(SELF-)REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN AT THE DAWN OF A NATION STATE: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF SELMA EKREM AND HALIDE EDIB

by
BILGE ÖZENSOY

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ABSTRACT

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BILGE ÖZENSOY

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Keywords: late Ottoman period, nation building, feminist historiography, otobiography, Halide Edib, Selma Ekrem

This thesis explores the question of how Halide Edib and Selma Ekrem assert their gendered and nationalized agencies through Memoirs and Unveiled: The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl, their respective autobiographical works written in English and set in the transition period between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. Through a textual analysis with reference to the contexts which the narratives refer to, and the context within which they were written, how the textual (self-)representations interplay with the official nation state ideology of the time regarding the leap from an "Ottoman past" to "Turkish identity", and "modern Turkish womanhood" was investigated. The main argument is that both women were contradicting with the image of "the daughters of the Republic", and demonstrate their autobiographical writing the complex, contradictory experiences of women that official history did not account for.

ÖZET

BIR ULUS DEVLETIN ŞAFAĞINDA KADIN (ÖZ-)TEMSILLERI: SELMA EKREM VE HALIDE EDIB'IN OTOBIYOGRAFILERI

BILGE ÖZENSOY

KÜLTÜREL ÇALIŞMALAR YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, EYLÜL 2021

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Hülya Adak

Anahtar Kelimeler: Geç Osmanlı dönemi, ulus devlet inşası, feminist tarih yazımı, otobiyografi, Halide Edib, Selma Ekrem

Bu tezde Halide Edib ve Selma Ekrem'in Memoirs ve Unveiled: The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl başlıklı İngilizce yazılmış ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile Türkiye Cumhuriyeti arasındaki geçiş döneminde geçen otobiyografik anlatılarında cinsiyet ve ulus kimliklerini nasıl ortaya koydukları sorusu araştırılıyor. Anlatılarda bahsedilen bağlamlar ve anlatıların yazıldığı bağlamlara referansla metin analizi yapılarak, metinsel (öz-)temsillerin dönemin resmi ulus devlet ideolojisiyle bir "Osmanlı geçmişi"nden "Türklük kimliği"ne sıçrayış ve "modern Türk kadınlığı" noktalarında nasıl etkileşime girdiği incelenmiştir. Temel argüman, iki kadının da "Cumhuriyet kızları" imgesiyle çatıştığı ve otobiyografik anlatılarıyla kadınların resmi tarihin hesaba katmadığı karmaşık ve çelişkili deneyimlerini ortaya koyduklarıdır.

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Finally, the part I've anticipated forever. A global health crisis and a personal mental health crisis later, here we are. It was no piece of cake, and if I'm able to write these lines at all, it's because of the immense support of many kind spirits along the way. Please forgive me if I've missed anyone out, mere words wouldn't suffice to express my gratitude anyway.

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Last but not least, for my family, their support and openness to dialogue and change, I am truly grateful.

To women and queer folks
who choose to heed their inner poets'
"I feel, therefore I can be free"
over the tired dictum of the white father

To my muse-friends
who inspire me to heed the former
and mock away the latter

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

1. INTRODUCTION

> *History, while it carries messages of the past to the future, is regarded as a story at face value, but in reality it is the highest of sciences, one of the greatest auxiliaries of state governance. If a nation's past remains unknown, where can the necessary reasons for its subsistence and progress be learned from?*
>
> — Namık Kemal

[1]

> *History is too much about wars, biography too much about great men.*
>
> — Virginia Woolf

In this thesis I explore the autobiographical narratives of two women, Selma Ekrem and Halide Edib who have lived in the late Ottoman and early Republican period and written in English, and how their paths and positions converge and diverge in relation to the rupture between the empire and the nation state, especially with regards to how they experience this as women and how they perceive the process as it influences women's social position, how they depict and interact with the "state feminist" project. Although writing about the same time period, and coming from very similar familial backgrounds of Ottoman bureaucratic elites, the two women have different impressions of daily life both in familial/private and public settings, and correspondingly different framings of this period of transition. Most importantly, they end up following very different paths in their adult lives, and different ideas about women's position - past, present, and future - in their homeland, as they personally experience and observe around them. This of course goes hand in hand

[1] Tarih ki geçmişten geleceğe haber verir, görünüşte bir hikaye sanılır, fakat gerçekte bilimlerin en yükseğidir, devlet yönetiminin büyük yardımcılarındandır. Gerçekte bir milletin tarihi bilinmezse yaşaması, ilerlemesi için gerekli sebeplerin varlığı ve yokluğu nereden öğrenilecek? (Foreword of "Osmanlı Tarihi" by Namık Kemal, published in 1971 by Hürriyet Yayınları. Translated to English by me.)

with how they positioned themselves in the multi-dimensional ideological debates at the turn of the century, as the intellectual elite leaned more and more towards nationalism, away from the idea of Ottoman citizenship. In the first chapter I look at how Edib and Ekrem interact with Ottoman Orientalist and nationalist currents of thought, and how they contribute to the cultural construction and naturalization of a modern Turkish national identity. Then, in the second chapter I discuss the contesting ideas of womanhood and feminisms around public-private distinction and the veil as a key signifier in this regard, and finally around norms of family life and desire.

Before I delve into the autobiographies of Selma Ekrem and Halide Edib, I want to briefly talk about my own autobiography and how it led me to pursue this topic for my thesis, as I believe it forms an integral part of my theoretical and methodological framework. As an undergraduate student in philosophy, I was already interested in feminist theories and alternative historiographies. This was putting me in constant contestation with what we were studying in my department, namely, traditional philosophical texts of the "analytical tradition" (those of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hegel) and approaching every subject with the metaphysical assumptions of Western philosophical tradition as given. The conceptualization of human subjectivity as complete, individualistic, "rational" closed systems trying to gain access to an entirely external, material world of absolute truths was not sitting right with me and my political concerns. This led me to take interest in anthropology and literature courses, especially on feminist, postcolonial and queer theories, discussions of the self as embedded in a social context, and problematizing the possibility of an "absolute truth" by historicizing universal assumptions. I was interested in alternative stories, alternative voices and truths that history had silenced in order to support this narrative of rational subjects striving for linear, coherent progress. Then I took a course on Gender and Orientalism in late 19th century-early 20th century texts, and came across the diversity of the bodies of work in this period, especially (proto-)feminist writings and female writers that are pushed to the margins.

The late 19th and early 20th century is a unique period of radical transformations, ruptures, creations, war and nation making for Turkish-Ottoman history. A period that fitted the dissolution of an empire and the founding of a new nation state into the lifespan of many who have lived through it. So integral is it to the overall historical narrative of the modern Turkish Republic that an average citizen is exposed to it repetitively in much detail throughout formal education, starting from primary school. Yet for a period with such slippery ground, ambivalence and contesting voices, the official narrative is curiously monolithic (or at least insistent on a claim to being of monolithic nature). Meanwhile, there's prolific autobiographical writings

from the period, addressing various audiences, penned by diverse authors. Having been subjected to those that are considered a part of the official narrative, i.e. those written by military and political leaders, prominent intellectuals that align with the dominant discourse, my curiosity was immediately struck to find out about alternative voices. Especially those of women, who have largely been depicted as "victims" emancipated through modernization efforts, hitherto confined to domestic spheres and aspirations. I was already interested in feminist historiography and theory, but I realized how my knowledge was restricted to Anglo-American and European writers and activists.

When I first came across Unveiled, I was taking an undergraduate course with a special focus on women's life writing and travelogues in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was quite surprising to me. As a citizen of modern Turkey having completed the majority of my education in English medium and Western-influenced institutions, interested in feminist history, I had never heard of this Turkish-American writer whose grandfather happened to be Namık Kemal, a historical figure that I'd come across many times in different contexts, as a pioneer, a true patriot and "the" poet of liberty and nationalism, usually pointed out among the intellectual influences on the founding process of Turkish Republic. But it was also not a huge surprise, by then I knew why and how (official) history was written, and what it meant to be a woman with certain points of dissensus - erasure at best, or being condemned with the label "witch".

Selma Ekrem was born on 23 August 1902 in Rhodes, to a family of Ottoman bureaucratic elites. She spent her childhood in various Ottoman provinces due to her father's duty as an appointed governor, finally settling in "Constantinople" where she went to American College for her high school education. Following her graduation, she immigrated to America in 1923, started working as a writer, lecturer, and semi-official cultural ambassador working for the Turkish Consulate in New York, Washington, and later Connecticut. Ekrem's first book Unveiled: The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl was published in 1931 by Ives Washburn in New York, and sold 4 editions. Following this successful debut, she continued writing for local newspapers, and wrote two more books: Turkey Old and New (1947) and Turkish Fairy Tales (1964) respectively. Ekrem obtained American citizenship in 1960[2], and lived in Connecticut for the remainder of her life "with a long-time female companion"[3] until her death in 1986.

Ekrem's narrative has a very particular imagined audience, implied through various

[2] According to naturalization record.

[3] As mentioned in the Introduction to Unveiled, in the later version republished in 2005.

textual devices and explicitly addressed as "you in the West" (Ekrem 1930, 294), but directed specifically at the Americans. Local elements from her childhood, the food, clothing, customs, everyday practices and idioms are explained for the "outsider", sporadically put in comparison with their Western (mostly American) counterparts. Everyday practices, concepts, and customs are frequently questioned by the narrator, and explained by her Nurse, who is portrayed as a woman of tradition, an "old spirit" that complains about how "alafranqua" everything has become. This embeddedness of the narrator's voice within a childhood naivety and curiosity aligns with the Western audience's gaze, making this world more approachable to its intended readers. At the same time it gives them epistemological access to Ottoman life in the private sphere, within the compassionate relationship between a child and her caretaker. As the text follows her life trajectory through personal and familial anecdotes, she also informs the reader of the political history of the country. These go hand in hand, as her childhood is shaped around his father's diplomatic official duties that drive them to constantly move around and start their lives anew in "peripheral" regions of the Empire.

Throughout the narrative Ekrem presents herself as a defiant person putting her freedom above everything, unlike other Turkish women that she accuses of passively accepting their fate. But this was not the entire truth, for she was born into a period when women actively started gathering around journals and political meetings, and some of them were even in transnational feminist solidarity with suffragettes in Europe. This narrative about women's emancipation should be considered against the fact that Ekrem wrote "at a time when the events leading to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the political re-ordering of the Middle East were still fresh in the memory of Western audiences and information on Turkish affairs could be sure of being of keen interest" (Wirtz 2017, 151,152). The late 1920s was a period of rapid top-down reforms as part of the Kemalist modernization project. The symbolic shift from red "fezzes", and mandatory veiling to the "Western" hat is an important signifier for the break with the Ottoman past and secularization of public life. Ekrem's narrative framework and recurring tropes should be read against this backdrop, as well as her possible personal motives as a young "Oriental" woman trying to make a living in the US through intellectual pursuits.

Halide Edib has a central role in official Turkish history, known as one of "the daughters of the Republic" exemplifying the ideal of modern Turkish women as framed by the state, thus her name is much more familiar to the Turkish public. It is however within this mold of "exemplary modern Turkish woman" that the public is acquainted with her (which includes myself, before I had actually began my inquiry into her life and works from a feminist lens), and maybe with her public defamation

by Mustafa Kemal in his memoir Nutuk, as a traitor and supporter of American mandate. Yet Edib's person and her writings are in fact too complex and rich to fit into either image. She is perhaps the first woman in Ottoman history to divorce her husband (and on the grounds of a personal principle of rejecting polygamy), and a pioneer figure in women's emancipation in modern Turkey. Moreover, she is a quite fervent Turkish nationalist despite her multicultural and Western influenced upbringing. Her unique perspective and experiences conveyed through her Memoirs which she wrote while in self-imposed exile in 1926, offer great insight into the political events and their intellectual backgrounds, as well as daily life as experienced by a well-educated pious Muslim Turkish woman. The memoir was re-written (not exactly translated) in Turkish under the name Mor Salkımlı Ev (The House Covered In Wisteria), and first serialized in 1955 in Yeni İstanbul (New Istanbul) newspaper, and published as a book later in 1963, with many omitted or changed sections compared to the English version from 1926.

Women's claims and writings have been confined to the sphere of the personal. But autobiographies are far from being "merely personal" (the personal is never merely personal, perhaps). They utilize the advantages of the personal to "talk back" to discursive spaces that seek to exclude them, and to reclaim their subjectivity that hegemonic discourses seek to delineate (Smith and Watson 1998, 16). Talking back to hegemony assumes the form of showing contradictions in its assumptions. Thus, those who are excluded from subjecthood as defined by the unmarked, transcendent, Western white male subjects take their power in the multi-layered, multi-voiced, dialogical and fluid voice they use, undermining the idea of the "unified I" with the plurality within one (Smith and Watson 1998, 11). If history is a carrier of messages from the past to the future, it is time we dig out some of those messages that got stuck on their way, those letters that have been lost.

1.1 Situating the Auto-Narrating Selves

Since autobiographies are textual self-representations, loaded with claims about one's biography, identity, deeds, but with no single external reference point to make any "fact-check", this thesis looks at the two texts with reference to the contexts in which they were written, and the contexts which the narratives take place in. Halide Edib and Selma Ekrem have unique subject positions allowing them unique experiences and perspectives, interwoven with their narratives. It would be thus necessary to situate them in their social and historical contexts before going into

comparative thematic discussions.

Both women are first-hand witnesses of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and the emergence of a nation-state, though at different stages of their lives with a 20 year age gap. Ekrem's childhood coincides with the final years of the Empire, moving around different provinces; Jerusalem, Beirut, and the Aegean Archipelago Islands as part of her father's appointed duty as governor. She leaves for America at the dawn of the establishment of the Republic, and comes back as an occasional visitor. Her grandfather was Namık Kemal, an intellectual known as "the poet of the motherland" and "the poet of freedom" owing to his influential literary works infused with the nationalist and liberal ideals of French Revolution, and her father Ali Ekrem (Bolayır) served as a governor under Sultan Abdulhamid II, and contributed to the Edebiyat-ı Cedide (New Literature) movement, having his essays and poems published in the journal Servet-i Fünun (Wealth of Knowledge) among other Ottoman intellectuals at the time.

In terms of family background, Halide Edib is very similar to Selma Ekrem. She was born into a family of late Ottoman elites, her father Mehmet Edib Bey being a secretary of Sultan Abdulhamid II. She was the first Muslim student to go to American College for Girls in 1893, where Ekrem would also study around 20 years later. Their familial relations put both Ekrem and Edib in privileged positions at the heart of the Ottoman Muslim elite, closely watching history unfold. Here, it's important to be mindful of the class backgrounds, which provided them with comfortable, and somewhat sterile lives among Istanbulite bourgeoisie. While the early 20th century was a period of dire poverty and miserable conditions of living for many citizens, the accumulated wealth of generation after generation kept the Istanbul elites at a subsistence level even at the worst of times. During the height of political unrest, in this description of how Selma and her family lived through 1908 for example, they have the means to keep (at least the children) secluded from the happenings in the outer world:

> Sheltered by the big house, we lived through the months of unrest and revolution that followed our return from Beirut. Constantinople was in upheaval, but we lived within the tall walls where unhappiness and fear could only ooze through to be dispersed by the joy of those gardens. (120)

Indeed, when she's talking about the struggles and miseries that the family goes through (be it as prisoners in Greece, or in Istanbul during the Great War) there

is a distinct gap between what common people would call "misery" and what they experience. As war prisoners they have to settle in an inn for sheep merchants, and her mother exclaims "Aman Allah, let these days of misery end," (Ekrem 1930, 242) when she finds out that they will have to cook their own food. Then, in the thick of World War I there's a lengthy discussion of the clothing problem. They have to chop up the mother's expensive Irish linens, and eventually wear paper dresses, to which she exclaims again "Allah, do you not see our misery?" (Ekrem 1930, 267) Even at times of unrest and instability, during the invasion of Istanbul, Ekrem continues her higher education in American College which helped her immigrate to the US on her own and make a living for herself, preparing the conditions for Unveiled to be penned. As for Edib, she is entrusted with a mission to visit Syria for an educational reform and to organize orphanages during the war, and rather than personal stories of suffering or shortage, she talks about the "public service" she has done in the region, and the difficulties she faced while dealing with these, with a great deal of analytical discussion of the historical circumstances and details of the events, similar to memoirs written by military leaders "from the frontlines".

A central element of Ekrem's narrative is an in-depth recollection of childhood memories, focusing on everyday life and constructing the narrative from the child's perspective. Her childhood longings, fears, how she trotted around the house, her relations with the adults and what she did in her daily life are given an extensive place. She takes the reader through historical events from the perspective of a child situated in her family home, and a majority of her information appears as unconscious impressions, the feelings she observes through her parents, especially his father who is an important bureaucrat working for Abdülhamid until they are sent from Constantinople to exile. This emphasis on her position as a child, and thus an ambiguous position in experiencing the final years of the Empire, puts certain elements that are not often seen in traditional autobiographies in the front. Rather than the usual inclination towards dialogues and "events" in the public sphere, Ekrem's world is a little more object-oriented. Her feelings and impressions are projected onto the surroundings through personification, rather than directly communicated, just like her parents who do not overtly address the problems they're facing in the "outer world" nor their feelings. Especially in the earlier chapters, there's a constant anxiety and fear that has a spectral nature - there's something that haunts and disturbs the home life, but it's not really "present". As a child she's left out from the knowledge of what's happening on the outside, but the political tensions seep into her mind in the form of unconscious feelings:

> What did I know of all these events that crowded our lives? What can a child of four know of plots, intrigues and Abdul Hamid? It was the fear of my elders that spread to me, words that I heard and could not understand that held me in their grasp. It was the instinct of the child that lay trembling with nameless terror. (32)

Amidst the chaotic political atmosphere that they are exposed to, in the words of Halide Edib, being "permeated and colored by the pains and the daily troubles of my environment" (Edib 1926, 190), the games they played with other children, the fairytales, gardens and flowers surrounding their family homes are what they recall best from their childhood. In Jerusalem where Selma Ekrem and her family are sent for exile, the children start building a treehouse in the garden "among a cloud of purple grapes", a project that remains incomplete. Ekrem reminisces these days with a longing, pointing out her wound of an "unfinished" childhood: "To this day I sorrow because we never finished that little house. Perhaps it is still waiting for us in its haven of grapes" (Ekrem 1930, 94). Immersed in a world of war, constant instability and upheaval, she and her siblings "could not remain children with [their] very lives threatened" (Ekrem 1930, 256) and perhaps fairytales provided a shield for them to still feel like children in those conditions. Edib too expresses her awareness of living a difficult childhood repetitively, noting that "after the first period of [her] life in the wisteria-covered house [she] was no longer a child in mind and was very far from living the natural and normal life of a child of [her] age" (Edib 1926, 190). Her childhood constitutes a significant part of her memoirs, but in contrast to Ekrem's narrative, she equips an omniscient authorial voice, even positioning herself as a third-person narrator when describing her early childhood; which is an overall difference of the two writers, with Edib employing a more authoritative, analytical narrative voice.

Ekrem's father Ali Ekrem Bolayır wrote his memoirs around the same time in the 1930s, which he had to take a break from in 1934, but handed over to his friend Midhat Cemal Kuntay a few years before his death, and wasn't published until 1991 after the manuscripts were bought by the National Library. Bolayır's memoir portrays a very different world compared to Ekrem's, as he puts the focus on his work as a bureaucrat, his dialogues and relationships with historically significant figures and later his friendship with the literary circle of Servet-i Fünûn. What appears in Ekrem's narrative as a cause of insecurity, anxiety and fear is discussed in a different light, with little to no feelings and embodied experiences and more of events, actions. Ekrem's "nameless terror" is in Bolayır's narrative a complex relationship with Abdülhamid. Despite the tension and hardships of the period, he nevertheless expresses his admiration towards Abdülhamid as a political leader:

> At the time of his reign, he has implemented many reforms and renewals, and in all fairness the state has attained the orderliness of a civilized state under the rule of Abdülhamid the Second. (..) Abdülhamid Han began his auspicious deeds which -no matter what anyone says- were a source of pride at the time of his reign with amending financial affairs... (357) [4]

Today Namık Kemal and Ali Ekrem Bolayır are introduced in history and literature lessons as part of the official high school curriculum, as intellectuals with significant influence in Turkish political and literary history. Namık Kemal is mentioned among the thinkers that have influenced Mustafa Kemal, the founder of the Republic. Yet the modern Turkish public isn't familiar with Selma Ekrem's name, let alone her works. The book was translated into Turkish as recently as 1998, with the title "Peçeye İsyan: Namık Kemal'in Torununun Anıları" which can be translated as "Revolt Against the Veil: The Memoirs of Namık Kemal's Grandchild"[5], barely reaching second print. As the Turkish translation's cover letter expresses: "We all know Namık Kemal. Those who are interested in history may also be acquainted with his son Ali Ekrem. However, hardly anyone outside the close circle of the family knows his grandchild Selma Ekrem. Especially since she's a person who had to emigrate to the US in 1923, as a 21-year-old young girl, and spent the rest of her life there up to her death in 1986."

The historical invisibility of Selma Ekrem certainly has a gendered dimension, an extension of women's subjugation that she is aware of and acknowledges while describing her well-educated grandmother: "If she were only a man she would make the best minister of foreign affairs in the world" (Ekrem 1930, 189). Despite her own scholarly achievements, as a first generation American who immigrated there in her early 20s, and a woman who defied the law and her family to follow her own will and freedom in going against compulsory veiling; she is branded as "Namık Kemal's grandchild" in the Turkish translation of her book, though there's hardly any mention of him in her narrative save for a couple of short anecdotes. Here, one must consider gender in its historicity, situating it in its context with other vectors of identity and power dynamics too. Women's autobiographies written in the Early Republic period, such as that of Halide Edib, have had a significant place in the body of official historical and cultural texts. But those women had a specific "service" in the emerging nation state project as "Atatürk's daughters", prototypical models for

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[4] "Zaman-ı saltanatında pekçok teceddüdat ve ıslahat fiile çıkmış ve bir kelime söylemek lazım gelirse, devlet Abdülhamid Sanî ahdinde medeni bir devlet-i muntazama hali iktisab etmiştir. (..) Abdülhamid Han -kim ne derse desin- zaman-ı saltanatına medar-ı iftihar olan bütün icraat-i mebruresine umur-ı maliyyenin ıslahıyla başlamış (...)"

[5] Translated to English by me. All translations belong to me unless otherwise stated.

women of the new Republic. Moreover, the autobiographies that are highlighted in the Turkish public's eye are those that are seen as contributive to official historiography. The autobiography of Sabiha Gökçen, Turkey's first female (war) pilot, for example, titled Atatürk'le Bir Ömür (A Lifetime Lived with Atatürk), relates everything in her biography with Atatürk, so much so that it is sold under the section on Atatürk and not the section on women's history or memoirs (Altınay 2000, 267).

Ekrem did not neatly fit into this category of "the women of the Republic", having chosen to leave the country and start a new life in America, putting her personal well-being and emancipation before a patriotic sense of "doing service to the nation", and choosing a life that doesn't involve a nuclear family, not following the desired balance between domestic bliss and public participation, not undertaking the role of the caretaker as well as the hardworking secular woman. She was not writing an "epic" for the newly emerged nation state, but rather appealing to an imagined American audience, which allowed more space to diverge from the official narrative of "the Independence War against invasive Allied forces", complete renunciation of the Ottoman past; and to make more space to emphasize familial, personal, everyday anecdotes in order to invoke "universal" affects to capture her intended audience. She treats the Ottoman past like a fragile antique porcelain with sentimental value, perhaps identifying it with her familial past and memories that she leaves behind when she immigrates to the US. Moreover she doesn't add to the "heroic", militarist master narrative of the emerging nation, nor does she take active part in the process as Halide Edib does. She gives thorough descriptions of the misery war brought behind the fronts, openly communicating her fears and grief in seeing the country as a "big graveyard", not romanticizing the deaths nor martyrdom. There's a distinct anti-war stance she iterates: "That feeling of excitement, that craze for war did not exist in our hearts. The mob had been carried away, lured with victory and conquest, the Unionists were sure of themselves and Germany. But to us war was a deadly menace" (Ekrem 1930, 259).

Halide Edib on the other hand, although claiming that she is "against war in general" (Edib 1926, 379) and stating her disapproval of the elongated mutual suffering that war causes on all sides, seems to be "anti-militarist" merely on a discursive level, as she supports and praises the military accomplishments of her country. Her sensitivity towards human suffering and conscience are painted as private "sensibilities" (Edib 1926, 387) that need to be suppressed for the greater good of the country, which necessitates military violence. Unlike "the Republic's daughters", the selfless, enduring women who suppress their pain and put the nation's survival above their suffering; Ekrem left the country around the time when the nation-state was officially established, which is perhaps why she has been left out from the Turkish

public's attention, for she doesn't serve the "master narrative" as desired. Though she ends her memoir with an admiration of the "new Turkey" where women were freer and wearing the hat was the norm, she spent the rest of her life lecturing and writing in the US, and never came back except as a visitor. Edib also wrote her memoir while she was away from her country in "voluntary exile" due the political tension around the single party regime, and was painted as a traitor and American mandate supporter ("mandacı") in public after a letter she had wrote in 1919 was published in Mustafa Kemal's 1927 memoir Nutuk (Çalışlar 2010, 323).

2. WOMEN WRITING HISTORY, NAVIGATING IDENTITY CRISIS

2.1 From Ottoman Orientalism to Nationalism

> *For centuries, Ottomans and later Turks received mixed messages from the West, ranging from accusations of barbarism to praise for modernization, and from fascination with their oriental qualities to scorn for the abandonment of their allegedly essential nature. It should not come as a surprise that the Ottoman/Turkish response was also of a mixed nature.*
>
> — Edhem Eldem

The Orientalist stance specific to Ottoman elites in late 19th century-early 20th century was imbued with an identity crisis in relation to modernization and increasing nationalist tendencies signaling the dissolution of the Empire. Seeing Westernization as "the way out" for the Empire on decline, the intellectual elite agreed on the implicit idea that "the East was essentially different from the West, (...) essentially stagnant and lacked the capacity to change without an exogenous stimulus" (Eldem 2010, 27). As opposed to the common mechanism of colonization, which involves a colonizer invading a foreign land, the exogenous stimulus had to come from within. The Ottoman Empire was already a colonizer itself, the colonized were already within the borders. These complex relations only had to be clearly defined and constructed, in order to provide a legitimate basis for top-down modernization efforts. But it wasn't an easy mission to articulate the need for Westernized modernization, and to keep the "Oriental" characteristics that maintain a binary opposition in the first place. The Orientalists themselves were conflicted about what the "Oriental" characteristics were, and there was a great deal of myth making that didn't exactly reflect the everyday practices and subjectivities in this imagined geography. Moreover, the variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds of the population

didn't allow it to be "lumped together under a single 'oriental' label" (Eldem 2015, 90). Thus, in Edhem Eldem's words, an "awkward" combination of praising Western modernism and self-Orientalization emerged among the Ottoman bureaucratic elite and the palace, who were able to distance themselves from an "Oriental other" within (and neighboring) the Empire (Eldem 2015, 96), constructing these Others and their own identity of "authentic Turkishness" simultaneously. Ussama Makdisi's concept "Ottoman Orientalism" provides a substantial ground for approaching these discussions in late-Ottoman, early-Republican period reflecting a peculiar type of Orientalism(s); which has informed the construction of Turkishness as a national identity and the nation state itself, to this day still maintaining its relevance in political debates and everyday life. Ottoman Orientalism is an extension of the Orientalist corpus in acknowledging the East-West binary as a real distinction, and the values attached to them, mostly reaffirming the myths involved. As it is with Orientalist discourse produced by Western subjects, certainly it has a heterogeneous, contradictory, polyphonic nature.

The elite take it upon themselves to "modernize" the remainder of the population. This is a tough mission of Westernization without being completely assimilated, keeping a certain cultural identity as a basis for the nation state. They project the political tension fueled by Abdülhamid's oppressive regime onto the citizens themselves, and "Eastern culture" in general, as obedient and fatalistic. These motives appear in various texts, especially written by the elites that have a contact with the West through their educational backgrounds, travels or friendships. Zeynep Hanım is one such example, whose letters written during her visit to Europe to escape the Hamidian regime have been edited and published by Grace Ellison. She criticizes those who blindly believe in fate and put up with the tyranny, and goes to Europe seeking freedom. We see a narrative of the compulsory veil and restrictions imposed on women as a prison that she escaped, and feeling emancipated when she "stood before a window wide open that had neither lattice-work nor iron bars" (Hanoum 1913, 52). On the back cover of the book's Turkish translation, she is described in the following way:

> Zeynep Hanım is a pioneering woman who raised her voice in the East which otherwise seemed unbudged by the Western feminist movement that led to a great awakening about women's rights in the late 19th century. In that respect she's a universal rebel, an intellectual with a good grasp of language, and a noncompliant, stubborn romantic, a daring spirit.[1]

[1] Zeynep Hanım 19. yüzyıl sonunda kadın hakları konusunda büyük bir uyanışa yol açan Batı feminist

> "She's perhaps our first female Turkish traveler that traveled on her own!"[2] - Buket Uzuner

She is thus portrayed as an exceptional individual in a land of passive, fatalist women, without paying much attention to when and why it was published, and the fact that it was edited by Grace Ellison, an Englishwoman.

Although Zeynep Hanım is very content with the freedom she finds in Europe at first, she later grows to despise the "culture" and misses her own country, a flux between different stances towards the Orient-Occident binary often seen in the intellectuals of that period. First there's the belief that "Modern Europe" and its culture should be taken as a model for progress, compromising some elements of "Oriental traditions" which cause the East to "lag behind" in terms of progress and development (**?**). Then the claim that Europe's moral values are corrupt, and a certain "cultural essence" of the East should be preserved. It falls upon elites with intellectual access to both cultures to reform the population, a "civilizing mission" that only the ignorant would reject, expressed in Selma Ekrem's second book Turkey Old and New: "Of course there were some who objected strongly [to these reforms], not that they questioned the government's right to do as it would, but they were ignorant and refused to accept the ways of the West. To them, any reform that came from the West was a dire attack on Moslem religion" (Ekrem 1947, 45).

A central mechanism for this period was the double constitutive exclusion to secure the emerging "modern Turkish" identity: exclusion of Orientalized others through abjection in a material sense, and exclusion of non-Muslim elements and Occidental others through abjection in a moral sense through disgust and disapproval of traditions and values, portraying it as a moral decay. The common colonialist argument, "white man's burden" to save and civilize the barbaric natives, becomes materialized in depictions of filth and dirt, and identification of Orientalized others with filth, a mechanism Julia Kristeva terms "abjection". Ekrem meticulously portrays herself and her family as finicky, sterile people, in sharp contrast with those who she portrays in abjection. She describes her grandfather as someone who "had the disease of cleanliness. He wore gloves even in the house for opening doors and if he did not have them on he would call one of [them] to open the door" (Ekrem 1930, 129) Her "abjects" vary between locals of Jerusalem regardless of their ethnic back-

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hareketi karşısında kıpırtısız görünen Doğudan sesini yükselten öncü bir kadın. Bu bakımdan o evrensel bir isyancı, dili iyi kullanan bir entelektüel, aynı zamanda uyumsuz ve dik kafalı bir romantik, bir cesur yürek.

[2] "O belki de bizim yalnız başına seyahat eden ilk Türk kadın gezginimiz!" Buket Uzuner is a Turkish best-seller novelist and travel writer. Both the description and this review are from the back cover description of the book's Turkish translation published in 2016, by Everest Yayınları.

grounds, Arabs and Bedouins, and even lower class Turks and peasants. We come across abjected others in Edib's narrative too, although she's careful not to portray herself as a condescending elite far removed from the society, and she doesn't as easily distance herself as an Ottoman Turk from Oriental others.

In Ekrem's portrayal of Ottoman Armenians, even for those who were in their household for care and service, there is an implicit physical abjection. Isaac, the old Armenian retainer is described as having "bony, crooked fingers, and a malicious laughter", the Armenian patriarchate in Jerusalem is described as having "an enormous nose", and her Armenian nurse Kalnick Dadı (whose name we are given later) is a gloomy character, as opposed to her "round" cheerful Turkish nurse that is introduced immediately with her name, Ferhunde. The same implicit abjection is also observed a few times when they come across Jews, when she mentions hearing "the nasal tones of a Jew" from a distance, and at another instance asking her Nurse "Why do Jews have curls?" (Ekrem 1930, 63) In Edib's portrayal of non-Muslim others we don't encounter the same overt abjection, however she seems to have internalized a slightly anti-Semitist position, as expressed in her description of the Jewish girl in her class at college: "She seemed always to be expecting a blow or some sort of assault and appeared as if she were wondering when it would be delivered. I believe it was the unconscious mark of a persecuted race" (Edib 1926, 151).

Ekrem is very particular with her descriptions of Oriental others in Unveiled, especially Arabs and Bedouins that she is trying to separate and distance the "real Turkish identity" from. In the chapters where she recalls their life in Jerusalem, there's a distinct condescension towards the city, as she posits Turks as a neutral,"third party" group that maintains the peace between two tense groups. The very same thought is expressed by Halide Edib in her visit to Jerusalem, as:

> One felt that all these many creeds and peoples were trying to have them to themselves, and were ready to jump at each other's throats at any moment. There was a hot and unwholesome atmosphere, mixed with a religious passion verging on hysteria. The Turk alone had a calm, impartial, and quiet look. (426)

Throughout the sections where she's recalling her time in Jerusalem, Ekrem uses Orientalizing phrases to describe the city, "a city of the Arabian Nights (...) [where there may be] palaces of gold and emeralds just as fairy tales describe," (Ekrem 1930, 40) that "[drew them] with its unknown magic" (Ekrem 1930, 60). This Orientalist

discourse is supported with a photograph of the sisters dressed in folkloric looking dresses (Figure 2.1) similar to those included in Western travelogues of the 19th century where local attires were treated as exotic costumes. She pretends to carry a jug on her head to "try to be an Arab girl" for her family's entertainment, and decides that she would "not try again to acquire the magic of these women" (Ekrem 1930, 63).

Figure 2.1 A photograph of "Abla, Beraet and Selma Ekrem in Jerusalem" in Chapter VI, depicting the sisters dressed in "Oriental" outfits which they do not normally wear.

In addition to this "benevolent" exoticization, Jerusalem is depicted as "a city of dirt and dust [with] odd houses and crooked streets", "a city where there was nothing but gloom, religion and filth" (Ekrem 1930). This is the first sign of her self-positioning as part of the bourgeois "elite with a civilizing mission", with better and higher status than Oriental others and common people from lower classes. Later, in her portrayal of the Arabs living in a village, Ekrem makes an emphasis on their dirtiness and nudity with disgust. When mentioning the sheik's wife, for example, she uses the phrase "a dirty Arab woman" (Ekrem 1930, 105). Furthermore, she points out how "naked babies crawled in the sand" (Ekrem 1930, 106), and "a barefoot Arab" (Ekrem 1930, 99) helps her nurse ride a mule, focusing on the naked body parts so as to point out the dirtiness of their bodies. As to the food and eating practices of Arabs, when they sit down to eat, her mother who she portrays as having an obsession with cleanliness is disgusted, "gulp[ing] down with an effort, the look of secret horror on her face veiled by a polite smile" (Ekrem 1930). Even

prayers and God, which is actually the same God and the same prayers recited by Turkish Muslims, become strange and disturbing when it comes out of Arabs' mouths: "There rose a wild chanting prayer from Arabs. I sat shivering with terror, with the mysterious fear of the sea and of God which these men were invoking" (Ekrem 1930, 60).

Another such instance is when she introduces the Senegalese soldiers brought along with the French army in wartime. Although they are not necessarily Oriental subjects, Ekrem's appeal to the imagined Western audience positions herself within the colonizing discourse, this time joining in the abjection of racialized others, and in a similar fashion, she describes their "black faces and thick lips" as frightening (Ekrem 1930, 284), and adds a rumor about how they stole children and ate them up. It's also worth noting again that she's writing in the 1930s US, where slavery had been only recently abolished and segregation continued heavily in many states. The 1930s were furthermore a time when racist eugenics was on the rise around the world, and the Kemalist republic was also working towards proof that they too belonged to the "superior race", tracing the roots of modern Turks back with the alleged findings of physical anthropology. Considering Ekrem's position in her family of elites, she was most likely aware of these developments, the Turkish history thesis and attempts to establish a racial background for Turkish national identity. Her discursive choices serve the purpose of constructing the racialized colonial subjects and non-Turkish Oriental subjects as the "constitutive outside" of her own identity, as "uncivilized", "dirty" abjects, in an attempt to distance herself and the Turkish identity from them, and to secure the boundaries between herself and others.

Selma Ekrem seems to reinforce her image as "refined" and exceptional in the eyes of her American audience in various instances through reproducing Orientalist stereotypes. In the chapters about her visit to America, we see the construction of herself as a Westernized, modern Turkish subject. The Americans she encounters are surprised that she is Turkish, because she has fair skin, lighter colored eyes and hair, and wears a hat (Ekrem 1930, 301). As a response to this, she claims that there is a legend of "The Terrible Turk" in the minds of the Americans, "a huge person with fierce black eyes and bushy eyebrows, carrying daggers covered with blood" (Ekrem 1930, 302), and that herself, "a real True Turk (...) not very unlike an American" (Ekrem 1930, 302) goes against this representation. Although it is a moment of intervention to the stereotypical representation of Oriental subjects, the way she constructs a counter-representation, with a claim to "truth", is through likening herself to Americans, and thus once again we see her complex self-Orientalizing position, carrying the identity anxiety of the new Turkish nationality.

As her Little Aunt takes her to the Shadow Theater, a traditional entertainment attended by the general public, she gives a thorough description of "community glasses" which everyone in the audience drinks water out of, and how dirty they are with the lip prints of so many people. To her bourgeois eyes, the theater is "another dirty hall littered with shells", and "the stage [is] so primitive that even [she] laugh[s] at the crude attempts at houses and stairs" (Ekrem 1930, 126). Being used to Western classical music playing in the house, of higher forms of art, and of course having visited various European and American cities as she is writing, she belittles traditional entertainment as primitive and vulgar. She carries this condescension towards lower classes and those living outside Constantinople into her book Turkey Old and New in 1947, when she's talking about Kemalist reforms' effect in the country, especially in rural parts of Anatolia. She describes factories as "centers of education and enlightenment", where the villagers learn the manners and ways of the city people. This description echoes the project of modernization's construction of new and reformed subjects, taking civilization to "peripheral" parts of the country, where "Cleanliness, fresh air and good food gradually transform the undernourished village youth into a healthy citizen," (Ekrem 1947, 114) an attitude which is commonly seen in early Republic era's intellectuals, "village novels" which can perhaps be seen as a different version and extension of Orientalist logics carried into 20th century, and nevertheless reveals a continuity of the anxiety around modern Turkish identity.

Halide Edib is not as overtly condescending about cleanliness as Ekrem is, having lived a "less sterile" life in multiple senses. She regularly goes out in the city, prays in the mosque, walks around the back streets of lower class districts of town and makes conversation with the residents, and later in her life stays in Syria for an extensive period for cultural "missions". In fact she nostalgically recalls an Ottoman national song written by Vedi Sabra, a Syrian musician, and the lyrics of which were written by Tevfik Fikret, sang in Taksim square, claiming how "[i]n those days race hatred in Turkey had not come into being" (Edib 1926, 452). Overall, she is more in touch with people from different ethnic, racial, and class backgrounds, yet the othering discourse against racial and ethnic others is also prevalent in parts of her narrative. Having lived in Syria for an extended period, entrusted with the mission to organize schools and orphanages by Cemal Pasha, Halide doesn't have the typical Ottoman Orientalist approach to Arabs. The same sounds peculiar to Arabic language that Selma receives with fright and perhaps disgust are described in her narrative as "wonderful Arabic, with the rich guttural harmony which only an Arabic throat can compass" (Edib 1926, 396). This is no coincidence, for Edib is much more at peace with the Islamic part of Ottoman culture than Ekrem, taking refuge in her

spirituality at tough times and enjoying the practices overall. Although she doesn't partake in the negative stereotypes, she still exoticizes them as Oriental others, describing "real Arabic villages with blue smoke curling up in transparent waves, so different from the thick sooty smoke of the modern cities" (Edib 1926, 398) and later commenting that "The life substance of the Arab is much warmer and of more aggressive kind than of any other nation I know" (Edib 1926, 405).

However there are certain ethnic and racial others that she does not spare of negative stereotypes and abjection. Speaking of her milk-mother Nevres Baci who is a black woman, Edib remarks that she "had the incurable smell of colored people, so hard for a sensitive nose to bear, however that nose may love the owner of the smell" (Edib 1926, 63). In the very same page, earlier in the day when she and Nevres Baci are going to Suleymaniye, she describes a Kurdish porter who carried her through the steep hill in a similarly objected manner: "Such an unpleasant smell attacked my nostrils from his body, and his face was so fond and foolish. (...) I hated him violently at that moment, but I have changed my mind since, and I love him and his kind" (Edib 1926, 63). The Turkish version of the memoir replaces the phrase "his kind" as "creatures who look like him, vulgar and bestial on the outside, simple on the inside but with an expression of humanity"[3] Edib (1926), omitting the racial implications in the earlier version of the memoir. There's a recurring pattern of such stereotyping and othering against Kurds and some of it complemented by the omission (or replacement) of the word "Kurdish" in the later version of the memoir published in 1963. For instance, she mentions how her half-sister Nilüfer's dadı (nanny), "a Kurdish woman, a tall slender person dressed in very picturesque native costume (...) [who] walked with the particular pretty swing of Kurdish girls" (Edib 1926, 103-104) was the inspiration behind the Kurdish heroine in her novel Kalp Ağrısı. In the Turkish version, she writes that the baby had a "Turkish nanny who preserved her local costume"[4] (Edib 1926, 48). These differences in the two versions and the historical context in-between deserve a lengthy exploration in themselves, but it would be enough for the purposes here to note that each anecdote and description of non-Turkish Others was quite conscious and intentional in Edib's writing, and perhaps she didn't want to deal with the political backlash that her writing may receive in the 1950s-1960s, since by then the tension between the state and Kurdish citizens had increased. Moreover, by then the Turkish History Thesis was developed and widely adopted as official history, permeating school curricula and hegemonic political discourse, and Edib had officially become a political figure, having served as a Member of the Parliament for one term between

[3] "Ona benzeyen dışı kaba ve hayvani, içi basit fakat insanlık ifade eden mahluklar"

[4] "Yerli kostümünü muhafaza eden bir Türk dadı"

1950-1954.

2.2 The "Cultural Essence" of Modern Turkish Identity

While there's an overt romanticization of modernism and a material superiority of the West, Ekrem still holds certain elements of her own culture dear to her heart and cannot replace them with their Western counterparts. These are mostly related to her "Turkish habitus", from her preference of food to the way she approaches familial relations. Ekrem's narrative produces and maintains an essential distinction between the East and the West in relation to time both in a wider, macro sense and in the pace of everyday life. Following the modernist narrative of progress, she glorifies the speed at which the West has adopted new technologies for transportation, and often places them at a culturally superior point in the linear development of civilizations that applies universally. They are "freer", more individualistic, have taller and greater buildings, roaring "iron pillars" and sights that pass by in the flash of a light, machines and gadgets that dazzle her Oriental mind. She also shows disdain towards cultural forms in the Ottoman Empire, especially popular ones such as the public theater, and depicts by contrast how much she and her family enjoyed Western music and literature. But of course there isn't a strict binary opposition as traditionally posited, the situation of the Orient vis-a-vis the Occident is multifaceted.

Because the text is appealing to the American gaze, we get detailed descriptions of Turkish breakfast, Turkish dinner, and Turkish coffee; both the contents and the rituals of food. These depictions are very rich and enticing, reminiscent of tourism advertisements, emerging even in dialogues between subjects that are familiar with the culture. For example, in a scene when they are anticipating guests, she quotes her mother addressing their house servant Varbet, proclaiming: "There is a visitor tonight, make a burek, a pastry with cheese" (Ekrem 1930, 34). It is without a doubt that Varbet knows what "burek" is, but since the imagined American audience is not acquainted with "burek", its ingredients are described redundantly. The meals in her childhood home are always described as abundant and of excellent quality: "the bureks were crisp, the meat tender and the Russian salad excellent" (Ekrem 1930, 36); which is then followed by "a big cup of steaming coffee". The importance she attributes to food and cooking practices resonates in a similar manner in her later book Turkey Old and New: "Turkish people spend a great deal of time in the kitchen. Vegetables are never boiled and served with a dab of butter. Heavens, no!" (Ekrem 1947, 20).

It is not just around her family life that Ekrem observes an ease of living and idleness. As they are moving to Jerusalem, little Selma sneaks out to the street and watches the animals that will pull the carts with their furniture. She describes that "Animals hardly moved, they seemed to meditate over a serious problem. The driver poked them with a long pointed stick. (...) Soon the driver gave up and he too fell into a deep meditation, or was it sleep? Why hurry? There is a whole day before them" (Ekrem 1930, 43). This description of the oxcart driver and the animal itself as languid with no sense of rush is nothing short of a deliberate foreshadowing of how she will later be mesmerized by the pace (and abundance) of cars, fast moving people and everyday routines in America. When she's making a comparison between the two temporalities, she describes this particularly Eastern relation to time as "sip[ping] life leisurely through a straw" (Ekrem 1930, 308)). She reminisces of women who sit under the trees for hours on end, "for the mere joy of sitting", an activity she has come to forget in her time in America. Perhaps she surrendered to the Protestant ethic of American life and left her idleness in the "languid East" (Ekrem 1930, 309).

But despite these fond cultural elements that make Constantinople "fume under her nose" she keeps a critical distance, and reiterates through the text how resentful she is for the backwardness of her country. Meltem Ahıska argues that Occidentalism comes with a certain temporal/spatial imagination of the West and the East, and an ambivalence regarding the construction of modern Turkish national identity: "The West is both celebrated as a model to be followed and exorcized as a threat to indigenous national values" (**?**, 353). As the model to be followed, the West is imagined as "the train of civilization" which other cultures are lagging behind, being late to the competition. This narrative of a forward-movement with a fast pace creates a persisting anxiety (**?**, 352) among the 'languid East' with its traditional institutions and social organization, attempting to catch up with modernization. Through the narrative, Ekrem depicts a contrast between the oxcarts and horses in Constantinople, and the technological means of commuting in the West: "How does it go, mother? I was astonished. The train puzzled me. This train must go by magic, I thought. Everything went with horses in Constantinople. I could not understand why this thing didn't need horses." (Ekrem 1930, 56). While she views the dichotomy from the perspective of a naive child, ignorant and merely "mesmerized", mystifying the technology, likening it to magic, earlier in the text she quotes her father who's an Ottoman elite and a well-educated intellectual as saying: "The train is civilization that follows its course and never stops. (...) But the cows are the uncivilized nations which are frightened and run away" (Ekrem 1930, 12). Her father is thus portrayed as a confident man who knows what he's

talking about, and he likens those who are against "civilization" to cows running away from a train - irrational, erratic and ignorant.

In the chapter about her first time in America, Ekrem expresses how she is taken aback by the hectic pace of daily life. There's an exaggerated sense of rush that she expresses when describing her experience of shopping in New York, how "it was not easy: each time I tried to stop I was being swept forward" (Ekrem 1930, 296). Later, she describes her first "American dinner", after having described many Turkish meals in depth with mouthwatering details and various rituals of their food culture, the coffee that is served after meals:

> We entered a charming restaurant and at first glance I noticed how attractive it was with gay colored tables and decorations. Here, I said to myself, I could sit at my ease and think about New York. Prompt as lighting we were marshaled in. And then the charming restaurant lost its flavor. Back of us came crowds of people and crowds left in a hurry. In America one did not eat, one played a game to see who could rush in, eat first and come out the fastest. I was not given time to think or to rest. I thought of our Turkish coffeehouses where clients pass dreamy hours over a little eggshell cup of coffee or a nargile that never ends.
>
> I did not eat, I marveled. Everything was strange to me. The soup that was sweet, the vegetables that seemed tasteless, a salad that was made of sweetest fruits spoiled with a dash of mayonnaise. What was I to have next? (298-299)

She creates a sharp contrast between her description of American restaurants and how people are in a rush to get a table and eat very fast, with Turkish coffeehouses where people sit for hours drinking only a cup of coffee. As much as she admires the rush and technological developments of America, here we see her expressing her discontent with an essential cultural practice. Moreover, in the way she describes the American food, we see that she finds it strange and tasteless, in contrast to how lovingly she recounted the diverse dishes and fruits served in her family home. These points should be interpreted in the light of the nationalist discourse again, which strove to incorporate Western rationality and technology, the material parts, without contaminating "the essence of culture", the spiritual essence which are harmless to the material developments in the "outer world". Although Ekrem is fascinated by the material abundance and technologies present in America, she still expresses a longing for the cultural rituals of her home country. This may also be read as an elaboration of the outside/inside distinction. Back at home, food and eating rituals are very much domestic, extensively prepared by a bunch of servers commanded by

her mother. In the houses they visit while they're in exile for her father's diplomatic missions, they're also served grand meals prepared at home. Yet in America they have to eat outside, along with many others, and she dislikes the taste of the food, perhaps as an implicit metaphor of "spiritual decay" in the Occident, where "domestic values" are eroded. A similar motif is found when she criticizes a conversation she has with her friends, where they talk about dates, dances and boys. This comes as a surprise to her, for she has spent the majority of her life either in school, where she danced only as part of an education, a refinement; or at home with her family. She views the way young girls live, perhaps being "too much" involved in the outside, with less of a domestic life and a looser bond to their family, which she believes is an excess that should be tamed with the cultural "essence" of her country:

> While I admired their freedom and courage, one thing scratched my pleasure. I could not find children in America. Even little schoolgirls were grown up, went to dances, and rouged their faces. Could these girls listen entranced to the tales of djins and peris which my old nurse had told so lovingly and which I had listened to for so many years and was still homesick for? (..) No matter how much I craved freedom, I could never utterly sacrifice the beauty and quiet of our Turkish life. I wanted to work, I wanted to be free from the veil and to shape my life to suit my desires, but I could never be so ruthless as these American girls. I would cling to some essentials of our Turkish character. The freedom that I wanted would have to be tempered with some submission to the days that were no more. To shorten childhood so brutally did not suit me in the least, I wanted children to be children as long as they could. (313)

After this discussion of how she sees a lack of childhood, she talks about their family life which also comes as a shock. She observes the relationship between the youth and their parents, who act like friends, and the children "talk back" at their parents, mock them and criticize them as they want. For her this as an extremity, a disruption in family life, and mentions the "wall of respect" between Turkish parents and their children. There's a conflict of life trajectories between the cultures depicted here, perhaps resulting from the different temporalities and paces of life. This discussion of eroding traditional values may be included as a cautionary tale towards the possible negative consequences of extreme Westernization. It is interesting that she would make such a sharp criticism about the arrangements of the personal, for earlier she had fervently expressed her frustration with the resignation of her elders to the veil, and insisted that she didn't care about the law or "the will of [her] elders",

that she would stand against them with her youthful recklessness (Ekrem 1930, 180). In the end, she chooses to move away across the ocean to live on her own, without any extra effort to cling to that essence of culture related to traditional family life. While Ekrem's portrayal of Turkish culture seems to revolve around an Occident-Orient binary corresponding to her American audience and herself as a(n Ottoman) Turk, and focused on everyday practices; Halide Edib has a much more specific and elaborate discussion of cultural elements, since she is writing her memoir as someone entrusted with educational and cultural reform plans by the Unionists, and as she is actively involved in literary circles (especially around the journal Tanin), and political organizations such as Türk Ocağı (Turkish Hearths). She takes a much sharper and radical stance informed by Turanism, making very specific and strong claims about cultural elements and discussing cultural forms in their historicity, whereas Selma Ekrem keeps her analyses more on a surface level, of everyday expressions and her own impressions, without going into complex discussions of form and content. While Ekrem is addressing a generic Orientalist gaze from a more apolitical place, Edib has a more precisely motivated project of explicating Turkish culture in its nuances, and how to purify it from "foreign" influences and elements. As an extension of her aim to convey a cultural essence of Turkish identity, she also embraces Muslim practices and recalls her fond memories of religious festivities, such as visiting the Suleymaniye Mosque for bayram which she describes as: "I felt caught up into the general sway and began moving my body unconsciously to and fro in the same harmonious manner. I became a part of the whole" (Edib 1926, 69). At other times, as a bilingual student in American College, she expresses the difficulty of reconciling her Westernized education and her experiences and belief of Islam, yet "some part in [her], a strange and distinct part, claimed to be an outcome of Islamic culture, a product of mosques, cemeteries, and set prayers" (Edib 1926, 192).

From young ages, Edib receives both formal and informal education in French and English literatures, and is well acquainted with literary movements, discussions of form and content, and how literary developments have come to influence Turkish literature. In addition to the traditional formal education of the elites, she is also very interested in folk culture, popular literature, theater, and music. Hence, in a section where she recalls her visit to the theater, we get a very different narrative from Ekrem's experience where she had belittled how "amateur" and ridiculous it was, and how disturbed she was by the noisy, crowded and dirty surroundings. Edib begins by giving a detailed overview of the origins of Turkish theater: the national one, orta oyun, and the French-influenced vein introduced by Namık Kemal, Nuri and Ahmed Midhat Beys in 1867. It is also not the only time she would mention

Namık Kemal's contributions to culture, as she would also praise the influence of his journals and his thought legacy which influenced nationalist and reformist thinkers of her generation. Yet in Ekrem's memoir there is only a short mention of Namık Kemal, and a dry mention of his famous play "Vatan" which was acted in public in 1908, and her father Ali Ekrem (hence, Namık Kemal's son) was invited to give a speech (Ekrem 1930, 136). Edib acknowledges the efforts of Namık Kemal and his contemporaries in adapting romantic French theater in Turkey, and how Kemal trained Armenian actors in Turkish pronunciation (Edib 1926, 122). However it is the other "national form" that she is really taken aback by. She expresses her praise of the form and its authenticity in a kind of nostalgic remark:

> I was charmed beyond description. The music, the color, the humor, the absolutely original tone, the unpretentious artistry, and the extraordinary ensemble have kept Turkish children, as well as the grown-up public in thrall for centuries. It is one of the heartbreaking facts of today that our new taste, or rather lack of taste, has killed this wonderful and simple art. (136)

Edib's interest in "simple" and "national" folk culture extends to literary forms as well, and inevitably comes with a discussion of Turkish language reform. Rıza Tevfik, her private teacher who tutors her in French and Turkish on art, literature, and philosophy, not only taught her "the higher and more sophisticated expressions of Oriental art and Arabic philosophy", but also shared his collection of popular songs, poems, and stories with Halide (Edib 1926, 184). While expressing her admiration towards Persian literature and the mastery of form within the tradition, which was also mirrored in Divan literature, she claims that "In spite of the grandeur and perfection of form in our older poets, I felt a stranger to them, while the simple and original expression of the people in their songs, stories, music, and mystical literature of the religious kind charmed me and made me feel akin to them" (Edib 1926, 183). Her approach is clearly shaped by Pan-Turanist and nationalist schools of thought, and the populist turn among the elite with the modernizing mission. She also notes the simultaneous changes in language, that "the outward and final break of the Turkish language away from the Persian conventions and Arabic phraseology was already in the air, although so far it was only Mehmed Emin who had dared to publish a few short poems in simple Turkish language and in the simple Turkish metrical form used in the people's songs and ballads" (Edib 1926, 184). Orienting towards the cultural forms "of the people" and taking critical distance to higher forms of art simultaneously aims to carve out an "Anatolian Turkish culture", a

cultural essence for the new nation state to naturalize modern Turkish identity, and to provide a break with "palace art" characteristic of Ottoman culture, moving towards forms of art that are more in line with the idea of a modern democracy.

Yet this politically motivated turn also meant the assimilation of all sorts of folkloric forms in a single "Anatolian" "Turkish" culture, as she overtly demonstrates in the section where she describes Goumitas Vartabet, an Armenian priest who was also renowned for his musical talents, and the performance he gave in Türk Ocağı. Edib suggests that Goumitas had come from a poor family in Kutahya, and that "his parents were probably of Turkish descent, from the Turkis who had joined the Gregorian Church" (Edib 1926, 372), insisting on his Turkish descendance based on this mere speculation. In her description of Goumitas and his music Edib writes:

> As he appeared in the long black coat of the priest, his dark face as naive as any simple Anatolian's, and his eyes full of the pathos and longing which his voice expressed in its pure strong notes, I felt him an embodiment of Anatolian folklore and music. The airs were the ones I had often heard our servants from Kemah and Erzeroum sing. He had simply turned the words into Armenian. But I did not pay any attention to the language; I only felt the inner significance of that tender and desolate melody from the lonely wastes of Anatolia. (371)

She thus suggests the existence of a purely Turkish Anatolian folklore and music, which Goumitas had "simply turned into Armenian". She then describes how he sang Psalm 101 to the music he had composed, with anger and "vengeance for [her] people" as a suffering Armenian, followed by how "the Ojak generously used its influence" in 1915 to have him spared from deportation (Edib 1926, 374). By framing Anatolian folklore as distinctly Turkish and "adapted into other languages", she produces the myth of the pure essence of Turkish identity and excludes Armenian language and folk culture from it.

3. FEMININISMS AND FEMININITIES IN CONTENTION

> *At the center of the East/West divide, which, as it emerges in the 18th century, pits religion and tradition against reason and modernity, is the (un)veiled woman.*
>
> — Theresa Heffernan

3.1 Women in Public and The Veil Question

Especially from the 19th century onwards, women's place in society became a heated plane of political debate for different ideological veins stirring in the Ottoman Empire. Ottomanist modernization opened up discussions of secularization and a "modern" concept of citizenship, and women's social status was instrumentalized for these debates. In this period, although not equally prominent as men, women (especially upper-class elite women) voiced their own responses in the public through journals and periodicals. Nearly forty journals were published before 1923, such as Kadınlar Dünyası (Women's World) (1913-1921) which published articles written and edited exclusively by women from different segments of society, and provided a kind of "forum" for Ottoman Turkish women to discuss their issues, by receiving and responding to letters from the readers (Yıldız 2016; Çakır 2007). Among the discussions in these publications were overt articulations of the demand for women's liberation, participation in the public sphere, education, and everyday concerns, and connections to Western women's movements and debates(Sirman 1989; Yıldız 2016). Moreover, and very crucially, there was a strong political presence of non-Muslim Ottoman feminist women in this period, often overlooked in mainstream feminist Ottoman historiography (perhaps due to a common tendency to conflate women's movement and demands with modernization and nation-making debates), such as Hayganush Mark, the editor of Dzaghig, a journal which aspired to publish only fe-

male writers (or men, provided that they use women's pseudonyms), and later Hay Gin (Armenian Woman), a Turkish-Armenian periodical that continued its lifespan into the early years of the Turkish Republic (Ekmekcioglu 2016).

In addition to the various publications, especially during the Second Constitutional era starting from 1908 women established organizations, and arranged meetings and conferences to discuss their social status and rights. Among the brilliant women who were involved in these endeavours was Halide Edib, who wrote in various journals especially on civil rights and education of women, and founded Teal-i Nisvan Cemiyeti (Society for the Rise of Women). Teal-i Nisvan was mainly intended to "cultivate its members" through lectures and language education, however it coincided with the Balkan War and the members ended up also working "for relief and nursing" of the wounded soldiers (Edib 1926, 334). When talking about the club, Edib notes that "There was a feministic tendency in the club, but as a whole it kept within the bounds of usefulness and philanthropy (Edib 1926, 334). It is not clear what the concept "feministic tendencies" entails and to what extent it can contradict with "usefulness and philanthropy", however this remark implies a distancing from other women's organizations. Edib is very specific with her agenda for women's emancipation, and writes in Tanin about equal opportunities in terms of education and civil rights, which causes her to receive many anonymous threats (Edib 1926, 267). Her position as a renowned writer also enabled her to access "a great many women belonging to different classes who came to her with their personal troubles. It was through these visits that [she] first became aware of some tragic problems of the old social order" (Edib 1926, 270). Ekrem was a child for the most of this vigorous period of women's movement, in a relatively reserved household and having spent an important part of it in exile following her father's political duties. Yet she was well aware of transnational intellectual debates, as she repeats how fascinated she was by "American women's courage" as far as she learned at her American school, probably referring to the suffrage movement at the time:

> I loved school now, in its four walls I put everything else out of my mind. There the horror of war and death had to be forgotten with books. (....) In school I shook these thoughts from me, and only there did I forget that I was young and that life stretched before me. Also I became bolder. Now I had read and heard about the American women and admired them for their courage. They seemed as free as the wind to me who was shackled and bound. (270)

The same school had had the same liberating effect on Halide, about 20 years her

senior and the first Muslim Turkish Ottoman to attend the American College, who describes the influence of college on her as "giving [her] a much greater balance and opening up to [her] the possibility of a personal life with enjoyments of a much more varied kind. Some of the strong tendencies of [her] thought also found new vistas into wider paths" (Edib 1926, 190).

As Ekrem complains about her struggle with the mandatory veiling and restrictions imposed on women in public spaces, she expresses how alone she feels in her struggle. This should again be considered in light of her imagined audience, to which perhaps she's trying to paint herself as an extraordinary, heroic woman who "fled oppression and loneliness" to the land of the free. She appears on a yearbook page from 1934, belonging to an all-women's college, along with other "outstanding women from the Orient and Occident", and she is described as a Turkish feminist, interested in her nation's women and their leader (Figure 3.1). Although portraying herself as such, there is no concretization of this interest in her autobiography, as there are no mentions of women's journals, conferences and political organizations. Moreover later in 1947, in her second book Turkey Old and New she reiterates her opinions on Turkish women as passive, resigning to their fate obediently and accepting oppression, until Mustafa Kemal gave them their rights. According to her account:

> Kemal Atatürk realized that the country needed free, educated women if it ever would assimilate the changes he had in mind. Women must assume their rights. He toured the country again, urging women to throw off their veils, to take part in national affairs and step into their rightful places. He said in one of his speeches that no country could advance with half of society free and the other half lacking all freedom. The President was diplomatic, too. At one of the numerous balls given at Ankara, he saw an elderly lady wearing a black kerchief over her head. Approaching the woman, Ataturk told her:
>
> "You have beautiful hair. Why do you hide it under this ugly veil?"
>
> Kemal Ataturk used persuasion to free the women; no laws were passed forbidding the tscharchaf or the veil. (...) Kemal Ataturk showed us the way, and those who wanted to follow could do so. (81-82)

Figure 3.1 Selma Ekrem in 1934, among Flora Macdonald College's yearbook's division pages which were dedicated to "outstanding women from the Orient and the Occident". She is described as "a Turkish feminist", "interested in the women of her nation".

The veil question is Ekrem's central problematic, and she portrays it as the signifier of women's restricted participation in the public sphere. Coming from a family of Westernized indigenous elites who were closely involved to the discussions around the emerging national identity, Ekrem's negative portrayal of the veil and the tchar-

shaf, as "casting over her a shadow", "a black prison" hindering her freedom (Ekrem 1930, 178) goes parallel to the nationalist discourse of her time, seeing the Western clothing as "civilized and international" () (Yeğenoğlu, 133) and the Ottoman clothing grounded in Islamic values as "backward" and "oppressive". Ekrem's reasoning for being against the veil is "not being able to work", "not being able to enjoy themselves", and "not being able to live", their fate being limited "to sit behind lattices and curtains and peer at life with a sigh" (Ekrem 1930, 268). She thus takes the self-Orientalizing approach to the veil question in line with the nationalist project, reducing the complex and various experiences of female subjects with the veil to "black bundles of resignation" (Ekrem 1930, 180), seeing it as total oppression, disregarding the agency of the subjects with veil. Even as she pays respect to the Ottoman past, which is materialized in the figure of her grandmother, she expresses that the tradition should be left behind in favor of progress:

> [Grandmother] looked at us from her world that now lies in heaped-up memories, a world that is never to come back, the fragrance of which lingers only among a few chosen people. Great-grandmother was to me the old Turkey that was more enchanting than any fairy tale. The old days that now slumber in their graves – those were the days of beauty and enchantment, the days of power and fabulous wealth. (...) We children of Stamboul, born into days of sorrow and struggle, could only feel them stretching behind us as a lost paradise forever unattainable. With all her greatness and her wit, she too had bowed to all restrictions and had worn and was still wearing her black tcharshaf. The old days were beautiful, my grandmother I loved, but I could not be like her. (186)

In Halide Edib's writing, however, we see almost another side of the coin in the veil question, of the woman who does not feel completely victimized by the veil, but accepts it as a part of her culture, marking her religious identity. The veil is a casual part of everyday life and not a signifier for oppression. Quite contrary, for her it signifies the coming of age, passage to adult life: "Children are all little girls and continue to live in child-dom till they take the veil. That happens when they are ten years old, and they then join the grown-ups forever after" (Edib 1926, 17). In fact, later in her life when she has to flee the city with her two boys because of political threats, heavy veiling helps her to be disguised and safely escape. As a foreign woman in the ship asks out loud "What is that black bundle?" referring to her in tcharshaf, she remarks: "I was the black bundle" (Edib 1926, 286), claiming the agency of "that bundle" as it is called by those who belittle veiling practices and women wearing the veil as passive victims. Edib goes even further to criticize the

hat as a symbol of Christianity and Western culture:

> Turkey having, however, not yet entered the road of reform and modernism by a slavish imitation of English outward apparel, he did not make her wear a hat. As a matter of fact it would never have done for him even to express a desire to do such a thing, for hats were the outward and visible sign of Christians. (No good Mohammedan could wear the accursed things.) (23)

She's spelling out how it was considered "accursed" for Muslim women to wear the hat, and calls it a "slavish imitation of English outward apparel", in a wry critical tone of this pillar of Western-influenced reforms. Curiously enough, in the Turkish version of her memoir published later, Edib omits this emphasis and merely states that her father wouldn't make her wear the hat because "it wasn't possible in those days[1] (Edib 1926, 21), perhaps because by then the hat had become the symbol of Kemalist reforms and modernization and such remarks would be considered anti-Kemalist (and she was already in quite trouble with being labelled an anti-Kemalist). Later in the memoir, as she recalls the days of her first marriage and the mental illnesses she had dealt with in this period, she writes:

> I could not complain much of the details of my daily life, for they were more or less the same as the daily life of the great majority of other Turkish women. I did not envy the bustle and the empty pleasures of the few more or less described by Pierre Loti. I never had "hat and ball" longings. (To go out unveiled in a hat like Christian women, and to dance.) (229)

She does not feel a "lack" in her daily life due to the veil, nor does she have any envy to wear the hat which she notes that some women at the time did, and went out dancing "like Christian women". For Edib the problem of women's public participation is much more complex, and involves different issues around civil rights and laws arranging family structures, as well as educational and political rights which she spends her life fighting for.

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[1] "Yalnız şapka giydirmek, o günler için mümkün olmadığından çocuğu yazın başı açık gezdiriyor, kışın da kalpak giydiriyordu."

3.2 Family, Tradition, Desire, and Self-Censorship

Although Ekrem takes issue with women's status in the public sphere, their right to work and live self-sufficiently, we don't see how this perspective extends to women's "private" issues, which had a significant place in late Ottoman women's movements as well as (proto)feminist thought in Europe and the US. The Kemalist project promised a reformed family structure with equal rights to both parties, and an adoption of the modern monogamous marriage grounded in civil law. Yet none of these seemed to appeal to her enough to consider moving back, and in fact she applied for US citizenship in her later years, choosing her own surname instead of keeping that of her father's[2]. So why did she not discuss any of the issues concerning family structure, expectations of motherhood and marriage towards women and how these have undergone transformation? Moreover, while there's a detailed narrative of her family life and everyday practices at her childhood home, why does she not overtly address these in the life she chose for herself?

The autobiographical narrator's positioning as a child, or as someone who's an "outsider" to what goes on in the public sphere is very common in women's life writing, "because of the high degree of (auto)censorship in narrating the adult self" (Adak 2007, 29). Ekrem had already started making a living in America when she was writing Unveiled, and there isn't an apparent, immediate reason why she would choose to censor herself. However, when we look at the narrative structure, it is a story of a young woman who dreaded being "veiled", confined to the private sphere as soon as she "came of age" to become an object of the male gaze, therefore requiring to be concealed, who fled the country and left her family behind immediately after she finished school. In the narrative, there's a distinct duality between her life in the hometown as confined to "fate", unable to become the agent of her own destiny; and her life in the US, where she became "unveiled", relieved of the obligation to conceal herself. Yet this very part where she was freed of the "compulsory veil" is also the shortest part of her autobiographical writing. Certainly the fact that she's catering to the interest of an imagined American audience, and they may not be as interested to hear about their own culture as much as they are in "the exotic Orient" is playing a role here. However this is the part of the narrative that is least about her and more about what she sees in the places she goes. There's much fewer personal details about her friends, who they are, what they do, how she met them, and why she moved around the country a few times. The reader only finds out that

[2]According to her naturalization documents found on: National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington, D.C.; Indexes to Naturalization Petitions for United States District Courts, Connecticut, 1851-1992 (M2081); Microfilm Serial: M2081; Microfilm Roll: 10

she works as a lecturer and writer, and lives with a long-time female companion, embodying an "independent, nonheterosexual, woman-connected existence" in that she never expresses any heterosexual desire, has never gotten married nor had kids (nor expressed any such aspirations), despite writing about her fondness of her family and the cultural values around family life. Not only does Edib talk about her married life and children in her memoirs, but she also foreshadows how there was such an aspiration in her life as a child in their daily lives, a detail that Ekrem doesn't mention much. As little Halide talks to Reşe, a slave girl living in their house and taking care of her, she promises that "when I was grown up and married and had a house of my own, I would see that she should have the same dresses as I did, as well as a servant and a nice room to herself" (Edib 1926, 169).

Figure 3.2 Ekrem and her sister Beraet's photo included in the chapter where she first goes to America, captioned "The West and the East".

It's also worth noting that there's a photo of Ekrem in the chapter where she visits America, donning her short hair and wearing a pantsuit, next to her sister Beraet who's wearing a headscarf and a dress with frilled collars (Figure 3.2). Ekrem looks happy in her masculine style, which is out of the ordinary even for "the civilized West" at the time, when binary gender norms were mostly reflected in fashion, most women opting for long skirts and dresses, and soft, coiffed hairstyles. This is also after she has "emancipated" herself from compulsory veiling, so it cannot be merely explained by a desire for equality and participation in the public sphere. Following

Adrienne Rich's discussion on compulsory heterosexuality, and in the light of what little is known about her personal life, we could interpret this as a signifier of queerness, and view Ekrem's autobiography as a historical instance of lesbian existence, though rather subtly. Again, echoing Rich, I take queerness and lesbian existence in a broader sense, freeing the terms from the "limiting, clinical associations in its patriarchal definition" (Rich 1980) and expanding it to include "many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support" (Rich 1980) Indeed, Ekrem's connections with women are very central to her biography, starting from her childhood best friend Beraet, her all-girls school where she reminisces of being inspired by women's stories that she heard in the lessons, following her aunts and mother around the house (despite not having a gendered spatial division in their house), up to her life in America where she lived with her female friend. Looking from this broader angle, and seeing how she doesn't mention any heterosexual desire, or any aspiration, longing for a normative family life; we see a woman who has embraced the "erotic" in the expanded sense of Audre Lorde as claiming and channelling one's libidinal energy into every part of one's life, "the erotic in female terms as that which is unconfined to any single part of the body, as an energy not only diffuse but omnipresent in 'sharing joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic,' and in the sharing of work" (Lorde 1978; Rich 1980).

In terms of "private" life and family as she explicates in Memoirs, Halide Edib undergoes diverse experiences and emotions. Although she is attempted to be portrayed as "the Mother of the Turk" and the embodiment of state feminist ideals in hegemonic historical narratives, we see certain moments in her autobiographical narrative that create "cracks" in this image of ideal womanhood, of the blissful domestic life perfectly balanced with modest public participation. At a distant glance from the outside, she has had two marriages, two children, and taken up responsibilities in educational reforms, nursing and tending to the needs of soldiers, and orphanages established during the World War. She is particular with this outline of accomplishments in her memoirs. Yet looking more carefully, one can see how those experiences of being a wife and a mother have not lived up to the ideals of state feminism - that of the sacrificing, overgiving, caring homemaker that puts domestic responsibilities before her personal aspirations and professional endeavours. When she is reminiscing of her first marriage to Salih Zeki Bey, Edib writes with a sardonic tone: "No little Circassian slave bought from the slave-market at the lowest price could have entered upon our common life in such an obedient spirit as I did" (Edib 1926, 206). In fact, the opening paragraph of the chapter titled "Married Life and the World" begins with this bleak picture:

> My life was confined within the walls of my apartment. I led the life of the old-fashioned Turkish woman. For the first few years I even ceased to see father's old friends whom I had known as a child. I belonged to the new house and its master, and gave the best I had, to create a happy home and to help him in his great work. He had begun at this time his colossal work in Turkish and I prepared for him from different English authorities the lives of the great English mathematicians and philosophers. (207)

Curiously enough, in the Turkish version of her memoirs published none of these details and complaints are included, and she simply brushes over it as: "I will be as brief as possible about my married life. My father had given us an apartment in Sultantepesi. Salih Zeki's son from his previous marriage was also living with us there. (...) I had taken the role of the housewife very seriously. At the same time I continued my intellectual works and writing[3] (Edib 1963). There's a sharp contrast between the two pictures, as she censors out her negative opinions and impressions of marriage in the Turkish version, whereas in the initial version written in English these are an important part of her narrative leading up to her mental breakdown in 1902, which she considers a landmark in her life. The mental illness is also sort of censored in the Turkish version, all the details omitted and simply passed over as a "long-lasting sleep disease"[4] (Edib 1963), whereas the words depression and anxiety are explicitly used in the initial text.

Despite the negative experiences, Edib underlines the significance of marriage, calling it "the one possible felicity for a Turkish woman" (Edib 1926, 88) and "the key to the entrance to life for Turkish girls of that time" (Edib 1926, 121). She also notes how extensively she had considered divorce, for she was "a believer (...) in the inviolability of name and home" and "wanted to be absolutely sure before breaking up [her] home" (Edib 1926, 307,308). Unlike in Ekrem's narrative, marriage is a certainty of women's life trajectory in Edib. It is perhaps due to the security of this narrative frame that she talks about her intense attachments with and "passionate likings" for women, starting with her kindergarten teacher Kyria Ellenie "her intensest, sincerest, and perhaps longest love-affair" as a little girl (Edib 1926, 25). She has a publicly demonstrated heterosexual lifestyle and an image as "the mother of Turks", and thus doesn't have to censor her fond feelings towards women, fearing that it may be considered threatening or perverse. Speaking of Pesha Kalcheff, a Bulgarian girl who she formed a close companionship for two years, she writes:

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[3]Evlilik hayatımı imkan dairesinde kısa keseceğim. Babam, Sultantepesi'ndeki evin bir dairesini bize vermişti. Burada Salih Zeki'nin birinci esinden olan bir oğlu da bizim yanımızda idi. (..) Ev kadını rolunu cok ciddiyetle ele almıştım. Aynı zamanda fikri çalışmalarım ve yazılarım da devam ediyordu.

[4]Uzun süren bir uykusuzluk hastalığı

> After two years of camaraderie we all of a sudden developed a short but very strange and warm attachment for each other. I have often wondered why my liking for her was so exceptionally strong, and I find it very difficult to account for. It is true that she had the characteristic Slavic physique, which always attracted me. She had those deep-set eyes, the high cheek-bones, and the dominating expression of strength of character. She had a clear and penetrating mind as well as an intensity in her likes and dislikes, and all of these had their share in drawing me to her. She had a dramatic way of expressing herself too, which was all the more forcible because it was so unconscious and simple. Somehow this attachment, which I cannot class with any other I have had, I think of with reverence. I cannot say that it was due to admiration of any kind and still less to a foolish sentimentality. And yet there was something peculiarly perfect about it which seemed to arise out of her power of satisfying my soul's claims at the time. We made a great many plans together for the future; she was to be a doctor and I a violinist, and we would study in Paris. I am sure that she knew as well as I that all this was foolish and impossible; but we enjoyed the illusion of lengthening our friendship into years. (196-7)

It comes as no surprise that the details of her attraction to Pesha's physical and characteristic qualities, as well as the peculiarly strong character of their attachment are not included in the Turkish version of the memoir, but merely how they took classes together and made plans for the future. That these plans were "foolish and impossible" are also left out, perhaps because the relationship is not conveyed as a strong companionship as in the English memoir, but merely a friendship, and there was no need to point out the "impossibility" of the plans, involving two young women moving to Paris together and making a life there.

Regardless of her public status as an exemplary modern Turkish woman, and her modest activism for women's emancipation confined to civil rights, abstaining from "radical" forms of feminism, Edib experiences a breach in her relationship to her grandmother, which may be considered as a metaphor for her break with Ottoman traditions. She notes how granny "was much shocked by the new women. Their talk, their walk, their dress, and their general aspect hurt her. (...) She suffered because they shook their arms as they walked, looked into men's eyes, had loud voices, and smoked in public; above all they did not iron their clothes as she did every morning" (Edib 1926, 353). More than a mere clash of generational values, there is a clear breach between her grandmother who had spent the majority of her life in the early stages of Ottoman modernization, and herself who was born after Young Turks and lived through radical transformations in the status of women, and the fabric of society as a whole through reforms in family structures and the organization of public and private domains.

4. CONCLUSION

In this thesis I pursued how Halide Edib and Selma Ekrem assert their gendered and nationalized agencies through Memoirs and Unveiled, their respective autobiographical works written in English and set in the transition period between Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic. Through textual analysis, I explored how their textual (self-)representations interplay with the official nation state ideology of the time, regarding the leap from an "Ottoman past" to a "Turkish identity" and the corresponding "modern Turkish woman".

I had decided on comparatively reading the two autobiographies since they were written about the same period, addressing an Anglophone audience, by women coming from similar familial backgrounds of late Ottoman bureaucratic elites and even having studied in the same school, American College for Girls. Yet as I spent time delving into the nuances, I came to the conclusion that Halide Edib and Selma Ekrem engender different portraits of Turkish female subjects and different accounts of the historical background of "Turkish women"s position, which is not surprising to me personally but yields an intervention to monolithic accounts of women's subjectivities in the late Ottoman and early Republican period.

Ekrem is addressing a very specific imagined American audience, positioning herself as a cultural ambassador, even a cultural "merchant" of some sort. She caters to the Orientalist imagination through superficial descriptions of Turkish Ottoman culture, food and everyday life, but does so with a deliberate purpose of "selling" Orientalist delights to her audience. While doing so, she completely ignores the complex demands and stances of women's movements at the time, and portrays women as obedient victims. She singles herself out as someone who was troubled by the veil her whole life, struggling on her own, and who moved to the US to work and become emancipated. She reinforces the "American dream" narrative, but carefully preserves a connection to her "Ottoman/Turkish roots", perhaps to carve a space for herself as an authority on Ottoman Turkish culture. In her narrative, the focus is more on her childhood, and even the significant public events are narrated

from a child's point of view. Her life as an adult woman, why she decided to leave the country and the details of how exactly her life differed from the one she left behind is not touched upon as much. There are no thoughts nor experiences of herself in relation to motherhood or marriage, and she mentions living with a female companion. It is then fair to speculate that her "unveiling" was in fact a radical choice that she decides to censor, involving a non-heterosexual private life and queer existence and putting her at odds with the image of the modern Turkish woman as the perfect wife, homemaker, and the perfect mother devoting her life to raising modern citizens.

Edib, on the other hand, is much more deliberate in her self-representation. While she was writing her Memoirs, she had recently been dismissed as a "mandate supporter" and came into increased political tension with the single party regime. Her autobiography is thus heavily centered around her intellectual and cultural endeavors within the country, positioning herself in a crucial role for the cultural and educational pillar of Kemalist reforms. As she constructs herself as this key figure in nation building, and as a pioneer woman, her feminist standing and contribution to the nation building discourses of the time are expressed in the narrative. In Edib's autobiography too we come across a clash with the image of idealized Turkish woman, despite her public reputation as "the mother of the Turk". Neither is she a perfect mother nor a perfect wife, and has intimate attachments to women which would be frowned upon in the modern nation state, founded upon nuclear heterosexual families, all of which are written about in detail in the English version of her autobiography and shortened or changed in the later Turkish version. Despite keeping a modest image, Halide Edib too is not exactly the embodiment of the perfect daughter of the Republic, but simply a woman with her own contradictions, desires, ups, downs, and mostly passionate about her career and activism, all of which lead to the fact that in all her complexity she wouldn't fit the box that state feminism carved out for women.

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