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Murat Akser, Ulster University

m.akser@ulster.ac.uk

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Abstract

Defined by some critics as the ultimate national cinema movement piece, Halit Refiğ's *I Lost My Heart to a Turk* (1969), the love story of a German woman and a Turkish worker in the ancient town of Kayseri becomes an allegory for the Turkish nation's identity crisis. This paper identifies the parameters used by Refiğ to position the Turkish identity in his film and emphasize the special role of women in Turkish modernization.

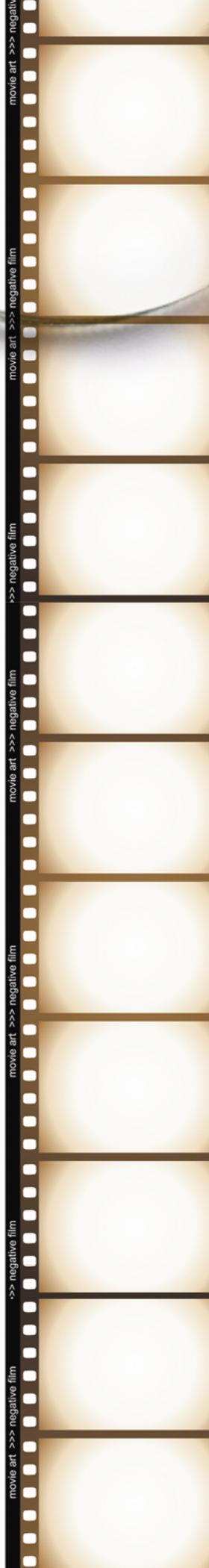
Keywords: Woman, Islam, Cinema, Film, Refiğ, Turkey



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Halit Refiğ's *I Lost My Heart to a Turk*: Woman, Islam and Modernity in Turkish Cinema

Murat Akser

Defined by some critics as the ultimate national cinema movement piece, Halit Refiğ's *I Lost My Heart to a Turk* (1969), the love story of a German woman and a Turkish worker in the ancient town of Kayseri becomes an allegory for the Turkish nation's identity crisis. This paper identifies the parameters used by Refiğ to position the Turkish identity in his film and emphasize the special role of women in Turkish modernization. Although there have been recent attempts to discuss the film in terms of migration and national identity, a comprehensive analysis in English language is still missing (Yüksel, 2010; Kayaoğlu 2012; Yıldırım 2015).

Refiğ's incursions into the issues related to the role of women in public life as one of the major topics of discussion of national identity in his previous films such as *Four Women in the Harem* (1964) and *Birds of Exile* (1965). Turkey is the first Muslim country to adapt universal suffrage and grant equality of women in all aspects of public by law. Yet women also act as markers for national identity in the discourse of the new revolutionary patriarch with a modernization project. Refiğ's films reflect his interpretation of a dual identity or an identity crisis regarding women's place in society and as a consequence within Turkish national identity (Akser 2017; Akser and Durak-Akser 2017). The official cultural state discourse of the 1960s presented the view that Turkey has become a modern European country by granting women all civil rights. But on the other side women were still expected to remain within the space designated by the modernizing patriarchs. They were expected to be obedient wives who cook and raise children. This is the so-called patriarchal paradox of Turkish democracy (Arat 1997; White 2003)

Halit Refiğ: An Intellectual Filmmaker

Halit Refiğ made his films in the classic period of Yeşilçam between 1961-1989. In his memoirs Refiğ describes himself as lucky to be working in a prolific and dynamic era for filmmakers (Refiğ & Türk 2001; Hristidis-Kılıç 2007; Refiğ & Zileli 2009). Refiğ also endured a politically turbulent period of the 1960s-70s where right and left wing fighting among Turkish political elite reflected the Cold War conflicts of the era (Karaveli 2018). Refiğ's popularity among Turkish film historians lies in his strength as an intellectual Turkish filmmaker who reflected the ideas of his time.

Refiğ was born into an industrial family in the cosmopolitan coastal city of Izmir and raised in the imperial city of Istanbul. He had his education in English and attended the American Robert College of Istanbul, the oldest US institution of higher education abroad. He has been to Korea, Vietnam and Singapore in 1955-6 where he shot documentaries with a Super 8 camera. He started writing film criticism in 1958 and made his first feature film 1961.

Refiğ soon experienced the dilemmas of being a Turkish intellectual: Being Turkish meant living in the land of thousands of years of cultures merging and mixing, rising and falling civilizations. It meant repressing the multi-cultural Ottoman past and reaching back to a forgotten age of Turkic tribes fighting the Chinese in the steppes of central Asia.

Refiğ soon understood what being an intellectual in Turkey meant: It meant alliance with the reforming military-bureaucratic elite. Being a Turkish intellectual meant having an agenda to

enlighten people, to force them to deny the history between 1299-1922, to tell that their religion is false and their language and customs have to be purified and made national.

Finally, being a Turkish intellectual filmmaker at the time meant having to work in a profit-based market that cares little for education, talent, vision and ideals and is for entertainment only. Refiğ made a deal with producers: for every blockbuster he produced he would be given crew and equipment to shoot a cheap personal project. This explains how he still survived within the system even when his more intellectual films failed in the market.

Halit Refiğ launched his first attack on split Turkish identity in 1961 with *Forbidden Love* (Yasak Ask). He formulated a love triangle roughly corresponding to three pillars of Turkish identity: the westernized-scientific, the Ottoman-Islamic and the Turkish-nationalist republican.

Refiğ had always been an ardent reader of Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil who was an elite novelist of the 19th century who dealt with issues of westernization and alienation of the intellectual in civilian and military bureaucracy. He adapted *Aşk-ı Memnu*, (forbidden love in Ottoman Turkish) as *Yasak Aşk* (the modern Turkish version of the title). In this film, Refiğ created his famous love triangle: a young woman married to an old man with a lover who is the husband's relative, usually a nephew. This way Refiğ created an elaborate allegory. The Ottoman past is represented by the husband and is cheated by the young wife who in turn represents the Turkish element and finally the seducer who represents westernization.

Refiğ's uses women characters as allegories for the Turkish nation. This is a process of using women in reference to a national allegory (qualities of Islam-Turkishness) as national experience resulting from an intentional process of encoding especially when particular individuals

are presented as representative of a group or when the recapitulation of the past is taken as the disguised discussion of present dilemmas (Xavier 1999: 334-35). Such encoding works at both conscious (that of the artist/creator) and unconscious (that of the reader of the text) levels. In terms of film the allegory can be read in both horizontal (narratological successions of shots to create time-space) and vertical (cultural codes, intertextuality and interaction of image and sound) levels (Xavier 1999: 335).

The use of allegory in Refiğ's case is very much conscious; he can use an entire mansion house as an allegory in *Four Women in the Harem* or the adventures of a woman as an allegory in *I Lost My Heart to a Turk*. Refiğ also explicitly acknowledged his use of allegory in *Four Women in the Harem*, the house representing the Ottoman land and its inhabitants performing in a large allegory (Akser and Durak-Akser 2017). This way our attention will be focused on the relationship of the use of women as a discursive element in nation-building in Refiğ's films.

Refiğ used allegory over and over again with multiple couples and multiple lovers in films like *Those Were the Days We Loved* (1965), *Shattered Lives* (1966). Refiğ also shares similar concerns about women's condition in Turkish society as the Kemalist founders of the Republic. But his allegorical use of women in his films performs a critique of the anomalies created by the same Kemalists elite. The Kemalist rhetoric to emancipate women and to destroy theocratic Ottoman institutions conflict with public patriarchy limiting women's freedom and visibility in Turkish society. This conflict is the most fundamental conflict in Turkish society. Any discussion about modernism and secularism must start with women's place in society in Turkey.

Refiğ's most interesting characters are always women and they dominate the plot in all his films. Women can be used as allegories of a nation in the extreme as in the example of *I Lost My Heart to a Turk*. The German woman Eva who comes to find the father of her illegitimate son

and goes on to become a Turkish saint, an ideal image that personifies all elements of Turkish culture including the language (Turkish), religion (Islam), technology (western), ancient civilizations (Byzantium, Ottoman) and finally nature.

Women in the Nation Building Process

Women (or rather the concept of women) act as an important ideological marker in the newly independent ex-colony now nation-states. Through legislation, the new revolutionary elite of these countries gave large degree of freedom to women for participation in public life. But the revolutionary élites were no less patriarchy than the imperial/colonial elite they replaced (Yuval-Davis 1997).

Various studies on women indicate that women participate in the nation building process. Walby reports that they are used as ‘a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories’ (Walby 1996: 82). Özkırmırlı refers to Anthias and Yuval-Davis' concept of woman as representative of nation:

....in addition to being biological reproducers of members of ethnic communities woman are also the reproducers of boundaries of ethnic/national groups transmitter of culture as well as signifiers of ethnic/national differences...(Özkırmırlı 2017: 205-211)

In European countries political rights were usually given relatively late to women compared with third world countries. In the European context, women fought to legalize their citizenship rights whereas in the third world context, women were granted these rights without

much effort on their part (Walby 1996: 91). In all countries however, after granting these rights to women, the male political authority redefines its traditional role towards women through legislation. After these laws are passed, men have limited control over women's bodies, their right to enter a job or stand for political career. Except in rare cases, women are still under the control of the private patriarchy, that is, of domestic male domination. In the public patriarchy, created for women by the state, women are not excluded from activities in the public domain. They are 'allowed to enter all spheres, but are segregated and subordinated there' (Walby 1996: 89).

Nation-state formation in Turkey followed a similar course. After its war of independence and the abolition of the sultanate, the revolutionary elite of the republic used women as national symbols. Previously, post-Tanzimat reformists had emphasized 'the emancipation of women in moralistic, sentimental and civilizational terms' but not from a nationalistic view (Kandiyoti 1991: 26). Their objective was to attack decaying Ottoman institutions in the face of growing European economic and military power.

Since conservative Ottoman institutions were strong and any attack on them could raise objections, Kemalists chose the issue of women when they wanted to attack these institutions (Kandiyoti 1991: 26). During World War I and the independence war, women's 'patriotic' activities legitimized their greater mobility and visibility (Kandiyoti 1991: 30; Arat 2008: 391-93). With the establishment of the Turkish Republic, women were granted full citizenship and equal rights. Since the Kemalists tried to limit religion to the private sphere and create a full scale, secular life 'the woman question became one of the pawns in the Kemalist struggle to liquidate the theocratic remnants of the Ottoman state' (Kandiyoti 1991: 38). Unlike their western counterparts, Turkish women lacked the economic power to achieve any independent action against the patriarchal system. Instead they are given a mission:

...mythical unity of national imagined communities is maintained and ideologically reproduced by a whole system of symbolic border guards which classify people as members and non-members of a specific collectivity. These border guards are closely linked to specific cultural codes of style of dress and behavior as well as to more elaborate bodies of customs, religion, literary and artistic modes of production and of course language ...women are seen as embodiments and cultural reproducers of ethnic/national collectivities... (Özkırmılı 2017: 179)

Until the emergence of an autonomous female action, the new Turkish women were given the mission of legitimizing the new Turkish Republic. They assumed the role of fighters against ignorance of the masses in Anatolia and had to work hard to deserve the rights they were given. Their mission was to *civilize* people, especially ‘backward’ rural women. Kemalist equality of rights melted into the pot of sameness with the women having a genderless identity or women behaving like men (Arat 1997: 101). During this transformation process radical and different voices were repressed, including women's rights advocates (Karaveli 2018). The liberated Turkish woman was compelled to ‘repress her sexuality, had faith in professionalism (or education) and had respect for the community over the individual’ (Arat 1997: 105). After several decades and economic and cultural transformation in the 1960s, some Turkish women were able to achieve economic freedom. Some claimed equal freedom of action in the intellectual and revolutionary circles.

The position of women in Turkish society is especially important considering the change in the social bond once binding the empire together, Islam. Islam has the practice of organizing daily life and urges the use of a civil code based on the superiority of men over women.

Halit Refiğ seems to be well aware of the role of women in the definition of Turkish national identity. His films have female characters trying to fight in a male dominated world where they have to fight the patriarchal authority as well as fight conservative Islamist discourse. They both have to act as symbolic pawns. Refiğ supplies the viewer with a multitude of female characters in *Stranger in the City* (*Şehirdeki Yabancı*), *Shattered Lives* (*Kırık Hayatlar*), *Girls of Istanbul* (*İstanbul'un Kızları*), *I Give My life to You* (*Canım Sana Fedâ*) all have female characters.

Refiğ uses his female characters to narrate the national allegory and defining the qualities of Turkish identity. They are urban girls (*Those were the days we loved/Seviştiğimiz Gunler*-1961), urban wives (*Shattered Lives/Kırık Hayatlar* - 1966), pilots (*Watchmen of Dawn/Şafak Bekçileri*-1963), teachers (*Knock Down the Bitch/Vurun Kahpeye*-1973) or prostitutes. But they are all struggling in a hostile male world in a patriarchal discourse that promises happiness, economic-social freedom but in the protective disguise prevents women from achieving their aims. Thus, this schizophrenic identity split of women lead to their destruction in the end. Though women seem to achieve what they want, it is still the male dominant world that tolerates and defines the borders of female success and freedom.

The contrast between constructed national identity versus cultural identity is stressed through the allegorical journey of the woman in *I Lost My Heart to a Turk*. Refiğ contrasts the constructed Turkish national identity and its mission to create the positivist westernized individual with the natural cultural identity of Turkish people (stored in the collective unconscious of the people) through German woman's, Eva's, experience.

Synopsis

I Lost My Heart to a Turk is the story of a German woman Eva Bender (Eva Bender), who is deserted by a Turkish worker in Germany five years ago and left alone with a child Zafer. Eva's father refuses his illegitimate grandson from a Turkish worker. She comes to Kayseri, Turkey (the most conservative city in Turkey and center of ancient civilizations) with her illegitimate child to seek her ex-lover, İsmail Acar (Bibal Inci). İsmail works at Sümer Cotton Cloth factory as a mechanic and is about to establish a small private business. Eva finds her ex-lover but she soon realizes that İsmail exploited her in Germany to get a work permit and shelter. İsmail now lives with his wife and children and also uses his sister-in-law as a sex slave. Humiliated and beaten by İsmail, the German woman receives assistance from another Turkish worker, Mustafa (Ahmet Mekin). Mustafa is a young truck driver dreaming of migrating to Germany as a worker. But after he meets Eva, he gives up his dream and falls in love with her. Mustafa also helps his home village to get funding for a water project. Eva also falls in love with Mustafa and Turkish hospitality and converts to Islam, changing her name into Havva (means Eve in Turkish). As she is about to get married to Mustafa, İsmail gets jealous and shoots Mustafa during the wedding ceremonies. Mustafa's parents love and protect Havva and Eva-Havva refuses her brother Hans' and her father's calls to go back to Germany.

East and West: Cultural Politics of Identity

In *I Lost My Heart to a Turk*, western formalism, machinery, technology and modern-rational manners are contrasted with Turkish sincerity, hand and sweat labor and traditional practices.

Eva is robot-like before her transformation. She dresses and undresses mechanically, walks in the public in an as if she does not exist. Her speech is formal and monosyllabic. After her change she is relaxed in traditional Turkish clothes. She enjoys her body and feels happy to do hard house chores with other Turkish women. She speaks fluently and with a rich vocabulary. She also develops a lively smile. Eva's transformation after the encounter with the Turkish culture gives this message: there is no need to adapt western/European ways of living. It is a cold-rational and soulless way of living. The true path to spiritual happiness can be found in local Turkish culture.

The comparison between European formalism is also represented through Eva's son, Zafer. Zafer has a toy rocket (signifying German-European technological achievement and rationality) he carries everywhere. Later at Mustafa's village, where the kid meets his roots for the first time, he exchanges the rocket with a trip on a donkey and a traditional hat. This trade between kids is unequal. A rocket is only a toy, an inanimate object, whereas a donkey is a living entity and has value and function in the village. When the German boy is attracted to the beauty and simplicity of Turkish way of living, the poor Turkish kids are dazzled by the toy rocket. Refiğ directs our attention to the age-old conflict between the two worldviews and life styles. East and west have different material, social, economic, political backgrounds and transformations. But both sides also envy each other at the same time. The western rational individual has achieved a significant level of luxury in daily life through her investment in the material world. She envies the spiritual, natural state of living. The eastern man has experienced the depths of sensuality, otherworldly life style and wants to have material wealth as comfort.

Yet another encounter of the east and the west happen through religious symbols and monuments. The images and interiors of the ancient church in Kayseri are contrasted with mosques and minarets in the old city of Kayseri. Eva visits the ancient, cold church and hears the prayer of orthodox priests in a ritual. The sound of the ritual is far from relaxing. It evokes fear and

frustration. Then Eva encounters the Islamic practices of daily prayer. The next time she takes refuge in the church, she prays in the Islamic way and this time the sound of the church (inside her mind) is relaxing. Thus Eva unites two ways of living into practice in a consensual and symbolic way. Being a German woman, she prays as a muslim woman in a Byzantium church. This metaphor reconciles east and west as a synthesis (recommended to and/or actually practiced by) for the Turkish people.

In *I Lost My Heart to a Turk*, the clash between east and west is represented through Eva and her son in their encounter with the Turkish way of life. They both successfully adapt themselves to this environment; in fact, they welcome this transformation from material into the spiritual. Another extension of the east-west conflict in Refiğ's film is the conflict of old-new.



Figure 1: Eva is left alone with her son by his Turkish husband, Ismail, who appears to be westernized in look but acts as a patriarch on the inside.

Old and New: Resistance is Futile

According to Frantz Fanon one of the dangers of going back to the original roots in the myth-making process of a young nation-state can be over-romantization of the past practices. The artist in creating a new myth can try to adapt and encourage a neo-conservatism (Fanon 2004). Halit Refiğ is well aware of the fact that Turkish modernization initiated two centuries ago is partially successful in Turkish society but it is also possible to reconcile traditional elements in Turkish culture to the new Turkish identity. In *I Lost My Heart to a Turk*, Refiğ explores the tensions of change and disintegration of traditional culture in the Turkish rural life.

First the small world of the Turkish village is confused by the sudden appearance of a blonde German woman. With her manners, clothing and language Eva contrasts with the local

women. The imam, the religious authority in the village, sees her as a corrupting element in simple rural life. The imam's arguments are challenged by Mustafa's father, the *muhtar*, local and elected leader of the village. In a conversation between the imam and the *muhtar*, we see the confrontation of two strong elements in Turkish culture. One man is representing ancient Islamic heritage while the other stands for popular and democratic civil wisdom. The two old men agree on the bleakness of the future in their discussion about the unproductive land, migration of youth to big cities and European cities. We witness that a similar anxiety is also reflected on the other side as well. The European countries are amazed by the willingness of Turkish people to leave their country to live in Germany. A newspaper on Eva's table reads: 'hilfe die Turken kommen': (meaning help the Turks are coming).

The issue of old versus new is brought once again by rural women in Mustafa's family. Mustafa's mother is prejudiced about European women. She claims Eva is incompatible with Turkish traditions, she will corrupt the order of the small village. (Eva drinks rakı, a Turkish alcoholic beverage, offered by Mustafa's father, a shocking action incomprehensible to rural women who are used to serve their husband and never drink alcohol on the same table with them). But this criticism leaves its place to mutual understanding as Eva changes from a childish two-dimensional character to a mature woman. Eva purely and innocently adapts the Turkish customs such as practicing daily prayer, dressing in Turkish traditional rural clothes and speaking in Turkish.

Eva's presence and change brings hope to Mustafa and he quotes his dream of leaving his town for Germany to become a worker. Mustafa actively tries to change the fate of the village by bringing water for better farming. He applies for government loans and grants for farming. Mustafa's change is the representation of Turkish peoples' ability to adapt and fight their fate.

There is also an ambiguous scene about the unionized workers call for a strike in the Sümer factory. In this scene, a few workers are gathered around a unionist whereas most of the workers ignore the call of the strike. The ambiguity lies in the indecision of the viewer. Here both the ignorance of the workers is being criticized and the incompatibility a foreign and western practice in an eastern context is criticized. The scene becomes more when we consider Refiğ's and Erksan's efforts and failure to unionize the national film industry. In 1960s the Turkish national Cinema movement advocates tried to unionize the domestic identity but failed because of producers' attempt to accuse the unionization drive as communist propaganda. Refiğ hints at the ignorance of the people about their exploitation and knowledge of their rights. But, at the same time, Refiğ tries to understand why they have failed. In a community based eastern society, capitalist relationships are not shaped as sharp as in European society. Thus, applying the same socialist or Marxist principles of this society can be impossible or meaningless (Akser and Durak Akser 2017).

One Woman, Three Patriarchs: Turkish, European and Islamic Poles

In *I Lost My Hearts to a Turk*, Refiğ also supplies the viewer with a variety of patriarchal figures in Eva's life thus making the love triangle metaphor he used in the early years of his career complete. They are the ex-lover, İsmail, the village teacher, and Mustafa, Eva's husband. These men can be classified as old, new and compassionate patriarch respectively.

İsmail and his friends are the *old patriarchs*. They represent the ugly, corrupted side of Turkish identity. İsmail uses Eva in Germany to have shelter, food and, sex. All of his basic animal-like needs are satisfied then. But when he comes back Turkey, these needs are provided either by an obedient wife or by his sister-in-law. İsmail has no remorse for his actions in Germany. He throws Eva out of his house and tells the local youth 'to scare her' openly inviting the mother of

his child to be raped. This same man kills Eva's newly-wed husband because his code of honor is violated. Eva makes a conscious choice as a woman and chooses a man on her own. This action drives İsmail crazy. As an old fashion patriarch, he cannot tolerate independent female action and kills. There is also reference to western woman and promiscuity. In the factory when asked who Eva was, one of the workers' comment: 'Our man İsmail is a great person. He must have shown the power of the Turk to European women while abroad'. For the workers, or the old patriarch, it is a universal truth that Turkish men are a legend among European women who are ready to have sex with them.

There are also other minor old patriarchs. In addition to İsmail, there are the two pimps and the hotel manager who try to take advantage of Eva's loneliness. The hotel manager takes money to serve Eva to two local rich men (*esnaf*). These people have greedy and obsessive lusty behavior. For them Eva is the reflection of the promiscuous western woman ready to have sex with them. By contrasting İsmail and his friends' lust with Mustafa's romance Refiğ draws a line between the old and compassionate patriarchy. But in between there is the category of a new patriarchy.

The *new patriarch* is the Kemalist republican intellectual we mentioned earlier in the thesis. There is a whole genre of young idealist urban men/women experiencing trauma in the city and finding the true self in the village, and generally they become teachers. such as eg. *Dünden Önce Yarından Sonra* (Before yesterday, after tomorrow) written by Attila İlhan. When Eva first comes to Mustafa's village, the village teacher assists her. In fact, he is temporarily teaching as part of his military service. This teacher is trying to pursue Eva to go back to Germany, and asks why she wanted to stay in 'such a backward land'. He also offers a guided tour of the region and the only thing he could show is the ancient Byzantium church mentioned above. In addition to his discouragement of Eva, the teacher also causes trouble within the village community. The imam

and elder women see Eva and him together and spread rumors of fornication. Here the new Kemalist elite patriarch has nothing to offer to women. He is westernized and lives in a Europeanized dream world far from the everyday realities of his fellow people. But there is hope for Eva and comes in the form of compassionate patriarch, Mustafa.

Mustafa's approach is an alternative to both old and new patriarchs. Mustafa is the personification of Anatolian wisdom and spiritual teaching. He is always positive, providing solution to problems, strong both physically and spiritually. He guides Eva through her journey to the right side and marries her. (Eva's name changed literally to Eve can mean this is the ideal new couple for the future of Turkey, marriage of east and west). In the end the compassionate patriarch even gives his life for the woman he loves, a common theme in Turkish folk tales and love stories. Similarly, after Mustafa's death, Eva is still welcome by Mustafa's father. This is in contrast with Eva's real natural father in Germany. Eva's father throws her out of the house because of her illegitimate child from a Turkish worker. In Kayseri, Turkey, Eva becomes the cause of Mustafa's death and yet Mustafa's father welcomes her as the bride of the house. This patriarchal attitude is compassionate and preferable by the director to old and new patriarchy. It is presented a more natural and inherent in Turkish culture.

Finding the Right Path: The Change

Finally, *I Lost My Heart to a Turk* is about the change in Eva which serves as the allegory for the whole Turkish nation in the search for a national identity. Out of Eva's mythical transformation, several key values of Turkish identity sprout. Before their transformation, Eva speaks a silly monosyllable Turkish mixed with German. She is childish and naive. After she gets full command of Turkish (miraculously overnight) she turns into an adult and her gestures are

sophisticated. There is actually some ambiguity in the passage of time in the film. It feels as if time stands still which is very meaningful considering the values of serenity and spiritualism presented in the film. She becomes a full adult with responsibilities towards the society and people around her. The most striking scene in the film comes at the end when Eva, Ismail and Mustafa come together in a Turkish cafe. İsmail speaks in childish German to communicate whereas Eva, dressed in Turkish traditional costume, answers back in fluent Turkish. Eva asks İsmail why he is not speaking Turkish as well. And Eva’s son Zafer, who has been silent since his birth suddenly, starts speaking Turkish. His first words are: ‘I want to stay here with my mother’. Here Turkish language has some mystical power on individuals. It leads to maturity and wisdom. More importantly İsmail’s inability to communicate in his own language is striking. So Turkish as a language is one of the defining features of Turkish identity.



Figure 2-3: The two posters of the film *I Lost My Heart to a Turk* present the transformation of the German woman Eva into the Turkish woman Havva.

The second important feature of Turkish identity presented in *I Lost My Heart to a Turk* is the idea of sacrifice of the individual for the common good. The community is a means of support and sharing the burden of a hard life. It gives spiritual and physical support to the individual alone in the world on her own. This concept directly opposes the western idea of individual initiative. But the Turkish community is tolerant and welcomes guests and those who repent. The film opens with two stanzas from two ancient Anatolian poets. They are Mevlana-Rumi and Yunus Emre, both poets calling people to unite with society-God-love. Their motto is ‘god’s door is open to everyone who repents’ or you can find happiness in a spiritual love (of God/of human or in a mate). Quoting both poets are significant in that one of them is anonymous folk poet (Yunus Emre) whereas the other is the official elite court poet (Rumi). Whatever their background both poets praise the spiritual inherent in Anatolian people. Mustafa sacrifices himself for Eva without questioning it for a second. Eva is welcomed by the family and village as a sign of hope and happiness in the end. In return Eva is happy to do the difficult rural jobs such as working in the fields, washing clothes and dishes every day and working in the building of the water channel. Thus hospitality, tolerance and sacrifices for the community are defining features of Turkish identity in the film. Here the film is problematic because offering spiritual freedom to Eva, Refiğ also puts her in a physically demanding and classical exploitative role of the rural wife. Is this a real progress or a regression for Eva?

Yet another important component in Turkish identity is the role of Islam. Mustafa is one of the names of the Muslim prophet Muhammed. In the opening lines of Rumi in the film, the lines read like this: “An infidel’s wife came to the village to test out beloved prophet Mustafa. She had a son riding a donkey. When they arrived suddenly the child began to speak.: ‘God send you his love dear prophet, we came to you!’ ” (author's translation). The lines from Yunus Emre read:

“The door of the wise is the door of repent. Those who come determined to this door are not turned down” (author's translation).

Eva finds true peace of mind in Islam. Eva first encounters Islam when she sees village women exercising their daily prayer. She imitates them and finds serenity. She later officially enters the religion through a ceremony and changes her name to Havva. As we have already mentioned, the mosques and minaret have an important presence in every sequence. Islam is presented as an inseparable part of Turkish national identity.

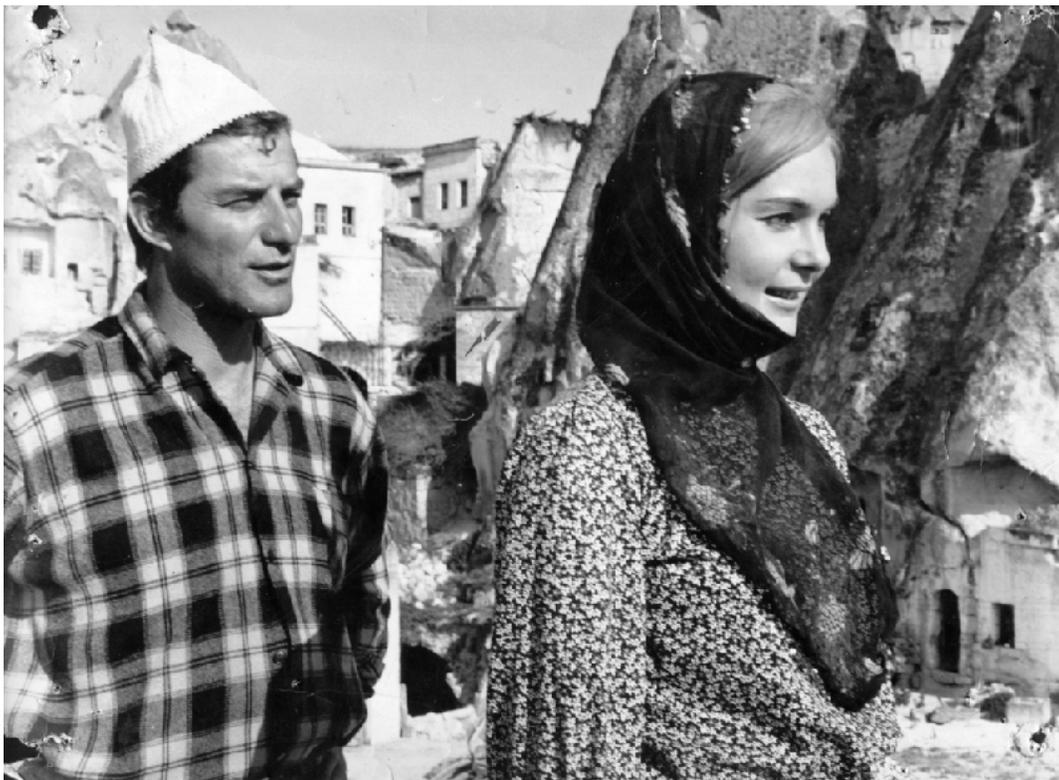


Figure 4: Eva finds true peace in Islam and the authentic Turk, Mustafa.

Finally, Turkish identity is presented as a fine mixture of east and west. A people full of the awareness of the ancient heritage of Anatolia, their central Asian background and their Islamic

value with the consciousness of the necessity to adapt to modern way of life. The use of inanimate objects is significant in that case. There are *peribacaları* (the travanten stones in shape of human beings) that signify the natural heritage of the land. There is the old Byzantium church signifying the mixture with the old civilizations in Anatolia. There are mosques and old *Külliye* (Seljuk and Ottoman religious and educational architecture). The villagers live in peace with the past a, present and the future. They are also aware of the problems of everyday life. They are trying to cope with the change, like building a water channel for better farming. Mustafa earns a living as a truck driver.



Figure 5: Eva's transformation is completed when she converts to Islam.

In *I Lost My Heart to a Turk*, woman's transformation becomes a national allegory for the Turkish nation. Ironically it is a foreigner that is being changed and finds a true path. In her transformation Eva is introduced to several aspects of Turkish national identity. Turkish language, Islam religion, traditional hospitality, tolerance and sacrifice for the community are defining parameters. The clash of east and west and old and new is presented through Eva's mythic journey as she changes into a Turkish person. She is assisted by several patriarchs and she succeeds with the natural compassionate one. In his most interesting work maybe Halit Refiğ is suggesting Turkish people are alienated to their culture and may need such a change. Such references are explicitly made in his theoretical writings on Turkish cinema (Akser 2015; Akser 2018).

Refiğ's two films that focus mostly on women's place in Turkish society are *Four Women in the Harem* and *I Lost My Heart to a Turk*. Both films use allegory as a narrative tool to reconstruct Turkish identity. In the former, a house in the nineteenth century Istanbul and the people live in it stand as national allegory. Women act as markers of modernity and their journey reveal the composition of authentic Turkish identity that Refiğ wants the viewers to see: Turkish, Islamic and westernized.



Figure 6: Eva Bender, the Swedish actress who played Eva in the film, was briefly married to the film's director, Halit Refiğ in the 1960s (Anon. 1969).

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