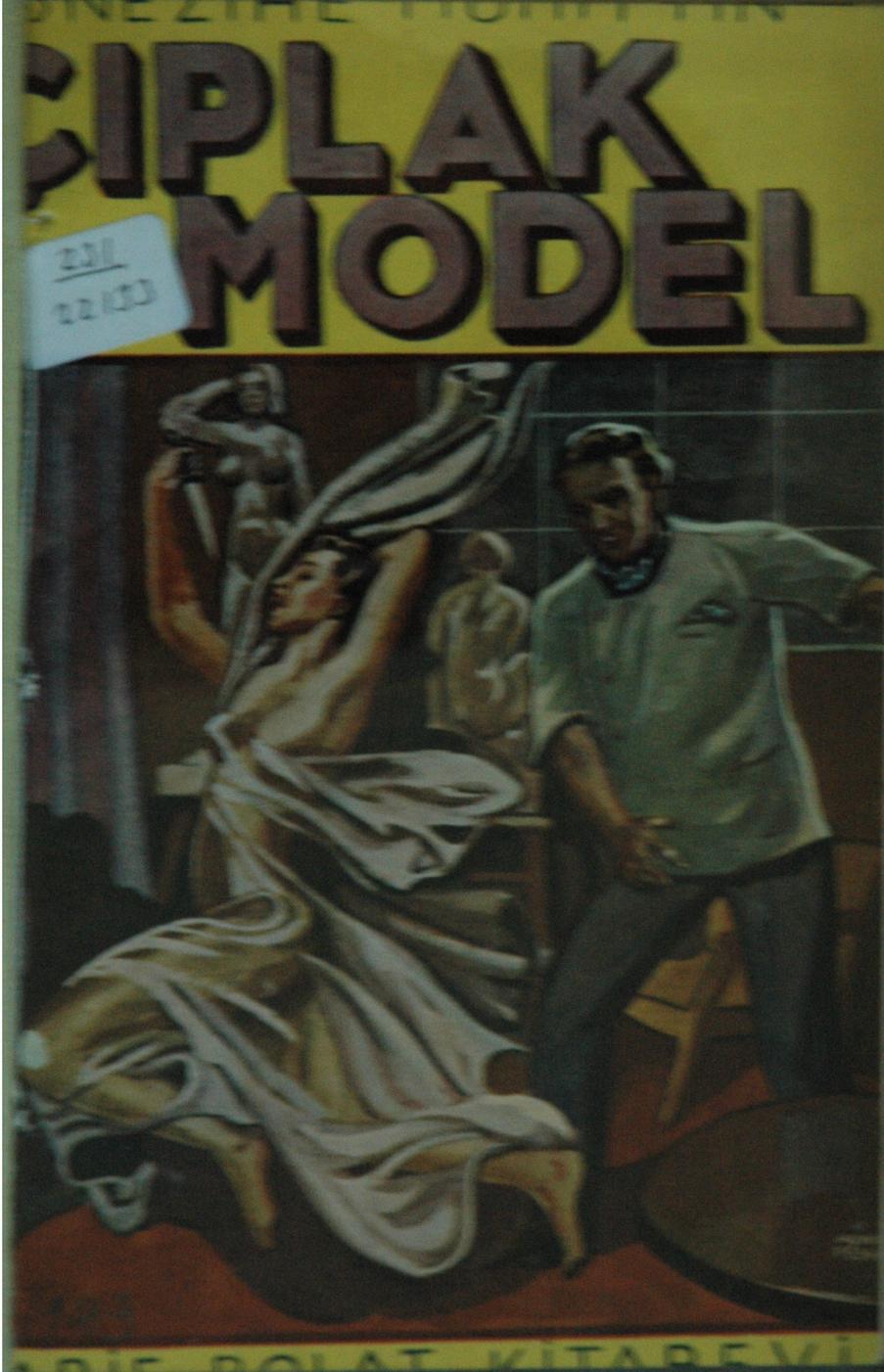
7. *The End of a Love (Bir Aşk Böyle Söndü)*, 1939



8. *It Was a Summer Night (Bir Yaz Gecesiydi)*, 1943



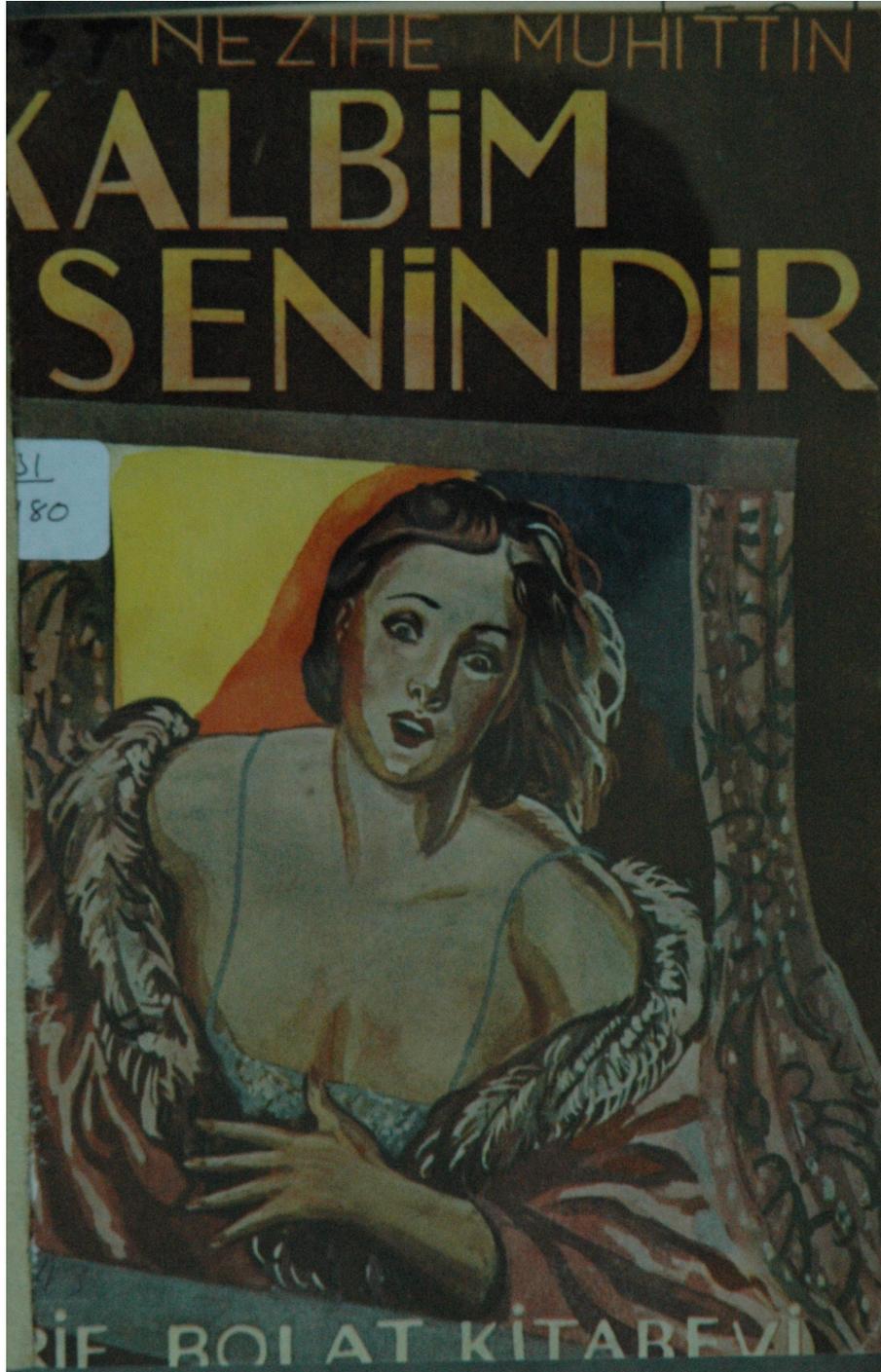
9. *Nude Model (Çıplak Model)*, 1943



10. A Vagrant Woman (Avare Kadın), 1943



11. *My Heart Is Yours (Kalbim Senindir)*, 1943



12. Rattlesnake (Çingiraklı Yılan), 1943



13. İzmir Child (İzmir Çocuđu), 1944



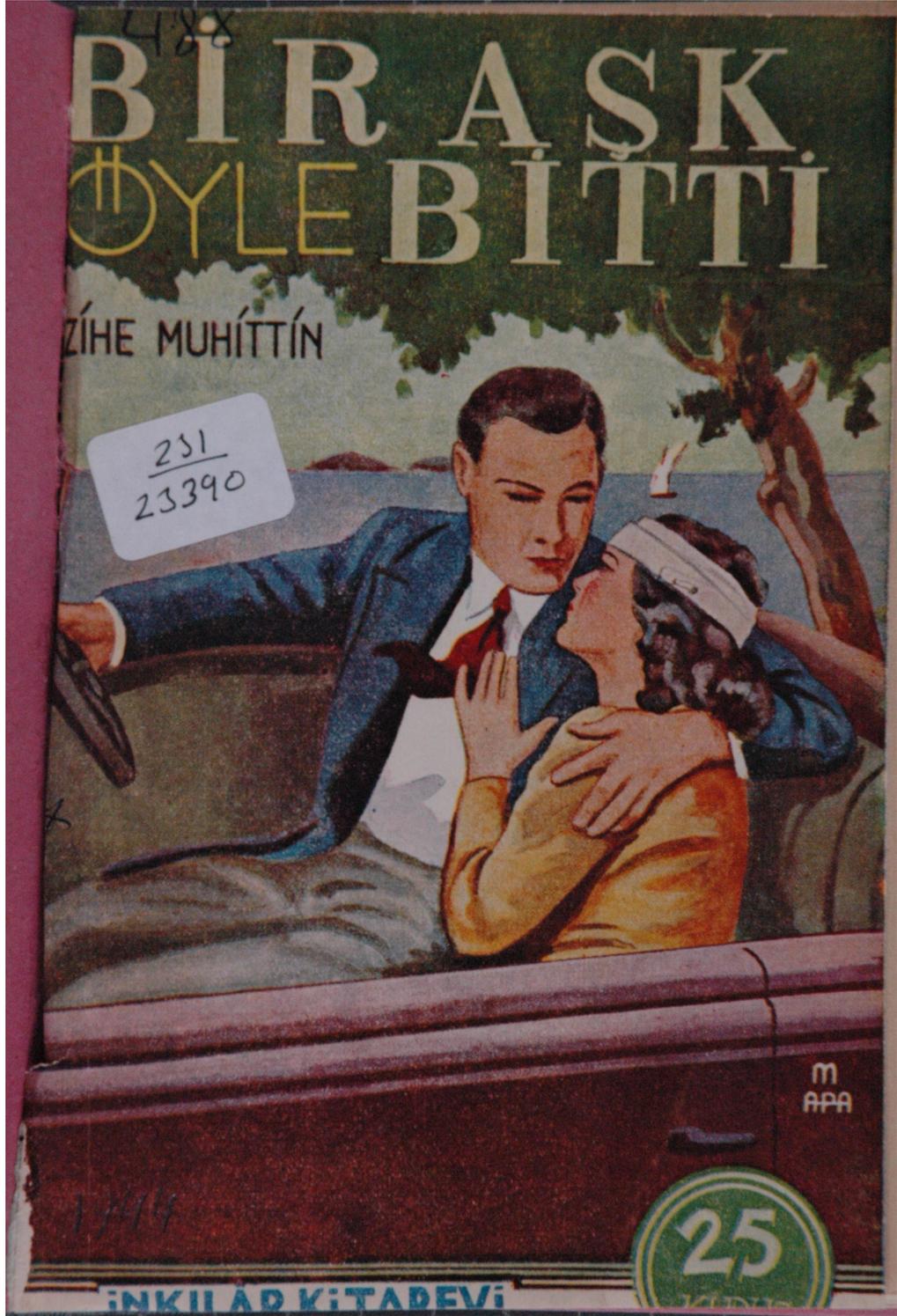
14. *The Morning is Coming* (*Sabah Oluyor*), 1944



15. *You Will Come Again (Gene Geleceksin) 1944*



16. *A Love Ended Like That (Bir Aşk Böyle Bitti) 1944*



17. *Quiete My Heart Quiete (Sus Kalbim Sus)*, 1944



