



European  
University  
Institute

DEPARTMENT  
OF HISTORY  
AND  
CIVILIZATION

# ‘A Nation of Orphans: Silence and Memory in twentieth-century Turkey’

Suzan Meryem Rosita Aljadeeah Kalayci

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to  
obtaining the degree of Doctor of History and Civilization  
of the European University Institute

Florence, 28 May 2018



European University Institute  
**Department of History and Civilization**

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**Examining Board**

Prof. Alexander Etkind (EUI)  
Prof. emerita Luisa Passerini (EUI)  
Prof. emeritus Jay Winter (Yale University)  
Prof. Hülya Adak (Sabanci University)

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I confirm that chapter 1 was the result of a previous study for the *Raphael Lemkin Award* (2014) I undertook at the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute Yerevan, Armenia.

I confirm that chapter 2 was jointly co-authored with Ali Sait Çetinoğlu and I contributed 60 % of the work. It was published as Suzan Meryem Rosita Aljadeeah, and Ali Sait Çetinoğlu (2016). "The 1915 Genocide in the Post-war Ottoman Press and in Parliamentary Records (1918–1919)," in *Mass Media and the Genocide of the Armenians: One Hundred Years of Uncertain Representation*, edited by S. Kappler, S. Kasparian, R. Godin, and j. Chabot, London, Routledge.

I confirm that chapter 3 draws upon an earlier article I published as Suzan Meryem Rosita (2016), "Atatürk: un culto lungo un secolo," translated by Tommaso Giordani, *Memoria e Ricerca*, 3, 515-539.

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## Abstract

Written during the centenary of the Armenian genocide, *A Nation of Orphans* focuses on the personal narratives of individuals who were touched, in one painful way or another, by the Armenian genocide of 1915 – individuals of different genders, social backgrounds, classes and ages. They range from orphans to school directors and presidents, from fathers to daughters and grandchildren, from genocide victims to perpetrators and bystanders. Engaging different modes of historical analysis, my thesis aspires to avoid two recent trends in Genocide Studies: a one-sided focus on either the perpetrators or the victims, and obsessive revolving around the notion of denial. Over the course of four chapters, *A Nation of Orphans* looks at how Turkey remembered the First World War and the Armenian genocide – what was spoken about but not said, and what was said but not spoken about. My central argument is that silence swept Turkey's memorial landscape after the Great War. The Turkish silence about the Armenian genocide is both unique and characteristic of the silence that followed the Great War. An ideological break with the past, which was solicited by the republican political regime in the years following the war, and the legacy of the genocide have shaped modern Turkey. I make an effort to understand how silence would indeed become the language of the newly founded republic and how individuals dealt with this predicament of silence: how they came to identify themselves in this liminal situation between speech and silence, between remembering and forgetting, and how they nevertheless found ways of telling their personal stories.

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This dissertation would not have been possible without my academic mentor, about whom I write in my introduction; and it would not have been completed without the kind support of Alexander Etkind and Luisa Passerini. I want to thank them again.



## INTRODUCTION

### THINKING ABOUT SILENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF WAR, ARCHIVES AND MEMORY

#### *DI DOVE SEI*

This doctoral thesis, touching on so many aspects of a political and historical struggle of which I am a part and to which I am still profoundly connected, has been difficult to write. Despite this, it has given me the opportunity to engage in a rewarding and enriching intellectual journey. I have learned much about my own historical heritage: about lives, neither hopeful nor hopeless, responding in one way or another to what Leo Spitzer has called “the predicament of marginality”<sup>1</sup> – that fleeting sense of belonging, in a state apart, in which we often find ourselves as a consequence of migrating by force or choice into inner or outer exile, oblivion or silence.

Here in Florence, I meet with a group of women twice a week to learn Italian at a local library. All of us are from somewhere else. We are from Palestine, Syria, Bangladesh, Argentina, Egypt, Japan, Brazil and Turkey. One of my friends calls it my ‘Italian-from-somewhere-else class.’ One of the first things we learned is to identify ourselves and to respond to the question ‘*di dove sei?*’ – ‘where are you from?’ A simple yet difficult question for us: at once evoking lost worlds, guilt, nostalgia and pain. The question contains much cultural (and lingual) subtext. It often disguises a certain notion of otherness toward the person asked. The question assumes that “you are not from here.”<sup>2</sup> It irritates me as much as it does Paola di Cori:

“In the three words that make up the sentence, all seems to me irritating, starting from the genitive particle at the beginning, which in my view plays a threatening role of possessive specification: the initial “di” is an imperative that allows no loopholes; it immediately establishes a mandatory bond, the priority of [a] dependence [...]”<sup>3</sup>

The perspective from which I speak is rooted in a critical engagement with my present situation. Sometimes during these past years, I have stopped being a historian and have become suspicious of history. I have started to feel uncomfortable writing it. “Isn’t the idea of ‘never again’ being

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<sup>1</sup> Leo Spitzer, *Lives in Between: Assimilation and Marginality in Austria, Brazil, and West Africa, 1780-1945* (Cambridge, 1989), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Bidding farewell to Edward Said, the Palestinians poet Mahmoud Darwish writes: “He says: I am from there. I am from here. I am not there and I am not here. I have two names, which meet and part, and I have two languages. I forget which of them I dream in.” For the full text of this poem in English see <http://www.mahmouddarwish.com/ui/english/ShowContent.aspx?ContentId=15>. I am indebted to Neveen Abuela for drawing my attention to this poem, and her family for introducing me to Mahmoud Darwish’s poetry.

<sup>3</sup> Paola di Cori, “Di Dove Sei?” *Lapis* 36 (1996): 14. I wish to thank Elena Laurenzi for drawing my attention to this quote from Paola di Cori.

mocked on a daily basis?” Martin Jay asked me when I told him about my struggle to write about war and genocide while my friends from Syria were escaping from their country of origin.<sup>4</sup> Many have died escaping war, their boats sunk before arriving in Europe. I recall afternoons spent with them looking for supplies to keep them warm and safe during their journeys; making one last attempt at getting them a European visa; bringing them to obscure locations from where their ‘handlers’ would pick them up and bring them to the boats.

“I could not bring myself to sit in the truck,” my friend K told me, “or let my children see the inside of it. It was a truck used for carrying dead meat with big, iron hooks hanging from the ceiling. The handler told me to sit in the front with my daughters. There was only room for them and myself in the front, but how could I let my husband, who had escaped from prison and torture in Syria, sit in the back of the truck and look out of the window, remembering what I am trying to forget?” K and her family did not leave that night. They stayed one more month with us. At the end of the month, we were all emotionally and physically exhausted: we had been cooking last suppers too many times; had been analysing possible horrific scenarios too much; had been saying good-bye too often. This was over three years ago. K and her family left for Norway across the Mediterranean in May 2014.

I begin to wonder why I should recall this day with K in such great detail when so many others have passed in a blur when I sat down to write this introduction. Why write about it now? Why write about it at all, when we were just the backdrop to conversations and experiences that we did not want to have nor had we experienced – our partners had been former cellmates in Syria and were sharing a bit of solidarity and *arab* in their new (temporary) exile. We immediately liked each other, had common friends in Damascus, and spoke of future projects: theatre plays that could be written and performed together. We would never write or perform them, we knew that much, but talking about them felt really good. At the time I was also reading Gloria Anzaldúa with a group of women. Talking about the process of writing *Borderlands*, Gloria Anzaldúa said something that made great sense to us:

“One thing I urge you to do when you are reading and writing is to figure out, literally, where your feet stand, what position you are taking: [...] For whom are you speaking? To whom are you speaking? What is the context, where do you locate your experience? [...] Why are you doing this research? What are your motivations? What are the stakes, what’s at stake – to use a popular theoretical expression. In other words, what’s in it for you?”

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<sup>4</sup> Email correspondence with Martin Jay during the month of September 2014–ongoing.

What are the terms of the debate and who set up these terms? Everybody has a stake; you are doing it because you are affirming your ethnic identity; you want to document your experience; you want to find meaning in it; you want to find acceptance and legitimacy; you don't want your voice erased.”<sup>5</sup>

## IMAGES OF WAR

War was not only very present in my personal life; it also haunted my professional circles. Those of us working on the memory of the Armenian genocide in Turkey skirted around questions about our research, avoiding unpleasant discussions that would automatically explode. Much of the research was to prove a point: the Armenian genocide did happen. The Turkish government was our prime audience. As a scholar, this frustrated me enormously. Even as I continued work on the social impact of genocide and war and on the enduring legacy of the Armenian genocide in modern-day Turkey, I found that I could not write about this history without writing personally, about my own images of war and the power they hold over me. And, for me, this power is intimately bound up with the city of Aleppo and with the familial and collective pain that the city stands for.

Aleppo, my grandmother's birth city, was where my former husband grew up and escaped from. It was the first city in Syria I heard about and visited. Aleppo was the city to and from which my uncle smuggled cigarettes and tea (among other things) – a fact I only learned when he drove me there for the first (and last) time. Aleppo, so they say, is the queen of all cities. It is also where Khaled Khalifa's beautiful novel *In Praise of all Hatred* is set, a novel by a cherished friend, whose fingers were broken by the 'thugs' of the Syrian regime to prevent him from writing.<sup>6</sup> Aleppo as a place of memory is also a city that I frequently encountered in my doctoral research: it was there that the Armenian orphan Harutyun Alboyadjian, whose story I tell in my first chapter, lost his beloved sister Ovsana after they survived the deportation march from the interior of the Ottoman empire to the Syrian desert. Aleppo is where Mehmet Celal bey, the Ottoman governor of Aleppo in 1915, protested against the deportation of the Armenian community – as we will read in my second chapter. It is where Atatürk, one of the protagonists of my third chapter, got into a street fight before retreating from the city with his troops on 26 October 1918 – thus marking the last engagement of World War One before the Armistice. It is also where Hagob Oshagan, who disguised himself as a German soldier and escaped the wrath of Atatürk's men on

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<sup>5</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, "On Writing Borderlands/La Frontera" in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, edited by AnaLouise Keating (Duke: 2009), 193.

<sup>6</sup> Khaled Khalifa, *In Praise of Hatred: A Novel* (London, 2014).

numerous occasions in Istanbul in 1922, was put to final rest in 1948. His novel *Remnants* inspired my final chapter.

*A Nation of Orphans* could easily have collapsed as a doctoral thesis. Sometimes I felt that the relentless repetition of the past in my own present threatened to overshadow the critical considerations raised by my historical research in the aftermath of genocide and war. I had begun my project with the idea that silence hints at a hidden sublime contestation that is still present. In other words, if there is no one to speak, there is no one to silence either. My interest in the contemporary presence of silence in Turkey was twofold: I wanted to know what was spoken about but not said, and what was not said but was spoken about. I came to think of it as ‘words can be full of silence; silence can be full of words’. In this spirit, I published a completely empty book with the title [*armenian genocide*], first in Turkey (2010), and then in Armenia (2015). The project was immediately censored in Turkey but a few libraries participated nevertheless. I thought of it as a retake on what the American poet Muriel Rukeyser said in 1949: “During the war, we felt the silence in the policy of the governments of English-speaking countries. That policy was to win the war first, and work out the meanings afterward. The result was, of course, that the meanings were lost.”<sup>7</sup>

In my conversations with Jay Winter at Yale University (2009), we had already talked about what Rukeyser wrote in her homage to Käthe Kollwitz (1968): “Held between wars, my lifetime among wars, the big hands of the world of death, my lifetime listens to yours.”<sup>8</sup> For Winter, Kollwitz’s work *Pietà* – a sculpture dedicated to her son who died during World War One – represented, more than anything else, the agony of war: the suffering, the memory, the insanity that became (part of every) family history in Europe. How about my own family history? Was I Armenian? Did we speak about the genocide at home? How was the First World War remembered in my family? These questions remained with me when I returned to Istanbul. It turned out that there were many of us who had been asked, or were asking themselves, similar questions. We began to talk about our family histories, whether we were of Armenian, Greek, Kurdish or Turkish origin, what our motivations were in asking these questions, and how we could reflect more critically

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<sup>7</sup> Muriel Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry* (Ashfield, 1949). Available online at: <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/life-poetry-chapter-1> (Last accessed: 8 August 2017). I am indebted to the poetry of Solmaz Sharif where I found this particular reference to Muriel Rukeyser in the context of silence and war. Solmaz Sharif, *Look* (Minneapolis, 2016), Chapter 2.

<sup>8</sup> These conversations took place in the framework of the International Fox Fellowship Program in Spring 2009. For more information on this fellowship program, see: <http://foxfellowship.yale.edu/>



and theoretically on these issues, given that we lacked a proper academic setting in which to express our thoughts freely. Thinking back, I can now see that – along with feminist colleagues and friends – these conversations about our family histories also emerged from our need to repair and redress our positions as scholars in a male-dominated academic environment. But history writing was dominated not just by male scholars but also by the towering figure of Atatürk, the Father of Turks. By doing a new type of family history, we very much wanted to challenge these patriarchal structures that underpinned existing historiographies and nationhood.<sup>9</sup> As Anzaldúa wrote, we wanted to question the very terms of the debate, find meaning in it, find acceptance and legitimacy and have our (and other previously neglected) voices heard.

A small, deeply personal book became an inspiration for my peers and me, in fact for my generation: Fethiye Çetin's memoir about her Armenian grandmother Heranush. Çetin had understood her maternal grandmother to be a good Turkish Muslim housewife until she discovered that the latter was born a Christian Armenian, who had been stolen from her family during the Armenian genocide and adopted by a Turkish gendarme.<sup>10</sup> Reading *Anneannem* [My Grandmother] during this time, I felt as if we were given a new origin story. One that started not only with a woman but which promised to unsettle those unitary, identitarian versions of history that we wanted to challenge. At the same time, the book allowed us to think more critically about memory, silence and intergenerational transmission. Heranush's story unsettled everyone's conception of where they came from; suddenly anyone could be of Armenian origin.<sup>11</sup> I was immediately reminded of what Jay Winter told me in a conversation we had in New Haven and which we later published in Istanbul:

“And there what happens is the wonderful complicity and alliance between grandparents and grandchildren over the heads of the parents in the middle [...]. So the grandchild

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<sup>9</sup> Carol Delaney has been in the vanguard highlighting the differential placement of men and women in and to the nation with field research material from Turkey and showing how our notions of kinship are not just about biology but are deeply embedded in how Turkish nationhood is narrated and imagined. See Carol Lowery Delaney, “Father state, motherland, and the birth of modern Turkey,” in *Naturalizing Power: Essays in feminist cultural analysis*, eds. Yanagisako, Sylvia Junko, and Carol Lowery Delaney (London, 1995), 177-99.

<sup>10</sup> Fethiye Çetin, *Anneannem* (Istanbul, 2004). For an excellent translation from Turkish into English by Maureen Freely, see *My Grandmother: An Armenian-Turkish Memoir* (London, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> At the conference “On Islamicized Armenians,” the Muslim feminist scholar Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal drew our attention to the question *nerelisin?* [where are you from?] in the context of modern-day Turkey. Despite the fact that cities and villages lost their original names, she argued, people continue to refer to these original names in certain contexts and/or to reveal their real cultural identity. The question *nerelisin?* is therefore often understood as a question of cultural identity. Depending on the context, people often refer to their home cities with different names. Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal calls this a “cartography of trauma.” Tuksal, intervention at the “On Islamicized Armenians” conference that took place on 2-4 November 2013 at Boğaziçi University and was organized by the Hrant Dink Foundation (Istanbul).

stimulates the breaking of silence, so that the stories of big collectives become stories of individual families. This has produced the avalanche of memory work within families and societies – not from states, but from below – which had generated archives and works of poetry, works of art, or scholarship of memorialization from below, which, in my view, describe something about global civil society: it is a place in which the victims of this bloody world are finally acknowledged, two generations, three generations after the insult they suffered.”<sup>12</sup>

Writing about this now, I can say that many of us have done graduate research, and even written our doctoral dissertations, on the topic of remembering the Armenian genocide while also breaking the silence that surrounded it.

#### WAR STORIES

Just when I began thinking more seriously about memory, I was accepted by the University of Cambridge as a doctoral student (Autumn 2009). In Cambridge I was miserable. My doctoral supervisor was a well-known social historian whose main interest in supervising me was for me to write a final thesis on the relations of Nazi Germany with the Atatürk regime. This was not something I wanted to write about. I had a few strong arguments with him and left Cambridge with a distaste for history (and an MPhil in my pocket) after one year.<sup>13</sup> I now realize that I probably published [*armenian genocide*] not only as a protest against the continual denial of the Armenian genocide by the Turkish government (a topic in which I became more interested at the time) but also as a protest against history writ large (something that, for me, was embodied by the outdated curricula of the Oxbridge system). In the middle of my depression, my academic mentor came to Istanbul and suggested that we visit Gallipoli together. Now I realize how lucky I was to accompany him on this trip to Gallipoli, something he had wanted to do for a long time. At the time, it did not mean much to me. I was at odds with history and those who wrote it – or so I thought. I returned from the trip completely reformed. Looking back on our trip to Gallipoli a little over five years later, it is hard to put into words the lasting impression the place, and the trip, left on me.

Writing personal stories is often a fragile enterprise. In doing so (particularly in an academic setting) one risks revealing too much or becoming tired of listening to oneself. I was very

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<sup>12</sup> Suzan M.R. Kalayci, “Interview with Jay Winter,” *Tarih* 1/1 (2009): 34ff. The interview is available online: <http://graduatehistoryjournal.boun.edu.tr/papers/ISSUE1.2009.REPRESENTATION/2.SuzanMeryemKalayci.Interview.JAY.WINTER.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Parts of my MPhil Thesis were published by the German Historical Institute (Istanbul) in the anthology *Bursa and the Germans* (2015). On the topic of Nazi-Turkey relations, I have been interviewed numerous times for German television programs and several Turkey-based documentary projects. See, for example, <http://programm.ard.de/TV/Programm/Jetzt-im-TV/?sendung=282315774143261>

insecure about my place ‘in history.’ Walking through Gallipoli with my mentor brought the past up close. We talked about how important it was to visit the places that we were writing about, where he had been wrong in calculating the distance between the Anzac and Ottoman soldiers, about the myths of war and the ordinariness of war – of what Samuel Lynn Hynes called the *Soldiers’ Tale*: the personal testimonies of war experiences by civilian soldiers.<sup>14</sup> What was war like, what did it feel like? By the time the Great War ended, everyone had gruelling stories to tell. Soldiers did not return or they returned damaged. My mentor asked me about their stories. Were there any memoirs of ordinary (Ottoman) soldiers that I knew of? Did the term shell-shock or the notion of the ‘unknown soldier’ play a prominent role in the cultural representations of war in Turkey? He asked me many questions. I wished I could have told him more than what I told him back then. If he asked me the same questions today, I could probably answer them all – along with giving the historical sources to support my answers.

I told him a story about maggots – just because it was the only story I remembered (how could one ever forget a story about maggots?). It is a story that my father read to me when I was little. The story is about a man who goes to war. The man is wounded on the “sixth night of May [1915] in eight places” and “facing the English at close range.”<sup>15</sup> [Just to give a little bit of historical context: from the date given in the text we can conclude that our man was among the first Ottoman soldiers to fight in the Gallipoli Campaign, which – for the Ottomans – officially started on 23rd April 1915, and for the English on the 25th April 1915 as their ships were delayed. After eight days of fighting, both side agreed to a ceasefire to have the wounded collected by the medics.]<sup>16</sup> Our man manages to crawl to safety and gets picked up by the medics:<sup>17</sup>

“They loaded us on the ship,  
screaming and swearing,  
again like empty wheat sacks.  
On the boat it’s like Judgment Day.  
Sticky with blood  
steam  
grease  
sweat.

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<sup>14</sup> Samuel Lynn Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale: Bearing Witness to a Modern War* (London, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> Nazim Hikmet, *Human Landscapes from my Country* (New York, 2002), 59.

<sup>16</sup> For a transnational perspective on the Gallipoli campaign, see Jenny Macleod’s recent book: *Gallipoli: Great Battles*. (Oxford, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> The Red Crescent Archives tell us that in total 19,443 Ottoman soldiers were picked up by medics and brought by boat to Istanbul for medical care. See <http://kizilaytarih.org/yayinlar/15/hilal-i-ahmer-icraat-raporlari.pdf>

They took me down to steerage.  
 We started.  
 Seven days and seven nights.  
 My wounds got maggots.  
 I open my cape:  
 little white worms  
 with black heads.  
 I bent over to look,  
 but the critters are smart:  
 when they see me,  
 they scurry back inside the wounds.”<sup>18</sup>

The story is from Nazim Hikmet’s epic poem *Human Landscapes from my Country*. In the story, the man – whom we get to know as “the man with the Tartar-face (the jura player and the watchman at the Merino factory)” – travels to Ankara on the Anatolian Express.<sup>19</sup> In the third-class car, number 510, he meets several other passengers. But only Kazim from Kartal and the ‘University Student’ listen to the Tartar-faced man talk about Gallipoli. After he finishes telling his story, Nazim Hikmet’s “man with the Tartar-face” falls silent. We learn that his forehead was “deeply furrowed” and the “sparse white beard on his pointed little chin needed shaving.” He returned from war an old man. A sense of dread hangs in the air. We, the readers of his story, feel it too.

“‘Kazim’s wolf-eyes smiled strangely’.  
 The Student (who’d listened to the story from a distance) was stunned and sad at first,  
 then angry with pity.  
 Then he thought:  
 ‘It’s too bad  
 how soon they forget.’  
 And he followed his thought:  
 ‘Like a species of fish  
 or tree  
 or a type of metal,  
 a kind of man lives in this country  
 whose one memory worth telling  
 – the only thing he can’t forget –  
 is war.’”<sup>20</sup>

“Most war stories,” Samuel Lynn Hynes writes in the *Soldiers’ Tale*, “begin with a nobody-in-particular young man, who lives through the experience of war, to emerge in the end defined by what had happened to him.”<sup>21</sup> “War does make men,” Hynes concludes, “But if it makes men, it also isolates them from other men – cuts off the men who fought from older and younger men

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<sup>18</sup> Hikmet, *Human Landscapes*, 62.

<sup>19</sup> The man with the tartar-face is first mentioned on p. 30 of Nazim Hikmet’s *Human Landscapes*.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>21</sup> Samuel Lynn Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale: Bearing Witness to a Modern War*, 5.

who did not share that shaping experience [...].”<sup>22</sup> The man “with the Tartar-face” – our soldier – is not concerned with why he lived through one of the most gruelling experiences a human being can endure – as anyone who has been to war, or thought about war can testify. “Gratitude,” “comfort,” “walls pure white,” “electric lights,” “stone floors squeaky clean” – these are the expressions he uses to contrast the reality in the trenches, the carnage that is war.<sup>23</sup> There are no words of courage, bravery or even heroism in this ordinary soldier’s account. He survived the front – short as his service was – but he survived it. His life intersected with history. He was part of it and one of many, his interlocutor, “the University Student,” is quick to point out. Neither in nor after war had he mattered much. Human lives – like his – became expendable. One can see why the student would feel that way and why we, the readers of his story now, will feel the same. The student thinks:

“Most of the time, does this business  
have anything to do with bravery?  
Or do those in the trenches  
follow the herdsmen  
to the slaughterhouse?  
Not just their bodies  
but their minds captive.”<sup>24</sup>

For me, it is probably one of the most touching and profound stories about war that I know. It is also one of the first stories I read and in which I heard about war. In the absence of war stories in my family’s oral tradition, Nazim Hikmet’s story about the man with the Tartar-face stood in for their stories. And why not? His could be anybody’s story: he was a simple man who went to war and survived. He was a man-who-was-there. There is not much else to his story, yet his story remained with me. I remembered it not only because of the maggots but also because of the student’s reaction. When I was younger it felt unfair and arrogant. Had the poor man not told his story bravely? I felt the need to protect the man, wrap my arms around him, and tell him that everything was ‘okay’ – let him tell me “his one memory worth telling” over and over again.<sup>25</sup> Reading it now, I feel the same. War stories are hard to think, to read, to talk, or to write about. They are lived experiences that defy language and representation. Words will never be adequate or enough; nonetheless, it is necessary to describe human suffering.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Nazim Hikmet, *Human Landscapes from my Country*, 63.

<sup>24</sup> Hikmet, *Landscapes*, 64.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>26</sup> In the aforementioned interview, Jay Winter says: “I have never believed for a moment that the work I have been doing has had a purpose that is outside of the understanding of suffering in the past. I have focused on that, and I

Lest we forget, at the time of the Great War less than ten percent of Turkey's population could read or write and in the Anatolian countryside this number was even lower, at less than two percent. As a consequence, a war correspondence from the front— as we know it from the Western context – does not exist in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>27</sup> “The Ottoman soldier has not left much in the way of written monuments: no letters home, no diaries.”<sup>28</sup> The soldiers' illiteracy, however, did not stop their stories from already being written during the war: “there is something that cannot be said; there is something that cannot be read but at least we can say that it has been written.”<sup>29</sup> In their case, it was their mothers, wives and sisters who petitioned for their lives and sang of their silent deaths during the war, as this song by a young woman from the Afşin district of the Aleppo province shows:

“[Military] harmonicas are being played for the sixteen-year-olds to be called to arms. Can a fifteen-year-old become a soldier! They collect them to die.”<sup>30</sup>

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believe rightly so, because the history of war is no longer the history of victory and defeat; it is the history of survivors and those who did not survive [...].” See Suzan Meryem Kalayci, “Interview with Jay Winter,” 32.

<sup>27</sup> As a contrast, German soldiers exchanged over 30 billion pieces of mail with their families during the course of the war; French civilians sent around 4 million letters per day to the frontlines; and British soldiers were sending around 1-2 million letters or post cards home every day. See [http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/war\\_letters\\_communication\\_between\\_front\\_and\\_home\\_front/2014-10-08](http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/war_letters_communication_between_front_and_home_front/2014-10-08). For sample letters by English soldiers who fought in Gallipoli, one may consult the online teaching resources for teachers of the British National Archives: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/letters-first-world-war-1915/>. One family from Berlin, Germany, alone exchanged 2000 letters with their son Otto Braun on the Western front. Dorothee Wierling, “Imagining and Communicating Violence: The Correspondence of a Berlin Family, 1914–1918” in *Gender and the First World War*, eds. Hämmerle, Christa, Oswald Überegger, and Birgitta Bader-Zaar (New York, 2014), pp 36-51. On the general topic of war letters of fallen soldiers, also see Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, 2006), 104-108. For students of military history with knowledge of Ottoman Turkish, the collection of Ottoman POWs held by the British Army in the Red Crescent Archives in Ankara, Turkey, might be of interest. To celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018 the Red Crescent is planning to return copies of some of these letters of Ottoman POWs to their grandchildren, İbrahim Altan, the Director of the Turkish Red Crescent Archives, has recently reported to the state-run international news broadcaster Anadolu Agency. See <http://aa.com.tr/en/culture-and-art/wwi-letters-of-ottoman-soldiers-to-reach-families/956710>

<sup>28</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher, “Between Death and Desertion: The Experience of the Ottoman Soldier in World War I,” *Turcica* 28 (1996): 236. This is echoed by a new generation of Turkish scholars who have taken it upon themselves to study the social history of World War One – a subject in Turkish history previously neglected. For a survey of the current state of this historiography, see Elif Mahir Metinsoy, “Writing the History of Ordinary Ottoman Women during World War I,” *Aspasia* 10.1 (2016). Also see Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War: Between Voluntarism and Resistance* (Leiden and Boston, 2012); Yigit Akin “War, Women, and the State: The Politics of Sacrifice in the Ottoman Empire During the First World War,” *Journal of Women's History* 26.3 (2014): 12-35.

<sup>29</sup> Suzanne Yang, “Silence and Illiteracy,” *London Society of the New Lacanian School*. Available online at: [http://londonsociety-nls.org.uk/Publications/007/Yang-Suzanne\\_Silence-and-Illiteracy.pdf](http://londonsociety-nls.org.uk/Publications/007/Yang-Suzanne_Silence-and-Illiteracy.pdf) (Last accessed 4 August 2017).

<sup>30</sup> Elif Mahir Metinsoy, “Writing the History of Ordinary Ottoman Women during World War I,” *Aspasia* 10.1 (2016), 31. The war experience of ordinary women in the Ottoman empire is a fairly well-researched topic that was first studied by my grand-aunt Charlotte Lorenz for her doctoral dissertation at the Oriental Studies Institute in Berlin. Her dissertation was published in *Der Welt des Islams* in 1918 as “Die Frauenfrage im Osmanischen Reiche mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der arbeitenden Klasse” [The woman question in the Ottoman Empire, with special

At the other end of the spectrum, we read short stories and narratives about ordinary soldiers – recounting epic tales of peasant soldiers who showed heroic courage fighting the enemy.<sup>31</sup> However, war on the eastern front was nothing like the picture we are given in these propaganda stories, which were written during the war to help with mobilization, survivors told Nazim Hikmet after the war. And while historians of World War One have lamented the lack of any written and oral testimonies by Ottoman soldiers, partly blaming it on the belated arrival of the practice of oral history in Turkey, we should recognize other cultural forms of oral traditions such as those found in Nazim Hikmet’s poetry. “Oral history has come into fashion in Turkey, but only recently – in the last three or four years – twenty years too late to be of much use for the study of the First World War,” says, for example, Jan Erik Zürcher.<sup>32</sup> But, third-class car number 510 was full of war survivors, as was Bursa prison after the war, where Hikmet stayed for nearly twelve years of his life and where he met them.

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Of course, I have a very different relationship with the text now to when my father read it to me, or when I told my mentor the story about the maggots. However, what remained with me as a constant through my different readings of *Human Landscapes from my Country* is the injustice or even moral outrage I felt – and continue to feel – when I read or hear about the war stories of men and women who did not volunteer to participate in war. Why and how to tell my first personal engagement with the subject of war has been a considerable challenge. Thinking about it now, I can say that it is a somewhat double-edged return story for me: little did I know then (in Gallipoli) that within a year war would be very present in my life – through the outbreak of war

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reference to the working class] *Die Welt des Islams* 6.3 (1918): 72–214. I translated her dissertation into English during my undergraduate studies at Boğaziçi University (2002–2006) as part of my final BA thesis, which, in turn, served as research material for my undergraduate adviser, Yavuz Selim Karakışla, who then published *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire: Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women, 1916–1923* (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre, 2005). His work inspired other research projects on the topic by students from Boğaziçi University. See, for example, Elif Mahir Metinsoy, “Poor Ottoman Turkish Women During World War I: Women’s Experiences and Politics in Everyday Life, 1914–1923” (PhD diss., Université de Strasbourg and Boğaziçi University, 2012) and Elif Mahir Metinsoy, “I. Dünya Savaşı’nda Osmanlı Kadınlarının Gıda ve Erzak Savaşı” [Ottoman women’s war for food and supplies during World War I], *Toplumsal Tarih*, 243 (March 2014): 56–61. See also Nicole A. N. M. van Os, “Taking Care of Soldiers’ Families: The Ottoman State and the Muinsiz Aile Maaşı,” in *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775–1925*, edited by Erik Jan Zürcher (London, 1999), 95–110.

<sup>31</sup> Mehmet Beşikçi, for example, mentions the stories about Sergeant Ismail from Bursa, Corporal Nasuh from Eskişehir, Sergeant Kadiroğlu Mehmet from Civril, Sergeant Murad from Söğüt and Sergeant Tahir from Antep. All of these stories can be found in Harb Mecmuası vol 1-2. See Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War: Between Voluntarism and Resistance* (Leiden and Boston, 2012), 79–80.

<sup>32</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher, “Between Death and Desertion: The Experience of the Ottoman Soldier in World War I,” 236.

in Syria, a country I had lived in for several years (and visited for even more years). Nor did I know then that during the following years I would return to academia to do doctoral research on the aftermath of war and genocide. However, looking back, what I know now is that it was there, in Gallipoli, that I began to grasp the affective, emotional dimension of history – why we remember or choose to remember stories of the past and why historical writing will be important as long as there are wars in this world.

What do these stories and memories of the past tell us? How can they assist us in drawing connections between the past and our present? How may they serve as a stimulus – as Marianne Hirsch proposes in a different context – “to engage in advocacy and activism on behalf of individuals and groups whose lives and whose stories have not yet been thought?”<sup>33</sup> I also wonder whether there is something like an aura, a genius loci – like the feeling one gets walking up to the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin or any other place that commemorates immeasurable human suffering. And while I am aware of the warnings in the scholarly literature not to succumb to what Andreas Huyssen first articulated as ‘topolatry,’ I must say that the atmosphere in Gallipoli was extraordinary.<sup>34</sup> Simply put, being in Gallipoli brought war up close, including the knowledge that – as Ariella Azoulay writes – “the fatal consequences of the past continue to shape what we can see, know, and think” and it ceased to be an abstract notion from the moment I set foot in Gallipoli.<sup>35</sup> It was there that I began to ask myself what a library of war would look like. And a museum of war? An archive of war?

I tried to imagine, like others, what it would be like if we brought together all the stories about war and human suffering. Who would come first and who last in telling their story? Would there be classifications? Categories? What would the arrangement look like? I asked my mentor on our way back from Gallipoli. He told me about Anselm Kiefer’s sculpture *Breaking of the Vessels* (1990). I learned that it consisted of a 17-foot-tall bookshelf with approximately 40 oversized books made of lead with broken glass scattered around it. The inspiration for the piece had come from the Kabbalistic conception of creation and the *shevirat ha-kehim*, the breaking of the vessels – the moment when evil escaped into the world. Monumental in size, the sculpture recalls images

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<sup>33</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York, 2012), 16.

<sup>34</sup> Andreas Huyssen, “Monument and Memory in a Postmodern Age,” *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 6.2 (1993): 248. For a more recent publication on the subject of site memory by the same author, see *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (London, 2012), 4ff. That there is a growing interest in the intersections of place, memory and affect is shown by the recent announcement of the interdisciplinary book series *Place, Memory, Affect* edited by Christine Berberich and Neil Campbell and published by Rowmann and Littlefield in Washington.

<sup>35</sup> Ariella Azoulay, “Potential History: Thinking through Violence,” *Critical Inquiry* 39.3 (2013), 548.



of the Kristallnacht, my mentor also told me. I tried to imagine what the sculpture looked like but could not. Nor could I draw up an image to which I was able to relate emotionally in the same way my mentor related to the sculpture. “What is it that makes it so special,” I finally asked my mentor. “It is the silence surrounding it,” he answered.

#### *ARCHIVES, WAR, AND MEMORIES*

*Breaking of the Vessels* certainly demands silence from its viewers. Recalling it now in the context of archives, war and memories, I am again brought back to New Haven when I first met my mentor who accompanied me to Gallipoli. Back then, Jay Winter was writing the first draft of his seminal essay “Thinking about silence,” which I luckily got to read and discuss with him in New Haven.<sup>36</sup> I also read Elie Wiesel’s *Night*, spurred on by watching Lanzmann’s film *Shoah* (1985) during a seminar at Yale on the subject of ‘Holocaust in Film and Literature’ (for which Shoshana Felman came to speak to us). Reading Winter’s essay and Wiesel’s preface to the new translation of *Night* (2006) left me confused about the notion of silence, yet wanting to explore it more. In “Thinking about silence,” Winter writes that “silence is always part of the framing of public understandings of war and violence.”<sup>37</sup> This was something that I came to understand only after I read *Night*: “I watched helplessly as language became an obstacle. It became clear that it would be necessary to invent a new language,” Wiesel explains in the preface to *Night*. “[h]aving lived through this experience, one could not keep silent no matter how difficult, if not impossible, it was to speak. And so I persevered. And trusted the silence that envelops and transcends words.”<sup>38</sup> These are powerful words that explicate “the relation of the concept of silence to survivor literature.”<sup>39</sup> When Elie Wiesel refused Orson Welles’s offer when the latter approached him about making a film adaptation of *Night*, he explained in a 2006 interview, “that between his words, he wrote silences” but in film and on television there was “no room to write in silences.” Therefore, his words “needed to be read.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Jay Winter, “Thinking about silence,” *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2010). I am grateful to Jay Winter for providing me with a copy of this chapter already in 2009.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>38</sup> Elie Wiesel, preface to *Night* (New York, 2006), iii.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Crownshaw and Selma Leydesdorff, introduction to *Memory and Totalitarianism* by Luisa Passerini (Oxford, 1992), vii.

<sup>40</sup> Elie Wiesel interviewed by John Kelly for *Slate Magazine*. Interview available here: [http://www.slate.com/blogs/lexicon\\_valley/2016/07/07/elie\\_wiesel\\_s\\_profound\\_and\\_paradoxical\\_language\\_of\\_silence.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/lexicon_valley/2016/07/07/elie_wiesel_s_profound_and_paradoxical_language_of_silence.html) (last accessed 4 August 2017). Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York, 2006), 4. Returning to these sentences by Wiesel now, I am reminded of Luigi Nono’s (only) string quartet *Frammente-Stille, an Diotima* [Fragments-Silence, to Diotima] (1980). In this composition, Nono placed 47 short quotations from the poetry of Hölderlin over the musical score for the musicians to read silently while they perform the music. We might say that between/around the music, Nono set silences that were – like Wiesel’s – full of words and meanings. Unlike Wiesel, he gave instructions how to

Much has been said about “the failure of the word in the face of the inhuman.”<sup>41</sup> We only have to remind ourselves of Georg Steiner’s magisterial study *Language and Silence*, where he writes: “Wherever it reaches out toward the limits of expressive form, literature comes to the shore of silence,”<sup>42</sup> reciting – among many others – Wittgenstein’s classic study *Tractatus* of 1921 (“What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.”)<sup>43</sup> We could also refer to Kafka’s mouse figure Josephine, the singer, of whom the narrator asks: “Is it her singing that enchants us or is it not rather the solemn stillness enclosing her frail little voice?”<sup>44</sup> or to Adorno’s *Notes to Literature*, where he writes: “Only one who hears the voice of humankind in the poem’s solitude can understand what the poem is saying;” or the music of Arnold Schönberg, John Cage and Luigi Nono. And yet, as we continue to explore the shores of silence in the realms of the unspeakable, I have found that the intersubjective character of silence has been largely left unexplored. But is there really any silence without the other?<sup>45</sup>

There is no silence in silence. Think back to what Elie Wiesel said above or of Cage’s musical composition *4’33*,” where he lets his musicians perform in complete silence for 4 minutes and 33 seconds. When the piece was first performed in 1952, concert-goers were shocked. Even now, whenever the piece is performed, people do not know how to react since the silence is unsettling to most. Or think of what Hélène Cixous said about writing: “but there is silence around writing.

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read the silences. I’d like to think that Wiesel would have given us the same: “ma molteplici attimi pensieri silenzi ‘canti’, di altri spazi di altri cieli, per riscoprire altrimenti il possibile non ‘dire addio all speranza” [but many moments, thoughts, silences, songs of other spaces, other skies to otherwise rediscover the possible ‘do not say farewell to hope’]. This might be not too far off an interpretation; we know that Nono had several books about the Kabbalah in his library. For example, Z’ev ben Shimon Halevi, *Kabbalah* (London, 1979); Gershom Sholem, *La Kabbalah e il suo simbolismo* (Turin, 1960); Gershom Sholem, *Le Origine della Kabbalah* [The origins of the Kabbalah] (Bologna, 1960); Alexander Safran, *Kabbala* (Rom, 1980); Karl Francis, *Heilweg der Kabbala* [Kabbalah, A Path to Salvation] (Freiburg, 1987). As cited in Erik Esterbauer, *Eine Zone des Klangs und der Stille: Luigi Nonos Orchesterstück 2°* [A Space of Sound and Silence: Luigi Nono’s Orchestra Piece No. 2] (Würzburg, 2011), 111/Footnote 186. I am indebted to Luisa Passerini for this reference to Luigi Nono’s work cited in *Memory and Utopia* (London, 2007), 28. Here, Passerini says: “If memory is more than words, music has a great deal to teach us about silence.” For a positive evaluation of silence in Elie Wiesel’s work, see, for example Simon P. Sibelman, *Silence in the Novels of Elie Wiesel* (New York, 1995).

<sup>41</sup> Georg Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* (New Haven: 1998), 51.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>43</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London, 1961), 237/7.

<sup>44</sup> Franz Kafka, “Josephine, the Singer or the Mouse Folk [1924]” in *The Complete Stories*, 389. Available online: [https://www.vanderbilt.edu/olli/class-materials/Franz\\_Kafka.pdf](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/olli/class-materials/Franz_Kafka.pdf) (Last accessed: 15.08.2017).

<sup>45</sup> I am grateful to Luisa Passerini for her important intervention about silence during a recent summer school on the topics of memory, visibility and mobility. This oral history summer school was co-organized by the BABE project, for which Luisa Passerini is the principle investigator, and the Oral History Master of Arts Program at Columbia University, directed by Professor Mary Marshall Clark, and it took place at the European University Institute on 19-30 June 2017. I am also indebted to all the participants and presenters for their thoughtful and inspiring contributions during these intensive two weeks. For more information, see: <https://babe.eui.eu/babe-ohma-2017-oral-history-summer-seminar-memory-visibility-mobility/>

I would like to speak silently.”<sup>46</sup> Is there not an innate intersubjective relation in all of these acts of reading, listening, and communicating in silence? What about the moments when we sit, read, and write in silence – are we void of feelings or overwhelmed by them, or are these the feelings that connect us to others? In a discussion about archives, war and memories, where do we position silence? And, as historians, which are the stories we tell and which are the ones we do not tell?

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To some extent, my desire to re-(en)vision war – to return to the place where I first heard and talked about war – arose from the need to distance myself from the presentness of war in my life. There are other memories and stories now, real and from fiction, which are overlapping with these earlier memories. I am reminded of what Adrienne Rich, several decades ago, described as “re-vision: the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a critical direction,” an act that, as Rich explains, “is for us [women] more than a chapter in cultural history; it is an act of survival.”<sup>47</sup> Ever so powerful, her words are particularly poignant in the context of war. “I have hesitated to do what I am going to do now, which is to use myself as an illustration,” Rich writes. And as she reflects on “how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us,” she comes to the conclusion that: “We all know there is another story to be told.”<sup>48</sup> So far, I have made a conscious choice to tell my story of war and the aftermath of war. Revisiting Gallipoli through the perspective of my childhood when my father first read *Human Landscapes from my Country* to me and through my memories of my trip there with my mentor was like recounting the war story of a man whom I would never meet outside Nazim Hikmet’s poem.

As scholars, we often try to make sense of the world through books. Writing these lines, I remember an essay by Homi K. Bhabha about the unpacked books in his library. There, Bhabha recalls how for Martha Nussbaum reading and owning books is connected with “the vivid imagining of difference” and how for Adrienne Rich it was about establishing “a certain affective and ethical identification with globality.”<sup>49</sup> Bhabha writes that he “was struck initially by a certain

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<sup>46</sup> Hélène Cixous, *White Ink*, edited by Susan Sellers (New York, 2008), xiv.

<sup>47</sup> Adrienne Rich, “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision,” *College English* Vol 34.1 (1971): 18.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>49</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, “Unpacking my Library ... Again” in *The Post-Colonial Question*, edited by Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (Oxon, 1996), 200 & 201.

bookish dis-order” that becomes “the primal scene for making a map of the late modern world.”<sup>50</sup> In reference to Rich’s poem “Eastern Wartime” (“I am a canal in Europe where bodies are floating; I am a mass grave; I’m life that returns [...]”), he reflects on the rearrangement of memory and the present that sets boundaries on an *atlas of a difficult world* in Rich’s work (emphasis added):<sup>51</sup>

“The I that speaks – its place of enunciation – is iteratively and interrogatively staged. It is poised at the point at which, in recounting historical trauma, the incommensurable ‘localities’ of experience and memory bear witness, side by side, but there is no easy ethical analogy or historical parallelism. For instance, in the deaths by water – the Jew once, now the Turk [...] or the lynched body in the Mississippi [...]”<sup>52</sup>

... or the Syrian in the Mediterranean. Writing in 2017, we can add other ‘deaths by water’ to this list. The continual identification that we hear in Rich’s work (1991) and that Bhaba (1996) evokes as a metaphor for the “living ghosts” – the dead among us – gives me a sense of what a library of war, a museum of war and an archive of war might look like.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, Rich and Bhabha also point to the difficulty and dissatisfaction that pulls at us as we try to set out, articulate, arrange, categorize and enunciate the territory of our difficult world. Indeed, it is Rich’s and Bhabha’s (and also Martha Nussbaum’s) dissatisfaction with mapping out a world – past or present – that speaks to me as a historian. The piling on of disaster after disaster in our present times made their questions and insights ever more urgent for me. In fact, their dissatisfaction speaks directly to my own frustration at the relentless repetition of the past in our present: a century of human catastrophes and genocides did not change our predisposition for war, nor did it make us more responsive or responsible towards it. Their respective readings of our difficult world underscore not just the social responsibility that we feel towards past and present human suffering but offer important strategies to transform these feelings into forms of advocacy and activism. Two things are worth noting here. First, their connective approach to remembering, repeating and working through historical trauma eschews any form of appropriative empathy and easy comparison. Second, by drawing a ‘memorial map’ of our difficult world they remind us that borders – geographical, linguistic or temporal – hold/establish differences and will therefore always dwell on/embody injustice.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>51</sup> Adrienne Rich, “Eastern War-time” in *An Atlas of a difficult World* (New York, 1991).

<sup>52</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, “Unpacking my Library ...Again,” 202.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

In the vast, heterogeneous and constantly evolving field of memory studies, these questions (of how to avoid appropriative empathy or historical parallelism and to address injustice in past or present times) have found their expression in recent debates on the subjectivity and intersubjectivity of memory and embodied forms of memory.<sup>54</sup> In the last decade this has been facilitated by the publication of several important books that turned to artistic works or photography to discover the complex connections between a traumatic past and its embodiment in the present, including Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York, 2003), Alison Landsberg's *Prosthetic Memory* (New York, 2004), Jill Bennett's *Empathic Vision* (Stanford, 2005) and Marianne Hirsch's *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York, 2008).<sup>55</sup> This cross-disciplinary tendency is especially welcome because it adds visuality to the theoretical and practical methodology of memory studies, as a form of intersubjective engagement. Here, by far the most thought-provoking research is being done by BABE (*Bodies Across Borders: Oral and Visual Memory in Europe and Beyond*), a research group led by Luisa Passerini at the European University Institute.<sup>56</sup>

This ongoing ERC-funded project studies shared intercultural connections in contemporary Europe through the movement or migration of people, ideas and images across the borders of European nation-states. In the project's fieldwork, interviewees – mostly migrants from Africa, Latin America and the Middle East – are asked, after being shown examples of visual art concerning migration, to document their own itineraries of mobility in drawings, collages or other visual forms of representation. The resulting drawings or collages are interpreted by the research group together with their oral testimonies, thus connecting oral and visual memories while studying the link between these two forms of memory. It is undeniable that this decisive move across bodies of knowledge and various forms of sensory perception addresses contemporary questions about, on the one hand, the production of exclusionary spaces (i.e. Fortress Europe)

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<sup>54</sup> Luisa Passerini, "A Passion for Memory," in *History Workshop Journal* 72.1 (2011): 248.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Monika Liuting's ongoing research on surrealism among young Chinese artists at the Columbia University Oral History Center. Her online profile can be found at: <http://oralhistory.columbia.edu/current-student-bios/People/monica-liuting-2016?rq=Monica%20Liuting>

<sup>56</sup> I am very grateful to Luisa Passerini and her research team for letting me take part in the various meetings of the BABE project that took place at the European University Institute during the years 2014–2017. For more information about the project, see: <https://babe.eui.eu/>

and, on the other, de-territorialized movements by migrants, refugees and displaced people, while also offering new ways to explore past lives.<sup>57</sup>

My own thinking about memory has been indispensably informed by these new approaches to its study. Their methodologies have legitimized in my thinking/granted me a certain type of mobility to move across different temporal frames and abandon my “need to distinguish between past and present” – and even future.<sup>58</sup> In looking at some of the drawings produced by the interviewees of the BABE project – and I am particularly thinking of the map produced by Youssef Bouhouss – I was suddenly aware of the contradiction that lies in our separating the past, present and future into different time zones. Through my engagement with the BABE group, it became clear to me that the interpretation of personal narratives has to take into account this tension between past, present and future. Maybe it is not sufficient – as Ariella Azoulay suggests in her seminal essay “Potential History” – “for history to simply describe an existing situation.”<sup>59</sup> Instead, we must try to reconstruct the roads not taken and the choices not made, and reconsider the possibilities that have been erased and the words that have been silenced in order to fill the gap between the visible and the invisible, between what has been said and what has been left unsaid.

If “all writing is confession,” I have to admit that my foray into the study of memory has not been without disillusionments and intellectual disappointments.<sup>60</sup> When I first ventured into the field of memory studies I was actually disheartened by its foundational texts. I had become interested in memory studies during my time at Yale in 2009 and had read works by Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora, Paul Ricoeur, and Aleida and Jan Assmann. Although instructive, these foundational texts did not really speak to me: I desired something more than a form of historical counter-memory that accounted for processes that have hitherto been unnoticed or which made previously unheard voices heard – something that I found better expressed by art, for example by Group Material’s 1984 exhibition *Timeline: A Chronicle of U.S. Intervention in Central and Latin America, AIDS Timeline*. I was looking for social justice, accountability, some sort of activism in

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<sup>57</sup> Here I was reminded of Luisa Passerini’s discussion on the production and perception of space in relation to Ursula Biemann’s video essay *Europlex* (2003) during the previously-mentioned summer school. Here, Passerini also reminded us of Lucien Febvre’s work on the production of European space. Also see Carole Reynaud Paligot, “Les Annas de Lucien Febvre a Fernand Braudel: Entre épopée coloniale et opposition Orient/Occident” [The Annals of Lucien Febvre to Fernand Braudel: Between Colonial Epic and Opposition Orient/Occident], *French Historical Studies* 32/1 (2009): 130ff.

<sup>58</sup> Franklin Rudolf Ankersmith, *Sublime Historical Experience* (Stanford, 2005), 4ff.

<sup>59</sup> Ariella Azoulay, “Potential History: Thinking through Violence,” 553.

<sup>60</sup> Cherrie Moraga in *Last Generation* (1993) as cited in bell hooks’ *Remembered Rapture: The Writer at Work* (New York, 2013), 68.

the writing of history. I soon found what I was looking for in the art works of Mona Hatoum (whom I met in Istanbul during the installation of her exhibition *You are still here*), Claire Fontaine (as artist collective), Martha Rosler and Felix Gonzales Torres (also a member of Group Material). Much of their work made the personal political and thus of public concern, especially Torres' conception of the "public privates," which was echoed in the Turkish art world by Kutluğ Ataman and Ahmet Ögüt, amongst others. I saw much of their work during the time of the 12th Istanbul Biennial in 2011.

Looking back, I am grateful for the twists and turns in my journey into the field of memory and I now realize that it was the visual representation of memory in these art works that sparked my interest once again in the category of memory. Moreover, the archival turn in contemporary art – which was also clear at the *12th Istanbul Biennial* and its parallel exhibitions – raised many questions for me about the dissonance in our existing archives and "how we might acknowledge and embrace critiques of the archive as a way of constructing new archives that foster new public and political cultures, including cultures of public memory that include the aims of activism," as Luisa Passerini read Ann Cvetkovich's thought-provoking work on an *archive of feelings*.<sup>61</sup> I remember a room of ceramics by the Ardmore Ceramic Art Studio (1985) of South Africa at the *12th Istanbul Biennial* that – for me – really showed what an archive could look like. The artist collective created beautiful and detailed plates, vases and figures devoted to AIDS education, either through stories told comic-book style or with texts remembering Ardmore members who had died. This (temporary) visual archive not only stood as a memorial to the dead in their community but also invited visitors to critically reflect on how traces are indeed forms of absences that – as Ann Laura Stoler writes in her important work on ruins and ruination – bring our attention to the "disassociated and dislocated histories of the present" because "asking how people live with and in ruins redirects the engagement elsewhere, to the politics animated, to the common sense they disturb, to the critiques condensed and disallowed, and to the social relations avidly coalesced or shattered around them."<sup>62</sup>

Just around the same time the *12th Istanbul Biennial* took place, I also heard that Fethiye Çetin – whose book had first inspired me to reflect on the workings of memory and intergenerational transmission more critically – was making a documentary about her Armenian grandmother

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<sup>61</sup> Luisa Passerini, "A Passion for Memory," 249.

<sup>62</sup> Ann Stoler, "Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination," *Cultural Anthropology* 23. 2 (2008): 193 & 232.

Heranush.<sup>63</sup> In fact, *Habab Çeşmeler* (2011) was not so much about Heranush (and was never intended to be) but about Çetin returning to the village of her maternal grandmother to restore the village fountains, which had originally been constructed by its Armenian inhabitants in 1634. As I see it, Çetin's film project responded to the challenge of how "to think divergent histories alongside and in connection with each other."<sup>64</sup> The film shows how the present-day villagers at first felt uncomfortable and fearful when Çetin and her crew arrived at the village. However, this fear and paranoia subsided and soon enough the villagers started to help Çetin and her volunteers with the restoration. So, following Stoler, we can see that, with their arrival in the village to restore the remaining traces of an Armenian presence there, Çetin and her crew unsettled the villagers' self-perception and assumed genealogy.

By interrupting the village's day-to-day routines and social interactions, Çetin and her crew confronted many issues, often unspoken, that were constitutive of the village's communal space. These issues were "at the intersection of multiple oppressions based on gender, race or ethnicity, and class; on institutionalized violence as a means of control; and on the language and ideology that exclude so-called minorities from full personhood," a subject to which I will return in my concluding chapter.<sup>65</sup> Çetin was accompanied by volunteers from Armenia, Turkey and various European countries. Speaking several languages, sharing and not sharing common cultural forms, making connections with each other through an exchange of their thoughts on various issues, Çetin and her volunteers created a heterogeneous context of different intersubjective relationships that not only invited the villagers to participate in this cross-cultural exchange but also foregrounded different narratives of the past, which emerged simultaneously. If the initial idea was to restore the ruins of the *Habab Çeşmeler*, the conversations it initiated went far beyond anything that could have been imagined. The heated discussions about the restoration work in the Habab village in Turkey's press are just one example of "the politics animated" in the process.<sup>66</sup>

The subtle changes in the interpersonal relations and the emotional connections made between the villagers and Çetin's crew might, however, be more important to note in the present context. For me, they pointed to the possibilities that arise from a context of polyphonic intersubjective

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<sup>63</sup> For an online version of this documentary, see: <https://youtu.be/f5lYTI2okco>

<sup>64</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *Postmemory*, 21.

<sup>65</sup> Jeanette Clausen, "Broken but not Silent: Language as Experience in Vera Kamenko's *Unter uns war Krieg*," *Women in German Yearbook* 1 (1985): 116ff.

<sup>66</sup> Ann Stoler, "Imperial Debris," 196.



relations and forms of being together that, as Ariella Azoulay reminds us, “exist at any moment in history without being shaped solely, let alone exhausted, by national division.”<sup>67</sup> The *Habab Çeşmeler* project viewed the past as a “never-ending project, a necessity to preserve it for some, an obligation to unravel for others, or a universal civil right to be claimed.”<sup>68</sup> I was fascinated by this idea of history since it offered me both a way “to produce an archive as well as to analyse one.”<sup>69</sup> Intersubjective in nature, it exemplifies what it means not to settle for a narrow account of what happened but instead to draw attention to what keeps on happening to my historical experiences. When I began my research, the historical record and the conventional archives in Turkey were (and remain) both resolutely centred on the state’s interest. Cultural projects such as *Habab Çeşmeler*, however, had already begun constructing new archives that nurtured new directions in the study of the Armenian genocide and memory in Turkey.

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In this effort, it seems to me that the recent doctoral dissertations turned into books – *Armenians in Modern Turkey: Post-Genocide Society, Politics and History* (2015) by Talin Suciyan and *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey* (2016) by Lerna Ekmekçioğlu – and their focus on how Armenian genocide survivors continue(d) to live in post-genocidal Turkey have begun to chart a future direction in the study of the Armenian genocide. Scholarly studies such as Ekmekçioğlu’s and Suciyan’s speak of the ways in which ‘the generations after’ in Turkey have come to claim the guardianship of the Armenian genocide.<sup>70</sup> Although not yet published as a book, Melissa Bilal’s moving doctoral dissertation *Thou need’st not weep, for I have wept full sore: An affective genealogy of the Armenian lullaby in Turkey* (University of Chicago, 2013) is another example of how ‘the generations after’ in Turkey have addressed, in the words of Marianne Hirsch, “the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before” and remembered “experiences they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories [or, in Melissa’s case, lullabies], images, and behaviours among which they grew up.”<sup>71</sup> Like them (and there are many others to

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<sup>67</sup> Ariella Azoulay, “Potential History: Thinking through Violence,” 565.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 573.

<sup>69</sup> Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Duke, 2003), 8.

<sup>70</sup> Talin Suciyan, *Armenians in Modern Turkey: Post-Genocide Society, Politics and History* (London, 2015) and Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey* (Stanford, 2016). Also see Talin Suciyan, “Surviving the Ordinary: The Armenians in Turkey, 1930s to 1950,” (Ludwig-Maximillan Universität, 2013); and Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, “Improvising Turkishness: Being Armenian in Post-Ottoman Istanbul (1918-1933),” (PhD diss., New York University, 2010).

<sup>71</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *Postmemory*, 5. Also see Melissa Bilal, “The lost lullaby and other stories about being an Armenian in Turkey,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 34 (2006): 67-92.

whom I refer in the individual chapters of my dissertation), I feel the need to address the historic trauma of those who came before me. But I also wonder: why this memory work now, and not earlier?<sup>72</sup>

Although it is always difficult to try to make sense of a moment from within, it may be at least as difficult to ignore the fact that scholarship on the Armenian genocide has gained momentum in the last decade and many new research perspectives have been introduced into the field. The reasons for this, I believe, are manifold, the centenary of the genocide being the first and most obvious. Second, and maybe less self-evident, is the rise of memory studies in Turkey in the early 2000s. These laid the ground work for an exploration of Turkey's past through the paradigm of collective remembering and denationalized (and to a certain extent de-masculinized) Turkish historiography.<sup>73</sup> As the Armenian genocide took centre stage in academic discussions following a landmark genocide conference that took place (after much public controversy) at Bilgi University on 24-25 September 2005 and which included a panel in which Fethiye Çetin spoke about *Anneannem* (2004), scholars began to collect the life narratives of Islamicized Armenian survivors and their families in an effort to add previously silenced and unheard voices to the historical archive.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> It seems significant that women in Turkey are at the forefront of scholarly debates on how we might confront the long-term legacies of political violence like the Armenian genocide. Is this because the genocide was inherently gendered with most survivors being women (and children)? Or, that women, in Turkey like elsewhere, are the keepers of family histories? Hourig Attarian's recent work seems to suggest so. See for example Hourig Attarian, "Narrating women's bodies: Storying silences and secrets in the aftermath of genocide," in *Gendered wars, gendered memories: Feminist conversations on war, genocide and political violence* (London, 2016); and Arlene Avakian and Hourig Attarian, "Imagining our foremothers: Memory and evidence of women victims and survivors of the Armenian genocide: A dialogue," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 22.4 (2015): 476-483. While this is a question that needs more exploring, I do not wish to give the impression that there are no male scholars with similar research interests. For example, Ari Şekeryan, a native Istanbul Armenian, has addressed his own cultural awakening within the dominant Turkish society and against the backdrop of anti-Armenian sentiments. Ari is currently completing his doctoral dissertation at the Faculty of Oriental Studies, the University of Oxford.

<sup>73</sup> For an excellent overview of the de-nationalization of Turkish historiography, see Hülya Adak and Ayşe Gül Altınay, "Guest editors' introduction: At the crossroads of gender and ethnicity: Moving beyond the national imaginaire," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 42 (2010): 9-30. For a general overview of the development of memory studies (alongside the field of oral history), see Leyla Neyzi, "Oral History and Memory Studies in Turkey," in *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity*, edited by Kerem Öktem, 443-459 (London, 2010), esp. 447-450. Also see my remarks on the patriarchal structures that underpin Turkish historiography on pp. 5ff and my discussion on how these patriarchal structures shape familial and social relations in Turkey, e.g. pp. 152-153.

<sup>74</sup> The title of the conference was "Ottoman Armenians During the Decline of the Empire: Issues of Scientific Responsibility and Democracy." For a critical perspective on the new memory work on Islamicized Armenians in Turkey, also see Ayşe Gül Altınay, "Gendered silences, gendered memories: New memory work on Islamized Armenians in Turkey," *Eurozine* (2014). Altınay writes that 17 books had been published on this topic alone since 2004.

This new wave of academic (and cultural) production on Islamicized Armenians post-2005, however, has raised important questions about the silence about this particular group of survivors in the scholarly literature for almost nine decades and the absence in the historical record of ethnic Armenians who continued to live in Turkey – a topic that was first explored by the Armenian scholar Rubina Perroomian in her 2008 book *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey After 1915: The Metamorphosis of the Post-Genocide Armenian Identity as Reflected in Artistic Literature* and then written about in the above-mentioned doctoral dissertations turned into books by Talin Suciyan and Lerna Ekmekçioğlu and the forthcoming book by Melissa Bilal. Oral history research projects in Turkey that address its genocidal legacy, like *Speaking to one another* (2009-2013) and *Sounds of Silence* (2011-ongoing), have further contributed not only to the breaking of silence over “the secret that everyone knows” but also to training a new generation of young oral historians in Turkey.<sup>75</sup> Another developing research field in this regard is the representation of the Armenian genocide in Kurdish and Armenian novels, as well as in Turkish autobiographical writings.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Leyla Neyzi and Hranush Kharatyan-Araqelyan, *Birbirimizle konuşmak: Türkiye ve Ermenistan'da kişisel bellek anlatılar* [Speaking to one another: Personal Memories of the Past in Armenia and Turkey] (Bonn, 2010), 14. For more information on the Speaking to one another project, see <http://www.dvv-international.ge/personal-memories-of-the-past-in-armenia-and-turkey.html>. The *Sounds of Silence* project has published four volumes so far: Ferda Balancar, *The Sounds of Silence: Turkey's Armenians Speak* (Istanbul, 2012); *The Sounds of Silence II: Diyarbakır's Armenians Speak* (Istanbul, 2013); *The Sounds of Silence III: Ankara's Armenians Speak* (Istanbul, 2015); *The Sounds of Silence-IV: İzmir's Armenians speak* (Istanbul, 2016). In 2017, the Hrants Dink Foundation launched a new series of oral history workshops. See <https://hrantdink.org/en/activities/projects/cultural-heritage/523-the-oral-history-workshop-is-going-on>. On the importance of oral history interviews when addressing past injustices like the Armenian genocide, also see Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Lost in commemoration: the Armenian genocide in memory and identity,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 48.2 (2014): 147-166. In the summers of 2002 and 2004-7, Üngör conducted approximately 200 interviews with grandchildren of eyewitnesses and survivors of the 1915 Armenian genocide. It is interesting that Üngör writes about his own positionality: “My subject position as a ‘local outsider’ (being born in the region but raised abroad) facilitated the research [...] It also provided me with a sense of immunity from the dense moral and political field in which most of this research is embedded” (Footnote 49). As another ‘local outsider,’ I share this research experience with Üngör. As a woman, I have additionally benefitted from being able to talk to women more freely and without men present.

<sup>76</sup> For recent articles on the representation of the Armenian genocide in Kurdish literature, see Adnan Çelik, “Hafıza Rejiminde Yeni Bir Alan: 1915, Kürtler ve Edebiyat” [A new space in the memory regime: 1915, the Kurds and Literature], *Birikim* 132 (2015): 27–32; and Özlem Belçim Galip, “The Politics of Remembering: Representations of the Armenian Genocide in Kurdish Novels,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 30.3: 458–487. For studies on remembering the Armenian genocide through western-Armenian literary works, see, for example, Nüket Esen, “Mıgırdıç Margosyan and Mehmed Uzun: Remembering Cultural Pluralism in Diyarbakır,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 36 (2007): 145-154; Béatrice Hendrich, “Meine Muttersprache? Ein Abenteuer! Mıgırdıç Margosyan” [My mother tongue? An adventure! Mıgırdıç Margosyan], in *Press and Mass Communication in the Middle East*, edited by Börte Sagaster, Theoharis Stavrides and Birgitt Hoffmann, 307-335 (Bamberg, 2017); Andreea Mironescu, “Quiet Voices, Faded Photographs: Remembering the Armenian Genocide, in Varujan Vosganian’s ‘The Book of Whispers’,” *SLOVO* 29.2 (2017): 20-39; and Mehmet Fatih Uslu, “Armenian literary studies in Turkey and new prospects,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 53 (2015): 191-196. For autobiographical writings in the Turkish language on the Armenian genocide, see Hülya Adak, “Ötekileştiremediğimiz kendimizin keşfi: Yirminci yüzyıl otobiyografik anlatıları ve Ermeni tehciri” [We cannot marginalize the discovery of ourselves: twentieth century autobiographical writings and the Armenian genocide] (2011): <http://research.sabanciuniv.edu/1282/1/301180000194.pdf>. Although much wider in scope and content, Fatma Müge Göçek’s most recent book, *Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present, and Collective Violence Against the Armenians, 1789-2009* (Oxford, 2015) also draws on autobiographical writings.

I agree with Ayşe Gül Altınay that we need to make sense of both the silence and the recent process of unsilencing from a feminist perspective, but in doing so I also believe we need to rethink the category of silence – it is in this way that I hope my dissertation will contribute to these recent debates.<sup>77</sup> Two authoritative books that span nearly two decades of scholarship on the politics of silence are Richard G. Hovannisian's edited volume *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide* of 1998, who was at the forefront in this field of scholarship, and Fatma Müge Göçek's most recent book *Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present, and Collective Violence Against the Armenians, 1789-2009*.<sup>78</sup> Reading such works, I cannot but notice that, because these studies are essentially anchored in the notion of denial and its continuing political importance, silence is often equated with oppression and powerlessness, and voice with agency and courage.

My dissertation responds to this simplistic predicament over silence and aspires to show what possibilities a more nuanced approach to silence and memory can offer to the field. Moreover, by using the conceptual categories of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, I hope to demonstrate that in ignoring the subtle interconnections that define the relationships between silence, voice and power we often obscure our own positionality in the telling of the stories of others.

#### *A NATION OF ORPHANS: CHAPTER OVERVIEW AND SOURCE*

In my introductory remarks, I have begun to trace “the uncomfortable connections between gender, memory and war” through my own memories of and silences about wars that I remember and have experienced.<sup>79</sup> Aleppo and Gallipoli were the genius loci of my memories and experiences. Central to my personal narrative about these cities was my need to counter the predicament of ‘never again’ with questions about how to avoid appropriative empathy or historical parallelism and to address injustice in past or present times in a more meaningful way. The four chapters of my dissertation will continue to explore these questions in complementing, even if very different, ways.

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<sup>77</sup> A notable starting point for such an approach has been the „Feminist Interventions in Armenian Studies, Armenian Interventions in Feminist Studies” workshop organized by Melissa Bilal and Lerna Ekmekcioglu, at MIT Women and Gender Studies Program, 7 April 2018. Also see Deanna Cachoian-Schanz conference presentation “In the (Un)Space: Transnational Armenian Feminist Dialogues Between Identities, Belongings and Mother Tongues,” at the *Critical Approaches to Armenian Identity in the 21st Century: Fragility, Resilience and Transformation*, organized by the Hrant Dink Foundation on 7-8 October 2016. Available online here: [https://youtu.be/\\_Y35Nf33R3k](https://youtu.be/_Y35Nf33R3k)

<sup>78</sup> Another note-worthy and recently published book in this context is Vicken Cheterian, *Open Wounds: Armenians, Turks and a Century of Genocide* (Oxford, 2015).

<sup>79</sup> Ayşe Gül Altınay, and Andrea Petö, *Gendered Wars, Gendered Memories: Feminist Conversations on War, Genocide and Political Violence*, 2.

Chronologically, *A Nation of Orphans* starts in 1915 and ends in 2016 and is largely focused on the personal narratives of individuals from Turkey (or the former Ottoman Empire) who have consciously added their voices to the historical record – either orally, or in written form. To paraphrase Samuel Hynes, they each speak with their own voice, as history does not, and they find their own shapes and memories which are not the shapes or memories of history. Each of their stories (including my own) is thus a lens that refracts life in Turkey in the twentieth century from a different angle and at a particular historical moment.

My contention is that by reading history through these individuals' past experiences and present circumstances at a given moment in time and in relation to their hopes or aspirations for the future, we are able to gain what Leo Spitzer has called "a more profound sense of the connecting thread between the individual and collective society."<sup>80</sup> This connecting thread is often no more than the stuff that dreams and nightmares – these silent projections of the self onto the world – are made of. Yet it is here in this liminal situation, between past, present and future, neither hopeful nor hopeless, in a state apart, that we are able to "engage in an effort of theoretical imagination, in which we imagine worlds quite different from those that exist or once existed" and ask ourselves "what might have been."<sup>81</sup> Thinking about silence, I found, gave me a space of endless possibilities to do so.

Scholars have treated silence as a space of the forbidden, or the language of the traumatized, as narratives of resistance and enablement. I find that silence can be both enabling and disabling. Far more, it is the space between what someone says – or does not say – and what we want them to say. And even when silence seems to bracket the unspoken, we can nonetheless use it to illuminate not just which stories are told and untold, or silenced and suppressed, but how these stories and their silences affect us as their listeners. By acknowledging the key role played by inter-subjectivity in the reading and writing of history, it may be that silence can provide us with a lens through which we can see ourselves by way of others. As Kamala Visweswaran put it, "For the story I give you is not exactly about this [person], it is rather more about how I negotiate and understand the construction of a silence, how I seek to be accountable to it."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Leo Spitzer, *Lives in Between: Assimilation and Marginality in Austria, Brazil, and West Africa, 1780-1945*, 7.

<sup>81</sup> Allan Megill, "Epilogue: On the Current and Future State of Historical Writing" in *The Oxford history of historical writing: Volume 5: Historical writing since 1945*, edited by Axel Schneider and Daniel Woolf (Oxford, 2011), 684.

<sup>82</sup> Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (Minneapolis, 1994), 60.

Written during the centenary of the Armenian genocide, *A nation of orphans* focuses on the personal narratives of individuals who have been touched, in one painful way or another, by the Armenian genocide of 1915. In these chapters, I have chosen the stories presented here to reflect current developments in the historiography of the Armenian genocide. All chapters focus on the gendered nature of the Armenian genocide, the role of orphans in the post-genocide Turkey, and the silence about Armenian survivors and their descendants, the silence that in some cases, continues today.

Chapter 1 begins with the tragic story of the Aintoura orphanage. Here, I turn to the memoirs of Halide Edib Adivar, one-time director of the orphanage in 1916. In her life story, Adivar presents her work at Aintoura as a major achievement bearing a resemblance to missionary activities in the orphanages nearby that were run to provide war relief. Her letter exchanges with Isabel Fry, a British Quaker woman, however, reveal her true intentions. The heretofore unknown testimony of Harutyun Alboyadjian, a former orphan at the Aintoura orphanage, further highlights the gaps and silences in Adivar's personal narrative. This chapter tackles the following questions. What role did Turkish women play in the Armenian genocide? And, what are the gender dynamics at play when writing about genocide and war?

In Chapter 2, which is written in co-authorship with Sait Çetinoğlu, I explore “the political value of what was forgotten.”<sup>83</sup> In post-war Istanbul the ‘crimes against humanity’ did not go unnoticed in the local press, government bodies and personal narratives of state officials. We hear of looting, property confiscation and the rise of a powerful new merchant class that profited from taking over the commerce and trade of non-Muslims. Our questions were: how and why was it possible for people to become silent about the Genocide? Who exactly benefitted from the Armenian genocide and the denial of it? And, did the price seem high enough for the ordinary Turk to be willing to place his stake in the game of silence?

In Chapters 3 and 4, my focus turns away from public representations of the genocide to individual responses to it. Here, I approach the ensuing culture of silence from the perspective of individual biographies. I make an effort to understand how silence would indeed become the language of the newly founded republic and how individuals dealt with this predicament of

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<sup>83</sup> Luisa Passerini, cited in: Diana Gittins, “Silences: The case of a psychiatric hospital” in *Narrative and Genre*, edited by Paul Thompson (London, 1998), 47.

silence: how they came to identify themselves in this liminal situation between speech and silence and how they nevertheless found ways of telling their personal stories. The two autobiographies I have chosen for these chapters were written by Sabiha Gökçen and Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyan. On initial consideration, it would seem that not much links these personal narratives together – one, Atatürk’s adopted daughter and combat pilot; the other, daughter of a Catholic Armenian family and Proustian scholar. They seem worlds apart. But despite their obvious differences, they both share important experiences and characteristics growing up as young girls in the early years of the Turkish republic. These chapters explore the following questions. How did their respective life stories play out in the given historical and political context? What were the sacrifices buried beneath? Which futures did they dream about, and which did they not dream about? In reading and listening to their personal narratives, how can we pose meaningful questions while still being careful of the “dangerous intimacy between subjectification and subjection?”<sup>84</sup> How can we highlight the absences that we uncover but also respect the silences that we encounter?

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I have engaged different perspectives and modes of historical analysis, and I wish to say a few words to explain how I selected the evidence used in this dissertation. Historiography on the Armenian genocide tends to suffer from two main problems. The first is that often scholarship focuses on either the perpetrators or the victims. So far, these studies have been meta-narratives about the Turkish nation state writ large or microhistories about Armenians, as if these two narratives are incompatible. The second revolves around the notion of denial. Part of the problem here is that such scholarship inadvertently makes denialists, and the Turkish government, their prime audience. My dissertation tries to avoid these two recent trends by reading “divergent histories alongside and in connection with each other.”<sup>85</sup>

Much like Nazim Hikmet’s *Human Landscapes of my Country*, my dissertation focuses on the personal narratives of individuals from Turkey during and after the Great War. These individuals are of different social backgrounds, classes and ages, ranging from orphans to school directors and presidents, from fathers to daughters and grandchildren, from genocide victims to perpetrator and bystanders. Wherever I could, I have framed my chapters around the memories

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<sup>84</sup> Deniz Riley, *Am I that Name?* (New York, 1988), 20. Also quoted in Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, 60.

<sup>85</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *Postmemory*, 21.

of children, and I have often privileged their accounts over those of adults (Chapters 1, 2, and 3). This has allowed me to make affect, privacy, and intimacy a focal point in my stories and shift my attention to minute details of their daily lives.

As I wondered how the worlds of my different protagonists collided and whether I could draw meaningful connections between them, I often imagined myself meeting them as passengers in Nazim Hikmet's third-class car, number 510. The device of a train journey gave Nazim Hikmet "historical mobility" and enabled him to speak through a diversity of voices and to stage them within the larger context of national history and beyond. Hikmet's primary goal in writing *Human Landscapes of my Country* was to write about life in the twentieth century, and by doing so he provided a way to think about lives lived in Turkey at that particular historical moment and situation alongside and in connection with lives lived elsewhere. In a host of ways, his book helped me to reformulate some of the questions I have encountered during my research and which I have outlined above. These were mainly questions about how to avoid appropriative empathy and easy comparison while at the same time acknowledging my own positionality and subjectivity.

As an event, the Armenian genocide occupies an interesting place in relation to the writing of history. During my research journey, I was often reminded of Diana Gittins' remarks about how silences are always political: "Who silences whom and why are thus crucial questions in understanding power relations in any given culture at any given time." After all, she concludes, "Silence is not only a noun. It is also a verb."<sup>86</sup> And while these are (and continue to be) important queries, I found silence can be so much more.<sup>87</sup> We all know that the Armenian genocide was a moment in Turkey's silenced past. But what might happen if we learn to read its silences?

Evidence has been selected to highlight the enduring legacy of silence in Turkey at different points in Turkey's modern history. It has been presented in such a way that it not only mirrors my own research journey but also reflects how silence slowly unfolded over Turkey during the past century. In other words, historical sources relating to the Armenian genocide become scarcer as we approach our present times. Why this is so is a question I address throughout my thesis. For my first and second chapters, historical evidence was plentiful; for my third and fourth

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<sup>86</sup> Diana Gittins, "Silences: The case of a psychiatric hospital," 47.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.



chapters, I had to become more eclectic and imaginative about finding and interpreting my sources.

Whatever the case, I knew that I had to look beyond Turkey and include a broad range of historical sources (in Turkish, Armenian,<sup>88</sup> English, French, German and Italian). I searched not only through public archives and private collections in Istanbul and Ankara but also in Beirut, Yerevan, Gyumri, London, Cambridge, Berlin, Venice, New York, New Haven and Tarrytown. In all of these places, I looked for biographical and autobiographical information pertaining to the individuals whom I was studying in books, newspapers, manuscripts, official records, personal letters and diaries, contemporary photographs and films.

Whenever I could, I visited the places I write about in this dissertation: the historical site of the Aintoura orphanage, former schools and residences, current burial places and private residences. I supplemented these materials with oral interviews I conducted with surviving family members, friends, acquaintances or simply with people who remembered their stories or were visiting these historical sites just like me. For my fourth chapter, I was able to interview my protagonist, Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyen. However, I did not have the chance to re-interview her, as originally planned, because I had to leave Turkey in 2016. My personal story then is as much a testimony of the predicament of silence in Turkey and the punishing legacy it holds for individuals and their families as are the life stories presented here in my dissertation.

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<sup>88</sup> Even though I managed to learn basic Armenian in order to have simple conversations with my interviewees, I mostly relied on the excellent translators of the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute. I want to extend my gratitude to Hayk Demoyan, Director of the AGMI, for offering his kind assistance and support during my field work in Armenia in 2014 and 2015.



## CHAPTER ONE

### WRITING AINTOURA: HALIDE EDIB.<sup>89</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

What role did Turkish women play in the Armenian genocide? In my search for their narratives that provide a window on female agency during the Armenian genocide, I learned of the memoirs of the Turkish writer and feminist Halide Edib Adivar (1884–1964), and tried to reconstruct why and how she sided with the lethal regime of the Young Turk government during World War One. Building upon recent feminist approaches that explore the intersections between war and gender, this chapter locates Adivar’s memoirs in the field of genocide studies as a point of departure for understanding the gender dynamics at play when writing about genocide and war. In the chapter, I will engage in a historical discussion of Halide Edib Adivar’s war-time memories of the Aintoura orphanage, a Turkish children’s home for mostly Armenian genocide orphans located on a hilltop overlooking Beirut. While uncovering the logic with which she constructed her personal narrative about Aintoura, I will also highlight the silences that her life story beholds.

Halide Edib Adivar’s novels and memoirs are the subject of frequent studies in both literary and feminist circles in which she is “portrayed either as a successful writer or a disobedient feminist activist.”<sup>90</sup> Feminist researchers from Turkey have often turned to her memoirs to recover the women’s voice in Turkey’s past. They focus on her career and intellectual activities in a gender-segregated, male-dominated society and consider them progressive, even radical.<sup>91</sup> In orientalist

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<sup>89</sup> This chapter is the result of previous study for the Raphael Lemkin Award 2014 I undertook at the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute Yerevan, Armenia. I am grateful to Hayk Demoyan and the members of the award committee for giving me this ward and for providing me with the unique opportunity to study and research at the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute Archives.

<sup>90</sup> In her essay “National Myths and Self-Na(rra)tions: Mustafa Kemal’s Nutuk and Halide Edib’s Memoirs and The Turkish Ordeal,” Hülya Adak, for example, suggests that Edib’s autobiography should be read as “potential resistance” to Kemalist historiography, which traditionally centres around the figure of Kemal Mustafa Atatürk. See Hülya Adak, “National Myths and Self-Na(rra)tions: Mustafa Kemal’s Nutuk and Halide Edib’s Memoirs and The Turkish Ordeal,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102.2 (2003): 509-527.

<sup>91</sup> Derya Iner, “Gaining a Public Voice: Ottoman women’s struggle to survive in the print life of early twentieth-century Ottoman society, and the example of Halide Edib (1884–1964),” *Women’s History Review* 24.6 (2015): 968. For studies which underline Halide Edib’s contribution to the Turkish women’s movement, see, for example, (in chronological order) Emel Sönmez, “The Novelist Halide Edib Adivar and Turkish Feminism,” *Die Welt des Islams* (1973): 81-115; Nermin Abadan-Unat, “The Modernization of Turkish women,” *Middle East Journal* 32.3 (1978): 291-306; Ayşe Durakbaşı, *Halide Edib: Türk Modernleşmesi ve Feminizm* [Halide Edib: Turkish Modernization and Feminism] (Istanbul, 2000). For an exemplary study on women’s autobiographies in the early years of the Turkish republic, see Hülya Adak, “Suffragettes of the Empire, Daughters of the Republic: Women Auto/Biographers Narrate National History (1918-1935),” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 36 (2007): 27-51. There, Adak argues that these personal narratives by Turkish women writers were in fact not narrations of their personal and private lives but manifestations of how these women’s lives intersect with a specific historical moment – women

histories of the Middle East, Adivar appears as an example of the positive influence of Anglo-American ideas among women in the Middle East. Indeed, Adivar was one of the first Muslim women to graduate from the American School for Girls in Istanbul (1901) who became an activist in the Turkish nationalist movement and she was the initiator of the first Ottoman feminist organization, the *Teal-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* (1912). Born into an elite Muslim family, Adivar was brought up by an anglophile father (her mother died when she was a small child), was first home-schooled and later sent to the American School for Girls in Scutari (Istanbul). Following her graduation, she married and had two sons. In 1910 when he decided to marry a second woman, she divorced her husband after having endured years of physical abuse.<sup>92</sup> In following years, she became a prominent political commentator and supporter of the Young Turk revolution, and also a writer and leading force behind the Turkish women's movement. By 1914, she was a respected member of the inner circles of the Young Turk government, and the only female member on the board of the Turkish Hearth Association. In 1916, she was asked by the commander of the Turkish 4th Army in Syria, Cemal Pasha, to take over the Aintoura orphanage.

#### *EVERYDAY LIFE AT THE AINTOURA ORPHANAGE*

In 1993, the remains of over 300 children were discovered in a small grave in the grounds of St. Joseph College in Aintoura, the oldest francophone college in the Middle East. They are believed to be the remains of Armenian children that died in the college grounds during the years 1915-1918 and they thus reveal a tragic chapter in the history of the infamous college. Run by Lazarist monks since 1773, the college was converted into an orphanage by the Young Turks during WWI.<sup>93</sup> Simply called Aintoura, it became the terminal station for children who had lost their parents during the “resettling policies” of the Young Turks.<sup>94</sup> The children – between the ages of 3 and 14 – who arrived at Aintoura, had seen it all. Some arrived at Aintoura from Muslim

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gaining voting rights – in Turkey's past. Included in her analysis are Halide Edib's autobiographical writings (pp. 29–32).

<sup>92</sup> “Today's post brings depressing news from Halide Salih. I have known for long that her relations with her husband were very painful; painful to a degree of physical pain that is certainly rare with us [...] the thought of polygamy she evidently cannot bear.” Isabel Fry, Diary Entry, 3 January 1911, Isabel Fry Papers, Institute of Education Library and Archives, University College London, Call No: GB 366 FY (hereafter cited as ‘Isabel Fry Papers’).

<sup>93</sup> Frederik J. Bliss (1859–1937; son of David Bliss, the founding President of the Syrian Protestant College and brother of Howard S. Bliss, the President of the Syrian Protestant College during WWI), says, in his “Report on the situation in Beirut during the early days of World War One, that St. Joseph College was the “war price of the Turks.” Howard Bliss Collection: AUB President 1902-1920, American University of Beirut, Archives and Special Collections, Box 17, File 2 (hereafter cited as ‘Howard Bliss Collection’).

<sup>94</sup> Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Orphans, Converts, and Prostitutes: Social Consequences of War and Persecution in the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1923,” *War in History* 19.2 (2012): 173-192.

households, where they had been kept as concubines or unpaid labourers. Others had roamed the streets, filthy and hungry, until Turkish soldiers or foreign missionaries picked them up and brought them to the nearest orphanage. Often they had been transferred from one orphanage to another until they arrived at their terminal station, Aintoura. Harutyun Alboyadjian is one of the few orphans that spoke about his experiences at Aintoura, tells us in his testimony:<sup>95</sup>

“When they killed my parents, they took me and other underage children to Djemal [Cemal] Pasha’s Turkish orphanage and they turkified us. My surname was ‘535’ and my name was Shukri. My Armenian friend became Enver. They circumcised us. There were many other who did not know Turkish; they did not speak for weeks, with a view of hiding their Armenian origin. If the gendarmes knew about it [older Turkish boys], they would beat them with ‘falakhas.’ The punishment consisted of twenty, thirty or fifty strokes on the soles of the feet or having to look directly into the sun for hours. They [also] made us pray according to Islamic custom [...].”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Harutyun Alboyadjian was born in 1904 in a village called Fendedjak, close to Zeytoun. He could not remember his father, who was a blacksmith and was taken away by the Turks to supposedly serve in the Turkish army. Reading testimony Harutyun Alboyadjian gave to Verjine Svaslian in the 1960s, one is struck by the blurriness of his memories about how his family died. He says of the caravan “the end of the caravan could not be seen – it was so long [...] I don’t remember my father [...] I remember mother was tired of walking.” Somehow the caravan made it to the Syrian desert through Aleppo, where Harutyun Alboyadjian lost his sister Ovsanna, he loved so dearly, because “someone in the passing train wanted to have a child.” In an interview I conducted with Harutyun Alboyadjian’s daughter Anjela Alboyadjian she told me that her father “never wanted to remember anything bad, that he believed in the good of people.” His daughter begged him to remember the atrocities that were committed against Armenians by the Turks; after decades of silence, Harutyun Alboyadjian told his daughter just fragments. His daughter, carrying the burden of her father’s fragmented memory, told me that she had sworn to never talk to someone from Turkey. In the end, she shared her and her father’s story with me, I kissed her hands in the old-fashioned Turkish manner, she accepted my gesture and then we sat in silence for half an hour, held our hands and cried. Anjela Alboyadjian, Interview with Suzan Meryem Rosita Kalayci, 25 April 2014, Armenian Genocide Museum Institute Yerevan, Armenia. (Note: if not otherwise stated, all the quotes by Harutyun Alboyadjian, in the following text are from his testimony given to Verjine Svaslian as cited in Verjine Svaslian, *The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eye-Witness Survivors* (Yerevan, 2011), Testimony 247, pp. 426-428. If quoted from my interview with Anjela Alboyadjian, I will mark it otherwise.

<sup>96</sup> According to his daughter, Harutyun was first brought from Aleppo to Beirut by the NEF; from there orphans were distributed among the various orphanages. According to the final report of the NEF in 1923, when relief work was officially announced to be over, The NEF had run a total of 53 orphanages and aided a total of 60,092 children. In Greater Syria, the number of children aided was 8,183 and – as the NEF noted specifically – these children were all housed in orphanages, as “home placement” like in Armenia and Athens was not “feasible in Syria because of racial and religious differences.” Near East Relief (hereafter ‘NEF’), Final Report, Near East Foundation records, Rockefeller Archive Centre Tarry Town, RG 5. What the report does not mention, however, is that children – like Shukri – were often sent to the Turkish orphanage in Aintoura because it was believed that Aintoura at least was not subjected to the severe food shortages in Syria. See “Report on Relief Work”, Bayard Dodge (1888-1972), son-in-law of Howard Bliss, President of the Syrian Protestant College at the time (succeeded him in 1923), Howard Bliss Collection, Box 18, File 3. In the *History of the AUB*, Howard Bliss tells us that the “NEF brought down 7000 of its orphans” (7000 is a good estimate by Bliss, if we discount the approximately 1000 Armenian orphans living at Aintoura) and that a total of 100,000 Armenians were living in Greater Syria. For the Syrian Protestant College, this was a significant number as it now became the “principal school for Armenians outside of Russia.” Howard Bliss Collection, *History of the AUB*. This is confirmed by the drop in numbers of Armenian students at the American College in Istanbul, Robert College Constantinople (RCC) and the American Girls College of Constantinople (ACC), *Yearly Reports 1915-1918*, Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Robert College Records, Series III.5: Annual Reports (hereafter cited as ‘Robert College Records’); Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, American Girls College Records, Annual Reports of the President, 1912-1921 (hereafter cited as ‘American Girls College Records’).

Life at the Turkish orphanage was hell. And ethnic affiliation often played out its cruel games in the playground. One Kurdish boy, so Harutyun tells us in his memoirs, was especially notorious for terrorizing the Armenian children. His favorite sentence, “I have killed 99 Armenians. If I kill you too, that will be one hundred,” echoed daily in the halls of the former St. Joseph College. Surviving violent attacks among the children, the haunting memories of the massacres, and most often days without eating, resulted in a cruel warfare for resources among the children in which only the strongest and fittest were able to survive. Spiraling down into a situation little short of cannibalism, Aintoura justified its nickname: it was the orphanage from hell.



Illustration 1: Orphans Roaming the Streets in Syria.

The general situation in Greater Syria was equally grave in terms of food shortages and misery. From the beginning of the war, Syria and Lebanon were “absolutely cut off from the outside world” and resembled an “ocean of starvation.”<sup>97</sup> When the blockage by the allied fleet was announced, Greater Syria, whose people had historically relied on foreign trade for its livelihood, was flung into instant poverty and was hit by severe food shortages. Bayard Dodge, an American teacher living in Beirut at the time, who would a few years later succeed his father-in-law as the President of the Syrian Protestant College, tells us that hunger and poverty were so severe that ‘for months the pitiful cry of beggars has been echoing in our ears and the streets of Beirut have been lined with poor wretches whose lives have been flickering out from weakness and fever.’<sup>98</sup> At the end of 1914, it was clear that Syria’s destitute situation could only be alleviated with help from the outside world. At the time, the United States was neutral so Dodge tells us there was no objection to it helping and sending relief workers. Finally, in January 1915, a local chapter of the American Red Cross Society was opened near the Syrian Protestant College, and it started providing immediate basic relief work for the city and the surrounding areas.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> “Report on Relief Work,” Bayard Dodge, Howard Bliss Collection, Box 18, File 3; “Retrospect on World War 1,” Frederik J. Bliss, Howard Bliss Collection, Box 18, File 2.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Bayard Dodge, “Report on Relief Work”. Several other historical sources discuss the supposed ‘neutrality of the United States’ and arrive at the same conclusion. In the book *The Story of the Near East Relief*, David Barton, for example, tells us that one of the reasons why the Near East Relief (NEF) was so successful was that America kept its neutrality for so long. However, he continues to write that the NEF also did everything else to make sure the Turkish authorities allowed them to operate. They, for example, stimulated “local gifts” by doubling “all contributions collected from the various national groups” and supported local Turkish institutions, many of which only continued to function in Constantinople and were notoriously “overcrowded and pathetically short of funds,” 212 and 349ff; Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross (ARC), tells us in her book *The History of the American Red Cross* that the ARC’s work during the Hamidian and Adana massacres was extremely important, yet at first volatile. By giving relief not only to the Armenian victims of the massacres but also to needy Muslims – even though this was harshly criticized at home in America – she explains, the ARC established a precedent under which they could operate more freely and in a less suspicious environment. In a report prepared by the War Relief Commission to the Rockefeller Foundation on 6 August 1915, we can read that Turkey does not “welcome any work carried out by foreigners in Turkey for the benefit of the civil society [...]” (9). Her book is available in the collection of Rockefeller Foundation International, N-War Relief, Vol 7-8, Turkey, Rockefeller Archive Centre, RG 5 This is also brought up in a letter, dated March 23, 1916, from the Rockefeller head office to the NEF headquarters. Rockefeller Foundation, Projects International, 100, 7, General Correspondence. The Rockefeller Foundation, which was one of the biggest private donors to the NEF, therefore specifically asked the NEF that their donations be partly given to Turkish institutions, such as hospitals, soup kitchens and orphanages, a letter from the State Department of 23 March, 1916, to the participating relief agencies and donors, finally quietens all doubts. Here we can read: “Turkish Government now welcomes help and through Minister of Interior [Talaat Pasha] authorizes the American Red Cross, cooperating with Red Crescent to conduct relief work for civilians of all races.” Especially in the areas along the shores of Marmara, Smyrna, and the suburbs of Constantinople, 500,000 people were starving, none of whom were Armenians, writes the State Department, and it urged all participating parties to donate to local agencies and soup kitchens as well. Rockefeller Foundation, Projects International, 100, Folders 722-728, Rockefeller Archive Center, RG 5.

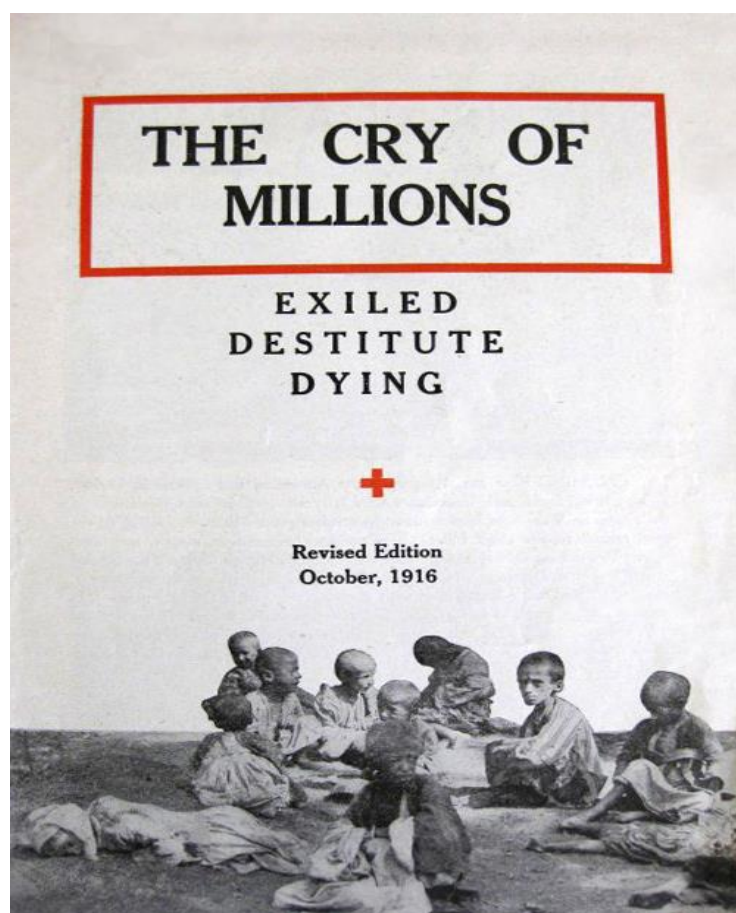


Illustration 2: Red Cross Pamphlet 1916.

When four German nurses and sixteen students from the medical faculty of the Syrian Protestant College, in collaboration with the American Red Cross, saved two hundred Turkish soldiers in the Syrian Desert, Cemal Pasha was so pleased that “he never missed an opportunity to help the college” and provided the college with money and food stamps and used its medical graduates for army service.<sup>100</sup> Collaboration between the local chapter of the American Red Cross and Cemal Pasha was administered by the president of the Syrian Protestant College, Howard Bliss, and his son-in-law, Bayard Dodge. Dropping formalities, they started requests to Cemal Pasha with a simple “Cemal, my friend,” rather than the conventional “High Excellency.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Howard Bliss Collection, Box 18, File 3; this is also mentioned in Halide Edib’s *Memoirs*, 369.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., Box 18, File 4. From *AUB, A Short History*, written by Howard Bliss. We also learn that Cemal Pasha gave Dr. Altounian and Pastor Shirodian enough supplies to form an orphanage and save 2000 children at Aleppo.





Illustration 3: Cemal Pasha comes to the Aintoura Orphanage.

Indeed, conditions at the college improved when Cemal Pasha took an interest in Aintoura. The orphan Harutyun explained: “Djemal Pasha had ordered that we should be given proper care and attention. Why? He appreciated the Armenians’ brains and grace and hoped that, in the case of victory, thousands of turkified children would in the coming years ennoble his nation and we would become his future support.” The American ambassador to Damascus, Edelmann, a good friend of Cemal Pasha, writes on 1 February 1916, that Cemal Pasha had, in one of their conversations on the possible war outcomes, hinted at the fact that he was not very much concerned about whether the Ottoman empire was losing the war or not.<sup>102</sup> The officer explains this in terms of Cemal Pasha’s genius for charm and his ability to play out favours with the different allied forces stationed in the Middle East. Tap-dancing his way through the diplomatic quartet of WWI and flirting with the various allied powers, one of his crazier plans was – so Edelmann had gathered – to ride, on an Arabian stallion into a defeated Istanbul. But in his case not backed by the Ottoman armies but, backed by the united Armenian armies.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Edelmann cited in Howard Bliss Collection, Box 17, File 7.

<sup>103</sup> Edelmann also warns Bliss that the German Consul Loytved Hardegg had “declared [that] American institutions are responsible for all troubles in the country,” letter exchange between Edelmann and Bliss, 28 February–9 March 1916, Howard Bliss Collection, Box 17, File 7. In a succeeding letter exchange between an anxious Howard Bliss and a reassuring Cemal Pasha, we learn that Cemal understands that the college is caught in “the war theatre [...] between Germany and America” and that there “is no danger for the college” as “the college is one of his [Cemal Pasha] furthering plans for the welfare of this country.” To which Bliss gratefully answers: “I consider you our

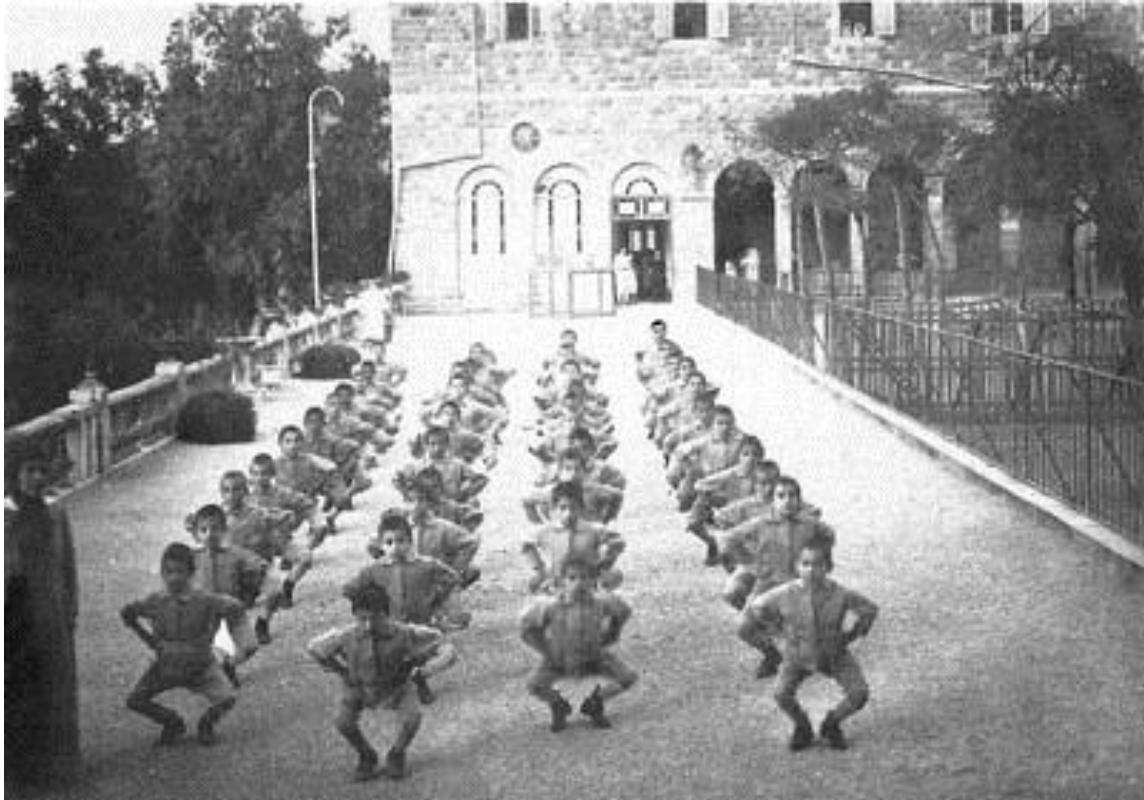


Illustration 4: Male Orphans at the Aintoura Orphanage.

Whatever Cemal Pasha's plans were, they worked in favour of many and – in the case of the Aintoura orphanage – were godsend for the children who survived the first year there and others who were just arriving. In fact, there was so much food that some children made “extra money by selling bread to the Arabs.” One day when Harutyun entered the dining room he was asked by – what he thought – was one of the corporals to make him a belt. The orphanage, Harutyun explains, was organized like the military and the corporals were Turkish children and were in charge of the food distribution. The boy – as Harutyun later found out to his dismay – was not a Turkish corporal who could have got him extra helpings in the dining hall, but an Armenian boy from Gürün who was so thrifty with his food portions that he was able to make some extra money by selling bread to the Arabs and needed a belt to stash away his earnings and hide them away from the other children. Nevertheless, Harutyun decided to make the belt for his new Armenian friend and soon became so famous among the other children for his skill as a belt maker that the “other boys also began asking [him] to make belts for them.” Needless to say, the clever Harutyun charged money and was soon able to save some money of his own. When “one

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minister of public instruction” and asks him for continuing “protection.” Howard Bliss Collection, Box 19, File 1. Zeine N. Zeine, AUB Faculty member, quoted from E.A. Adamov's book *Razdel Aziatskoi Tustsii* (Moscow, 1924), Zeine N. Zeine Collection, File 5.

day Cemal came to the orphanage to see the state of his Armenian boys who had become Turks,” Harutyun recalls they called him to see the commander:

“Djemal Pasha asked me, ‘My son, Shukri, what have you made?’ I had a drawer made by hand and a belt. I showed them to him. He said: ‘With what instruments are you making them?’ I replied: ‘I have no instruments.’ Djemal Pasha was astonished. He said with regret, ‘It’s a pity, pay attention to him; he is a gifted child.’”<sup>104</sup>



Illustration 5: Photograph of the Belt Harutyun Alboyadjian made for Jemal Pasha.

Although Harutyun got the feeling from his meeting with Cemal Pasha that the latter wanted to transfer him somewhere else, he waited in vain. Harutyun, so his daughter tells us, had even made a belt for Cemal Pasha as a ‘thank you’ for the possible transfer out of the orphanage.<sup>105</sup> Still, Cemal’s visit to the orphanage bore other fruits. According to Harutyun, Cemal Pasha also brought teachers and doctors from Constantinople because most of his orphans “fell ill with scurvy and died.” One of these teachers was Halide Edib Adivar. Although Harutyun does not remember Adivar being the director of the orphanage or a teacher at the college, he has very special memories of an afternoon spent in her presence. That afternoon, the only time Harutyun

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<sup>104</sup> This encounter with Cemal Pasha was very important for Harutyun, as we will later see, his belt-making did not only bring him fame and protection from the commander but also drew attention to him when the Turks had left and the Americans came. For Harutyun, making belts was not about money, it was about a special status in the orphanage that brought him safety, attention and admiration.

<sup>105</sup> Harutyun Alboyadjian, alias Shukri, kept the belt throughout his life and donated it shortly before his death to the Armenian Genocide Museum in Yerevan, where visitors can see the belt in the permanent exhibition.

had seen her, Adivar came to the orphanage with a group of Armenian girls, who danced a few Armenian dances for the boys in white dresses at the orphanage and even sang Armenian songs. As quickly as they came, they left again. Stunned by what he had witnessed that afternoon (so Harutyun later told his daughter), this visit from Halide Edib Adivar gave him much hope. Seeing Armenian girls around his own age, and obviously orphans, perform traditional dances and songs for them – despite being encouraged by a Turkish lady – was like a ray of sunshine in the otherwise dark days at the orphanage. For him, Halide Edib Adivar appeared like an angel out of nowhere.<sup>106</sup> As when Cemal Pasha praised his craftsmanship, this was one of those memories that Harutyun Alboyadjian would cherish for the rest of his life. It was as if he had to believe in their goodness to forget the rest. Although Harutyun spent two more years in the orphanage after the visits by Cemal Pasha and Halide Edib Adivar, he tells us nothing more of his time at the orphanage until the morning he and the other children realized that “the Turks had gone.” Harutyun recalls:

“One day, we woke up without the bell ringing; the doors were not open. When we opened the doors and went down, we saw that there were no Turkish guards or soldiers, no officers, inspectors or teachers; there was no one. There was no one to ring the bell for us to go to the dining room. Our big boys had become Turks [what he means by this is that now some of the Armenians were the older boys that demanded respect]; our chiefs had attacked the Kurd Silo and were beating him, and Silo was bellowing like a buffalo. He could just free himself and found refuge in the forest nearby. This was the same Silo who had said to Khoren over and over ‘I have killed ninety-nine Armenians. If I kill you too, that will be a hundred.’ This was the scoundrel Silo whom the Armenian orphans had [now] taught a good lesson [...]”

Harutyun continues to tell us of their bewilderment when they realized that not only were the Turks gone, but Beirut would also be liberated very soon. He recalls:

“As our orphanage was a military orphanage, we had special rules. Each class had to stand around its table, but there was neither chief, nor corporal or sergeant. All of us were standing and waiting, and there was no bread on the table.”

Finally, according to Harutyun, the pharmacist came. He had the military rank of major and three Armenian orphans were helping him with his tasks as the orphanage doctor. The doctor said, “Sit down.” When all the children sat down, Ezra Bey asked each group to send the oldest member to him. When Toros, Harutyun’s friend, walked up to the doctor, the latter asked him: “Oğlum Enver, senin ermeni ismin ne idi? [My son, Enver, what was your Armenian name?].” And Enver answered: “Toros idi, efendim. [It was Toros, Sir.]” The doctor continued to ask all the older

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<sup>106</sup> Anjela Alboyadjian, Interview with Suzan Meryem Rosita Kalayci.



boys of each group for their Armenian names. Then there was a minute of silence. All of us were waiting, so Harutyun remembers, and then finally the doctor said: “Bu günden sonra hepiniz de gene ermenisiniz!” [Beginning from this day all of you are Armenians again!]. Ezra, the doctor, also told them that everyone had left, all the Turkish children and staff, only him – who refused to go with them – and the Armenian and Kurdish children were left behind. He knew that soon he would be taken prisoner and left the children with the following message:

“I beg you not to give trouble to the Kurds around you. Continue to live in peace as you have done. If I were not here you would not be here either, as they asked me to poison your last supper. Please promise me this as I always treated you boys as if you were my own sons [...].”

Five minutes later, so Harutyun tells us, the Arabs came and took him away ... and Harutyun never saw or heard from him again.



Illustration 6: Photograph of Turkish military personel in front of German military truck at Aintoura orphanage.

*“Each Child Had a Drama”*

When Cemal asked Halide Edib Adivar to take over the orphanage located in Aintoura, she was thirty-two years old. Although at first reluctant to take over the orphanage, Adivar, who was chosen by Cemal Pasha to become the inspector of the schooling system in Syria (at the time this included not only schools in and around Damascus but also Beirut and Mount Lebanon) was soon forced to take on the role.<sup>107</sup>



Illustration 7: Photograph of Halide Edib and Cemal Pasha in front of Aintoura Orphanage.

In her memoirs, she describes her – at times – superhuman efforts to bring order and “peace” into the orphanage.<sup>108</sup> After a year, she writes, Aintoura became a model institution in which ‘her’ children thrived and prospered according to Montessori principles, which she believed to be best suited to her aim of achieving peace and order at the orphanage.<sup>109</sup> Sounding like a Montessori teacher, she explains that, given liberty and the right environment, every child can develop its own talents and capabilities and ultimately be a happier and more balanced child. In Aintoura, that meant that every child was given a task and a group in which he or she could feel comfortable. Turkish children, in Adivar’s opinion, were the most peaceful, Armenian the most musical, and Kurdish the most talented at handicrafts.<sup>110</sup> Why she thought this, she never

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<sup>107</sup> Halide Edib Adivar, *Memoirs*, 443.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 449.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 445.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 448.

explained, but these ethnic stereotypes defined her policy. A look into some of her private writings reveal that she believed in the peacefulness of the Turkish people as opposed to the other ethnic groups of the Ottoman Empire. In a letter to her former teacher, Miss Todd, Adivar describes the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 as a triumph of peace and liberty. She writes:

“Hurray! Hurray! It is a glorious page in our history that no bloody event marks our celebration of freedom [...] [the revolution] was done, not through Bulgarian bands or Armenian bombs but through the Turks and by them themselves [...] without bloodshed.”<sup>111</sup>

Did Adivar really believe that the Turks were the most peaceful among nations? We do not know. However, we know from her time as director of Aintoura that she thought the Turkish children were the best leaders: they were destined to be the group leaders of individual small groups of orphans divided by age, and or ethnic affiliation. Organized like the military, each group was headed by a Turkish corporal, who oversaw the daily routines and the food provision for the group and was answerable to the orphanage staff. For Adivar, Aintoura became a laboratory to test her theories on how to civilize the different ethnic groups, which actually hated each other with good reason, and make them live together harmoniously. At the start, she writes in her memoirs, Armenian children were accusing the Kurdish or Turkish children of having slaughtered their families and – in return – Turkish children were accusing the Armenian children and the Kurdish children of doing the same to the Turkish. There was so much hatred and anger in the eyes and hearts of these children and a kind of powerlessness in the bearing of their traumatic experiences, she describes, that it was – at first – impossible to think that they would ever live together in peace.<sup>112</sup> But she managed, she tells us: “after two months all the children were well-fed, clothed and content.”<sup>113</sup> In her memoirs, she proudly presents the pictures of the Aintoura orphanage, much in the fashion of the before-and-after pictures many relief organizations used (and still use) in their bulletins. These pictures show ‘content and happy’ Aintoura orphans at play in their specially designed Montessori classes or at work in their various craft workshops.

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<sup>111</sup> Halide Edib Adivar in a letter to her teacher Miss Todd, 1909, American College for Girls Records; Series VI: Records of the Office of the Trustees, Box 28; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

<sup>112</sup> Halide Edib Adivar, *Memoirs*, 444.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 446.



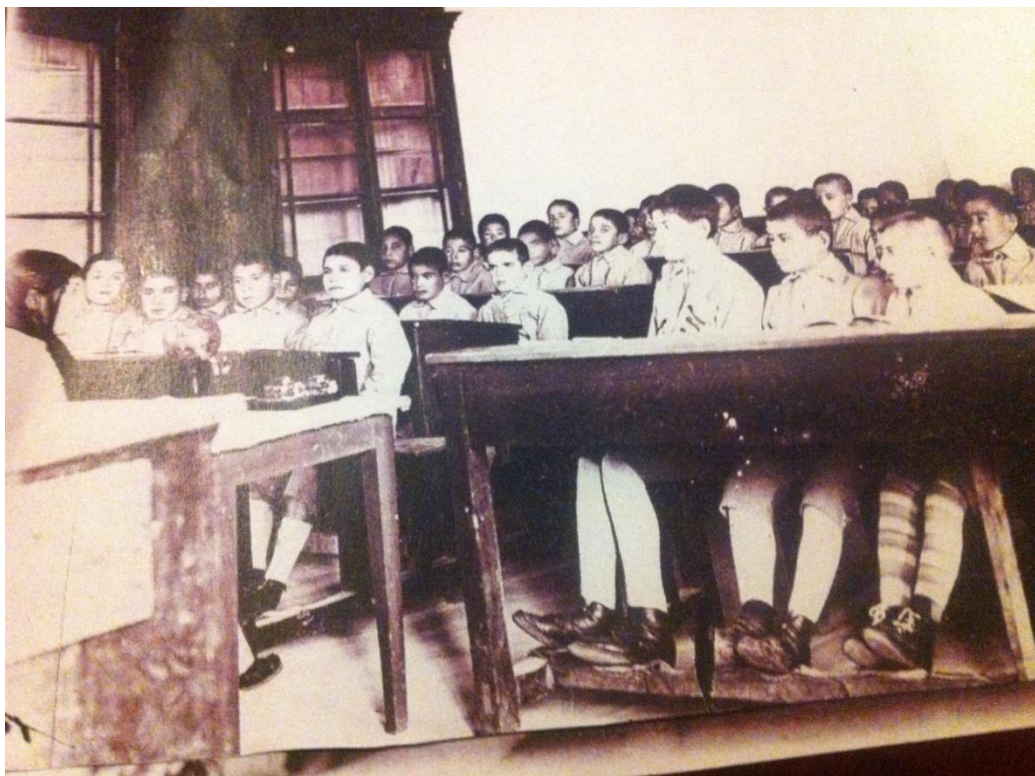


Illustration 8 and 9: Photographs of the Classroom and Dormitory at Aintoura Orphanage.



Orphanages nearby that were run by the Near East Relief –a humanitarian organization that was founded in 1915 to provide relief to Armenian genocide victims– used similar pictures and sent them back to their head offices and donors in America.<sup>114</sup>

What is interesting in the case of Halide Edib Adivar’s photographs of the Aintoura orphanage is that they are actually the only photographs that are featured in her autobiographical chapters about her educational activities. However, Adivar was not a stranger to organizing and implementing educational programmes, and had already been given the task – back in Istanbul – of organizing an empire-wide education system for Turkish women.<sup>115</sup>

Adivar, herself a graduate of the American Women’s College of Istanbul, and one of the first Turkish graduates of the college, had been writing articles in various national and international newspapers about Turkish women’s need for education since the beginning of the 1908 revolution. Like many others, during the counterrevolution of 1909 Adivar went into hiding, first in her old college in Scutari and then in England. The contacts and knowledge she gathered during this time remained some of the most important in her life. In addition, her articles about the time and the private letters she wrote to her old teacher, Miss Dodd, are extremely important for understanding her educational activities later on in Greater Syria. One essay in particular, entitled “The Future of Turkish Women,” published in her former college’s bulletin, shows how important the Anglo-Saxon discourse on civilization was to her. She writes:

“The actual cry of the Turkish woman for more civilized womanhood, especially to England and America, is this: You go and teach the savage, you descend into slums. Come to this land, where the most terrible want exists: the want for knowledge.”<sup>116</sup>

Because of her alterations with the minister of public instruction of the time, Halide Edib Adivar left her assignment to organize an educational program for Turkish women, and a year later was

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<sup>114</sup> The NEF tried to “home-place” as many orphans as possible. Whether they were sent to Canada, Georgetown; placed in Greek households, or sent to America, the more that were placed, the better for the NEF. For this purpose and for the general call for donations (during the Golden Rule Sunday, for example), the NEF took pictures of the NEF-run orphanages and of selected orphans, describing them, for example, as “intelligent,” “hard-working,” “good with needle-work,” General Minutes (1921-1929), Near East Relief, Rockefeller Archive Center, RG 7.

<sup>115</sup> American College for Girls Records; Series VI: Records of the Office of the Trustees, Box 28; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library. For the story about the so-called Georgetown boys, around hundred Armenian boys that were brought to Canada as agricultural workers, see Jack Apramian, *The Georgetown Boys* (Toronto, 2009); and for the successful journey of an Armenian orphan in the United States, read Samuel Nakasian’s autobiography *America’s Adopted Son: The Remarkable Story Of An Orphaned Immigrant Boy* (New York City, 1997).

<sup>116</sup> Halide Edib [Adivar] (among others) “Echoes on the Ottoman Constitution “The Future of Turkish Women”, American College for Girls Records; Series VI: Records of the Office of the Trustees, Box 28; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

called to Syria by Cemal Pasha to oversee the education programs there. She was reluctant to take on the directorship of the Aintoura orphanage, but later agreed: Aintoura provided her with another chance to prove herself as the educator of the Turkish nation. Years later, during her lecture tours through India and the United States, she would introduce herself as the first minister of education of the Turkish nation. At stake in Aintoura, however, it was not the education and empowerment of Turkish women but the making of a nation that would overcome the memories of atrocities committed between people. Well aware of what happened to the Armenians, Adivar at the time thought that national economies were behind the “mutual extermination of Armenians and Turks alike.”<sup>117</sup>

She asked Talaat Pasha – the mastermind behind the Armenian genocide– on the subject, he told her, “Look here, Halide Hanim. I have a heart as good as yours, and it keeps me awake at night to think of the human suffering. But that is a personal thing, and I am here to think of my people.”<sup>118</sup> In 1916, after she had been to Aintoura for the first time, she gave a speech at the *Türk Ocağı*, the Turkish Hearth Association, arguing that – contrary to what Talaat Pasha believed to be economically beneficial for the Turks – the bloodshed indeed “would hurt those who indulged in it more than it would hurt the victims.”<sup>119</sup> At the time, she believed that the Turks had sacrificed the Armenians for material gain. In her memoirs, she tells us how she witnessed the anger of the great Gomidas Vartabed, the founder of modern Armenian classical music. Once, after “the Armenians and Turks were [already] massacring each other” Gomidas came to her house and sang an Ave Maria from the sixth century to her.<sup>120</sup> She writes:

“It began like a hissing curse, bitter, rebellious, and angry; as he went on he rose slowly, looking like the apparition of Mephisto in ‘Faust’, drawing himself to his full height as he reached the last words. [...] It was the cry of the hatred and vengeance in his soul for my people. [...] We were seeing each other, with the Armenian and Turkish blood, and Armenian and Turkish suffering, as an increasing flood between us.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Halide Edib Adivar, *Memoirs*, 365.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 387.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 388.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>121</sup> When on the 24 April 1915, 200 of the most important leaders of the Armenian community of Istanbul were rounded up, the *Türk Ocağı*, the Turkish club to which Gomitas frequently came and sang at, asked Talaat Pasha to spare him from deportation. Gomitas survived but after being brought to Paris to a sanatorium by Halide Edib Adivar’s future husband Dr. Adnan Adivar, he died a madman. Tamar Nalcı, *Gomidas: Bu Toprağın Sesi* [Gomidas: the Voice of this Earth], Booklet prepared in Cooperation with Anadolu Kültür and the Cultural Capital of Europe 2010 Istanbul Committee, 38; Halide Edib Adivar, *Memoirs*, 374; Turhan Ada, *Adnan Adivar: Hayat ve Kişiliği* [Adnan Adivar: Life and Personality] (Istanbul, 2010), 48. For more information about Gomidas, also refer to Rita S. Kuyumjian, *Archeology of Madness: Komitas, Portrait of an Armenian Icon*. Princeton (New Jersey, 2001).

But, so she continues to explain,

“He was not the only one to be afflicted by politics, translated by politics. [...] I know a man, an Erzurum member of the first national assembly, who would not hear of mercy to the Armenians because seven members of his family, including his young wife and his sister-in-law, had been butchered by Armenians. I knew a poor Armenian in Syria who had lost his speech and wandered in the night crying like a dumb tortured animal [emphasis is mine] because he imagined his two sons, who were separated from him, had been shot. I know [...] never mind what I know, I have seen, I have gone through, a land full of aching hearts and torturing remembrances [...].”<sup>122</sup>

Clearly, Adivar writes about her real feelings about the Armenian massacres. Gomidas was admired by Adnan Adivar who became her husband a few years later; at the time, he was her family doctor and was a frequent guest in her house. Her memories of Gomidas, as she was writing them down, stirred something in her that Halide Edib Adivar was not able to hide. Her writing in the present tense about the Turkish “Erzurum member of the first national assembly” and in the past tense of the “dumb tortured animal” – an Armenian man she met in Syria – is telling. Her words “I know” and then “never mind what I know. I have seen, I have gone through” are her way of saying that everything she writes here is really true. She did believe until the end of her life in the greatness of the Turkish race; she even thought that Gomidas was of Turkish descent. “His musical vein was inherited” from the Turkish women of the Anatolian countryside who she believed were the true source of the Anatolian folk songs. Like Yusuf Akçura, she believed that Gomidas took the Anatolian songs and just translated them into Armenian.<sup>123</sup> She closes her story about Gomidas and the “Armenian-Turkish massacres” with the statement that Anatolia was “a land full of aching hearts and torturing remembrances.”<sup>124</sup>

In Aintoura, “each child had a drama,” she tells us, “and each had had its parents massacred by the parents of the other children, and now all were stricken with the same misery and disaster [...]”<sup>125</sup> The memories of the war, which was still raging, were haunting the long halls of the Aintoura orphanage and were acted out daily in the playgrounds and at the dinner tables. Halide Edib Adivar tells us that uncontrollable anarchy was ruling the orphanage: the children were like

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<sup>122</sup> Halide Edib Adivar, *Memoirs*, 375.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 373. Although her stance was not as harsh as Yusuf Akçura, who believed that “Gomidas had done great harm to the Turk by stealing his popular culture in the form of music and songs,” Adivar nevertheless believed that the songs of Gomidas resembled Turkish folk songs and were just translated into Armenian. Also see Hülya Adak, *Halide Edib ve siyasal şiddet: Ermeni kıyımı, diktatörlük ve şiddetsizlik* [Halide Edib and Political Violence: Armenian Genocide, Dictatorship, and Non-Violence] (Istanbul, 2016), 63-64.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 375.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 428.

“little wild beasts” and “acted as such.”<sup>126</sup> There was “no human decency and cleanliness left among them.”<sup>127</sup> In particular, feeding them was an ordeal: the “fighting began” even before the children entered the dining hall and it

“was a scene for students of anthropology to see, for it illustrated the terrific struggle for existence among the lowest kinds of animals. The stronger boys were snatching the bread from the weaker ones and the weaker ones were struggling to keep from giving up their bread. It was a wild fight, with all the children wrestling and tearing at each other, crying and screaming.”<sup>128</sup>

Most of them, Adivar concludes after witnessing these fights, would be much better “in a sanatorium.”<sup>129</sup> If she were to take on this orphanage as its director she needed a system to establish peace and order.

During her time in exile, in 1909, which she spent in her old college and then in England, Adivar had made contact with her old teachers and also with new female acquaintances who were involved in the latest educational movements in Great Britain and the United States.<sup>130</sup> Now, these international movements were experimenting with new educational models to replace older authoritarian teaching with the notion of school as a place where students would learn how to live. This included ideas of civic education and the creation of robust citizens capable of actively participating in a democracy. While these were all ideas that were of great interest to Adivar in her plans for establishing a nationwide education system for Turkish women, in Aintoura they seemed too utopian to implement, especially when the survival and sanity of the Aintoura orphans were at stake. The educational system of Maria Montessori, however, was different. Created for children with mental disabilities, it was a method that Adivar decided could work for the children at Aintoura. Implementing Montessori classes at Aintoura, Adivar tells us, helped her to establish much-needed order and stability. “The blessedness of work, cleanliness, and interest in games and music kept [the children] in much better humour, and the general harmony among the children was surprising,” however “one [still] felt,” she adds, “that these children whatever happened would carry something crippled, something mutilated in them.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 442.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 444.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Beatrice Curtis Brown. *Isabel Fry 1869-1958, Portrait of a Great Teacher* (London, 1960), 19.

<sup>131</sup> Halide Edib Adivar, *Memoirs*, 449.

The Great War ended in 1918, with the Ottoman Empire and Germany defeated. As expected, Beirut was soon liberated. Immediately after the Turkish doctor of Aintoura, Ezra Bey, was taken away from the orphanage, the American Red Cross took over. It provided the children of Aintoura with enough food and care for them to remember that time as their happiest there. Bertha Morley (1878-1973), an American missionary from Ohio took over as head mistress. The children thought she was “extremely attractive” and a “very lovely” lady, so our orphan Harutyun tells us. When Bertha Morley had to leave Beirut to take over an orphanage in Merzifon, Anatolia, the children were sad and understood that they would never see “their mother” again. Officers from the Near East Relief soon came and started distributing them to Alexandropol, which was by then called the orphan city with over 20,000 orphans living there; to Greece, from where many orphans were sent to North America; or back to orphanages in Anatolia that were run by American missionaries. Some of the lucky orphans were reunited with surviving relatives.<sup>132</sup>

The Near East Relief officials were now also helping older children. By the end of the war many of them were over 14 and 16 (the maximum ages for girls and boys respectively to stay at the orphanages) to resettle in or return to their native villages. The general hope of the Near East Relief was that these orphans could form the foundation of new Armenian communities in Anatolia and Armenia. Little did the Near East Relief know that in just under two years they would have to organize a big overnight rescue operation to save them from getting murdered by the advancing Kemalist forces. Harutyun, was also living in Anatolia again. His belt-making had saved him, and Bertha Morley, the headmistress of Aintoura had sent for him and five other boys to come to live with her in Merzifon, Anatolia. Harutyun was convinced that because of his ‘skill’ Bertha Morley had ‘remembered’ him and was proud to be among the chosen ones. Harutyun and the other boys who came with him to Anatolia worshipped her. But once again their lives were in danger as the new Turkish forces were mobilizing Anatolia. Among the few Turkish women able to carry a weapon and fight on the front lines was Halide Edib Adivar. She had been ordered back to Istanbul already in 1917 and along with her newly-wedded husband, Adnan Adivar, joined the Turkish liberation movement. By 1920, she fought side-by-side with Kemal Mustafa (Atatürk).

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<sup>132</sup> So we can read in the introduction by Bayard Dodge, the previously mentioned president of the Syrian Protestant College, to Stanley Sterr’s memoirs *Lions of Marash* (Albany, 1973), x-xi.

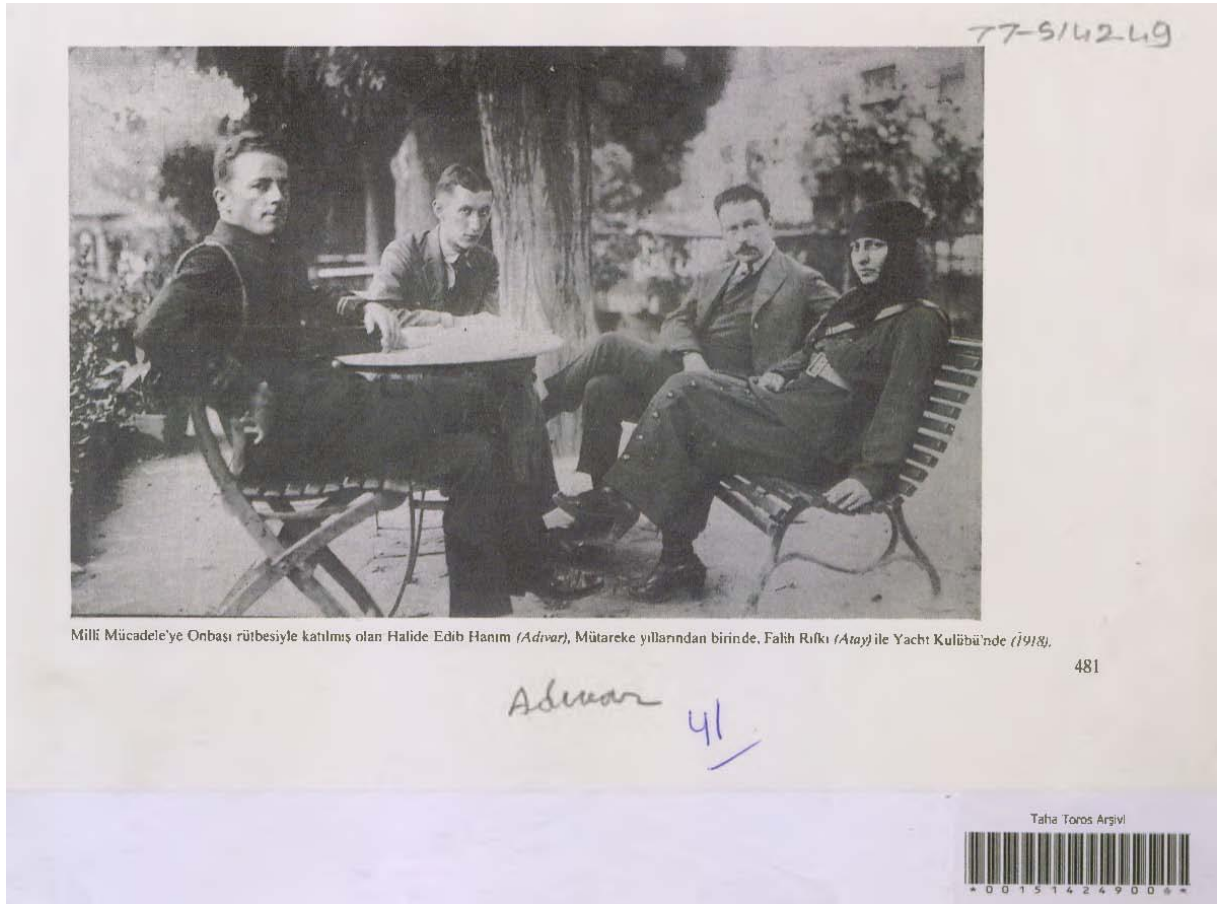


Illustration 10: Halide Edib in her Military Uniform in 1918.

### *SURVIVAL STORIES*

In this chapter, I have read Halide Edib Adivar's memoirs against the testimony of Harutyun Albojadjian. What I found was surprising to me. In Albojadjian's testimony, Cemal Pasha and Halide Edib Adivar are remembered as good people – ones who brought food and joy to the orphanage. From the perspective of Albojadjian, they were not the ones that had done injustice. It was the Kurdish children who bragged of having killed Armenians who were stigmatized as perpetrators. The playground and food hall at Aintoura, and later the woods surrounding the orphanage, were sites of ethnic conflict where memories of the war were acted out and revenged. Turkification by the orphanage authorities was seen as an unavoidable measure. We hear of more painful experiences in the memoirs of Karnig Panian, another Aintoura orphan, and can conclude that Albojadjian most probably avoided experiencing most of the cruelties by speaking good Turkish. However, his and Panian's stories overlap in describing the Turkification efforts at the orphanage. Circumcised and given new names, Harutyun, his friend Toros and Panian – or Ahmet as he was called at Aintoura – were clearly victims of the second stage of the Young

Turks' genocidal measures: "the transfer of children of the group to another."<sup>133</sup> They offer their own examples of survival, and their biographies tell the story of the punishing legacy that genocide can have on families and a nation and raise significant questions about how these orphans dealt with their traumatic memories, and how they articulated their shattered identities in the aftermath of genocide.

It is a story that contradicts Adivar's self-congratulatory account of her work at Aintoura. While Albojadjian did not bear any negative feelings towards Adivar – on the contrary, in his later life he followed Adivar's life as much as he could from Soviet Armenia – he does not remember her coming more than once, and just for a day, to the Aintoura orphanage. He attributes his survival to his ability to make anything out of anything – something he had learned from his late father who was a craftsman in their village in Anatolia. He is very aware that he could have died otherwise and most probably saw many children dying in front of his eyes; although he does not speak of them. From his story we also learn that Armenian children were not the only Ottoman children affected by the Great War: although maybe theirs was, and remains, a tragedy of a different dimension, Turkish and Kurdish children were also deeply affected and lost their parents.

In her memoirs, Halide Edib Adivar portrays herself as their caretaker, adopting a human rights language that is child-centered and which held a certain international currency within the post-war humanitarian orphan rescue and rehabilitation efforts.<sup>134</sup> I believe that this was the reason behind her including a long section on Aintoura. We need to remember that at the global level, WWI was maybe the first time the world was confronted with what can be called an 'orphan moment.' The exact number of orphans created during this time is unknown. However, the NEF alone cared for over 200,000 Armenian orphans during and after the war. The Rockefeller Foundation started an operation called 'Feeding the Children of Europe' and funnelled much money to Vienna, from where relief money was distributed to the different European states. Halide Edib Adivar's writing about her involvement with the Aintoura orphanage should be read

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<sup>133</sup> From the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide*, 1948; also refer to Keith Wattenpaugh, "Introduction" in *Goodbye Antoura a Memoir of the Armenian Genocide* by Karnig Panian (Stanford, 2015), xiii. Before the publication of these memoirs, I have shared my research findings with Keith Wattenpaugh and had lengthy discussions about the Aintoura orphanage with him (Summer 2014). In his introduction, Wattenpaugh has used my argument on the civilizational character of Halide Edib Adivar's work at the orphanage however –despite promises (on 16 July 2014) – he has not cited my contribution.

<sup>134</sup> See for example, Keith David Wattenpaugh, "The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian genocide Survivors and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism, 1920–1927," *The American Historical Review* 115.5 (2010): 1315–1339.

keeping this historical context in mind.<sup>135</sup> She had originally come to Aintoura to work on her career as the future policymaker in post-war Turkish politics, and left Aintoura as an international humanitarian worker and sought-after global lecturer.<sup>136</sup>

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When I started to read Adivar's memoirs, I was certain that there was something that I could recover, or uncover, in her story that would fill the silence in the historical record about the Armenian genocide. I wanted to tell Adivar's story because I wanted to add a woman's voice to the historiographical debates in my field. Had I not turned to investigate the role of Turkish women in the Armenian genocide for precisely this reason? However, it proved more complicated than I had anticipated at the outset. During my research I was – more than once – confronted “with the moral and political weight of the genocide” that animates historiographical and methodological debates within the two opposing epistemic communities in Turkey – and elsewhere.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> While I focus on Halide Edib Adivar's narrative about the Aintoura orphanage and her complicit involvement in genocidal practices at this orphanage, Hülya Adak has provided an excellent overview of Halide Edib Adivar's changing narratives on the predicament of Ottoman Armenians before and during the Armenian genocide of 1915 in her recent book *Halide Edib ve siyasi şiddet*, including her articles and speeches prior to 1916 (when her involvement in Aintoura began and later writings) and post-war political and literary writings. See Hülya Adak, *Halide Edib ve siyasi şiddet*, 27ff.

<sup>136</sup> Halide Edib Adivar had already gained international lecture experience in 1909 when she spoke in front of the ‘Balkan Committee’ in London, a small permanent organization of writers, statesmen, historians and travellers. The committee met in the House of Commons irregularly and was tasked with discussing and deliberating on Balkan affairs. In her diary entry of 23 June 1909, Isabel Fry tells us that she took Adivar to the ‘Balkan Committee’ and that the latter's views were endorsed by members of the committee (Isabel Fry, 23 June 1909, Isabel Fry Papers). In the *New York Times* we read that on 25 July 1928 Adivar had “come to the United States to be the first woman to lecture at the Institute of Politics at Willamstown, Massachusetts.” In 1935, Adivar was invited to give eight lectures at the Jamia Millia Islamica in Delhi, India, on the topic “Conflict of East and West.” These lectures were later published as Halide Edib [Adivar], *Conflict of East and West in Turkey* (Delhi, 1935).

<sup>137</sup> For a recent discussion on the denialist versus critical camps in Turkish scholarship on the Armenian genocide, see Edhem Eldem, “A reply to the responses by Taner Akçam and Ayhan Aktar,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 19.2 (2017): 297. This was most recently accentuated by the so-called Torossian debate that unfolded first in Turkey in 2013 and then in the *Journal of Genocide Research* in 2016/2017. This debate concerns the memoirs of Sarkis Torossian, an Armenian-Ottoman soldier who served during World War One and deserted after he found out that his family had been killed and deported as the Armenian Genocide unfolded. His memoirs were published in 1947 and republished in Turkish (with an extended foreword by Ayhan Aktar, who discovered the memoirs) in 2012. The debate – mostly among scholars from Turkey – centered around the question of whether Torossian's narrative was reliable and whether his evidence of having served in the Ottoman army (two documents that were allegedly authored and signed by Enver Pasha) is reliable or not. This debate has revealed some of the limitations within the scholarly field of genocide research and has highlighted the moral and political concerns informing the research questions and interpretative frameworks of scholars working on the Armenian genocide. Also see Edhem Eldem, “A shameful debate? A critical reassessment of the ‘Torossian debate’,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 19.2 (2017): 258-273; Taner Akçam, “Everything makes sense once given context,” *Ibid.*: 274-278; Ayhan Aktar, “A rejoinder: the debate on Captain Torossian revisited,” *Ibid.*: 279-291; Edhem Eldem, “A reply to the responses by Taner Akçam and Ayhan Aktar,” *Ibid.*: 292-297. A good overview of the historiography on the Armenian genocide in Turkey is provided by Fatma M. Göçek, “Reading Genocide: Turkish historiography on the Armenian deportations and massacres of 1915,” in *Middle East Historiographies* (Washington, 2006), 101-127.



At the time of writing this chapter, Fethiye Çetin has just finished her documentary *Habab Çeşmeler*; the Human Rights Foundation in Turkey has celebrated its 20th Anniversary with a series of events under the title *Where Fire has Struck*, raising awareness regarding human rights violations in social memory and contributing to the process of confronting historical truth; the Armenia-Turkey Cinema Platform has supported Nigol Bezjian's movie *I left my Shoes in Istanbul*, which is the first publicly shown movie by an Armenian filmmaker in Turkey and a landmark in cultural cooperation between Turkish and Armenian cultural agents;<sup>138</sup> and Alper Öktem has established the *History and Memory Research Fund* in cooperation with the Hrant Dink Foundation with the goal of fostering research on those who had at the time been termed 'the good Turks' – those who helped Armenians to survive.<sup>139</sup> Initially, I read Halide Edib's memoirs within this interpretative framework – as an exemplary and compelling account by a single Turkish woman helping Armenian orphans during World War One. This is also what Adivar wants us to read. How she begins her narrative about the Aintoura orphanage is illustrative:

“I [Halide Edib Adivar] said: ‘Why do you allow Armenian children to be called by Moslem names? It looks like turning the Armenians into Moslems, and history someday will take revenge for it on the coming generation of Turks.’  
 ‘You are an idealist,’ Cemal Pasha answered gravely, ‘... Do you believe that by turning a few hundred Armenian boys and girls Moslem I think I benefit my race? [...] ‘Afterward?’ I asked [...] ‘Do you mean after the war?’ he asked [...] ‘I will never have anything to do with such an orphanage.’”<sup>140</sup>

Adivar introduces herself into the story of Aintoura by criticizing Cemal Pasha for converting Armenian children to Islam. (When she was writing her memoirs, Cemal Pasha had just been assassinated by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation as part of Operation Nemesis). She recounts her hesitation about working there, and presents herself as a reluctant but benevolent caretaker of war orphans that have been left to die. In the tone of a missionary aid-worker, she tells us – as we have seen above – how everything changed after she took over the orphanage in Aintoura and explains how “clean” and “well-fed” the children were now. She even employed the

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<sup>138</sup> In 2015, Nigol Bezjian also made a documentary about the Aintoura Orphanage: *After this Day* (Armenia/Lebanon/Turkey/USA, 2015), for which he interviewed me early Spring 2015.

<sup>139</sup> You can watch Fethiye Çetin's film *Habab Çeşmeler* (Istanbul, 2011) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m40A8sG3o2>. For more information on *Where Fire Has Struck* (An Exhibition on the 20th Anniversary of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey), which took place from 10 March to 22 April 2011, see [http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites\\_detail.asp?ac=45](http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/activites_detail.asp?ac=45) (Last accessed: 12.08.2017). For more information about Nigol Bezjian's film *I left my Shoes in Istanbul* (Beirut/Istanbul, 2012), see <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/18511/do-not-compel-me-to-sing> (last accessed 14.08.2017).

<sup>140</sup> Halide Edib Adivar, *Memoirs*, 427-428.

Montessori method to help the children to overcome their traumatic experiences, she stresses. How did Adivar learn about the Montessori educational methods already in 1916, when Maria Montessori had published her first book in English in 1913? My query to the Montessori archives did not reveal much; an inquiry to the Montessori foundation, which organizes international education congresses, was more revealing. Maria Montessori had indeed invited teachers from all over the world to participate in the '1913 International Montessori Training Course' in Rome. However, there were no Turkish teachers present at the course. My next step was to re-read Adivar's memoirs to see whether she had any contact with foreign teachers as early as the years 1913-1915. The only ones we know of are the Quaker woman Isabel Fry (who also did not participate in the training course and followed a different educational movement) and her old teachers at Scutari – none of whom were in Rome in 1913 to our knowledge. Why and how Adivar had got her hands on the Montessori book remains a mystery. Her old college did not own any copies of it.

Meanwhile, I was invited to conduct research at the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute in Yerevan as the first scholar from Turkey. It was there that I stumbled upon Harutyun Alboyadjian's testimony and I convinced his daughter Anjela Alboyadjian to give me an interview, which confused me a great deal. Although Harutyun Alboyadjian remembered Halide Edib Adivar, he did not remember her being at Aintoura full-time or for any special classes. According to his daughter, and to his testimony given to the oral historian Verjine Svaslian, Aintoura was organized like an army base – which fits the character of its main benefactor, Cemal Pasha. There were no special classes, and as for Montessori, neither his daughter nor the oral historian Verjine Svaslian, who had interviewed Harutyun Alboyadjian for her book *The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eye-Witness Survivors*, remembers hearing about her. I went back to Halide Edib Adivar's memoirs and suddenly had difficulties verifying exactly when and for how long she stayed at Aintoura. At one point she writes that she stayed there for six months. Exactly which six months these were we cannot find out from her memoirs. The information is blurry and the narrative jumps. I re-read her memoirs looking for references to Armenians in general and found that the emotional tone of her narrative suddenly changes when she remembers meeting the famous Armenian composer Gomidas. At this point, her words are full of hatred and contempt. This contrast, between her describing the Armenian children of the orphanage as musical and well-behaved and the Armenian composer Gomidas as evil and a thief of Turkish folklore, raises red flags.

The reader of her memoirs does not know exactly where Edib lived while writing the text. I found out that she was living in the guest room “of a dear English friend” and began to wonder whether this “English friend” might be the previously mentioned Quaker woman Isabel Fry (1869–1958). This led me to Fry’s personal archives, which – in turn – added another dimension to understanding Halide Edib Adivar’s life story. Indeed, Fry’s diaries shed much light on why Halide Edib Adivar wrote her memoirs and which audience she had in mind in doing so. Adivar had already met Isabel Fry in 1910 – an encounter that Fry describes at length in her diaries. From Isabel Fry’s diary entries for the years 1910 to 1928, I was able to reconstruct the motivation for Halide Edib Adivar to take up her work at the orphanage. In fact, she tried to use it as leverage to obtain political support in Great Britain after the war when she was ousted from Turkey by Kemal Mustafa Atatürk. Still, I was puzzled at the contradiction between what I read in her memoirs and what I found in Isabel Fry’s diaries. These diaries present Adivar as being motivated by pure self-interest in positioning herself as a future policymaker in post-war Turkish politics and not by any kind of humanitarian sentiments. It was only by working back and forth between her memoirs, the private letters that she wrote to Isabel Fry and her former teachers (I found these in the archives of the American School for Girls in Istanbul at Columbia University in New York) and the testimony of Harutyun Alboyadjian that I was able to read and understand her personal narrative about Aintoura within the complex social and political context in which it was produced.

Already in 1909, in a letter to her English friend the Quaker Isabel Fry she describes the Young Turk regime “as just and firm” and holds it a necessity that Anatolia be taken over by the “Turanist movement” in order to restore “a primitive Turkish nation clean of Byzantine, Levantine and Islamic influences [...]” Adivar clearly believed that Anatolia was the rightful homeland of the Turkish nation. During her longer stays in England in the years 1909-1911, she often spoke of her political views and presented Turkish nationalism as an alternative to Islam that could – if it distanced itself from Islam and freed itself from other influences – become a major civilizing force in all Turkic lands and all over the Middle East.<sup>141</sup> As the “first [Turkish] woman to come to England,” Adivar made quite an impression on Fry, who circulated in

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<sup>141</sup> Halide Edib Adivar, in a letter to Isabel Fry (1910), as quoted in Isabel Fry’s personal diary. She also gave a speech to the Balkan Committee at the House of Commons, where she impressed the members with her “eloquence” and “passion,” as related to us in Isabel Fry’s diary entries for 23-28 May 1909, Isabel Fry Papers.

government circles and the upper echelons of British society.<sup>142</sup> Heralding her as the “ideal woman to do this pioneering work,” her English friends had high hopes for her future. When Adivar returned to Turkey at the end of 1911, she quickly arranged for Isabel Fry to follow her and help her with the restructuring of the school system for girls in Istanbul, an endeavor that did not end successfully. With a heavy heart and doubts about the Turkish mentality, Fry returned to England.<sup>143</sup> After major arguments with the education minister of the time, Şükrü Bey, Adivar aligned herself with another powerful figure in the Turkish movement. At the outbreak of the war, she followed Cemal Pasha to Syria, where she restructured the entire school system. Well-aware of what was happening to the Armenians – she describes Anatolia as “a land full of aching hearts and torturing remembrances” – it is even more striking to see that she sided with her political ideals; she insisted that everyone at the time was “afflicted by politics, translated by politics.” There are no regrets over the genocidal policies of the regime in any of her writings post-1916, just worries that these policies will affect the future of the Turkish nation.<sup>144</sup>

Adivar’s memoirs give a clue to her future aspirations.<sup>145</sup> She wrote them (in English) in her old friend’s house after being spurned in Turkey by none other than Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Where else could she have gone than Isabel Fry’s house, where everything had begun – the place where all her hopes of becoming “a pioneering woman” and making history were first conceived when she went to England during her first exile in 1909? Only in Fry’s house could she possibly write about “the context surrounding [her] political birth.”<sup>146</sup> Her audience – Fry – was an influential English educator with direct connections to the British government and with high opinions of Adivar (then still Edib). The Armenian massacres and her role in Turkifying war orphans was at the time not a delicate matter. As the Istanbul-Armenian poet Zareh Khrakhuni wrote at the time, it was a matter of “history.”<sup>147</sup> Nevertheless, Fry – a pacifist by religious conviction – would not have appreciated an overt denial of the massacres of the Armenians. We learn of Adivar’s feelings about the Armenians from her description of the great composer Gomidas, a good

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<sup>142</sup> Diary entry in Isabel Fry’s diary, 28 May 1909, Isabel Fry Papers.

<sup>143</sup> Beatrice Curtis Brown, *Isabel Fry 1869-1958, Portrait of a Great Teacher*, 20.

<sup>144</sup> Hülya Adak reference to recent book

<sup>145</sup> Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: the Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* (Cambridge, 1987), 61ff.

<sup>146</sup> Luisa Passerini, *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy, 1968* (Hannover & London, 1996), 24.

<sup>147</sup> The original poem:

“Their totem was wolf  
And ours was lamb  
Here is the issue  
The rest is history.”

As cited in Rubina Perroomian, *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey after 1915: the Metamorphosis of the Post-Genocide Armenian Identity as Reflected in Artistic Literature* (Yerevan, 2008), 9.

friend of her then husband, who with a group of comrades had saved Gomidas from persecution in 1915.

### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

This chapter has deliberately engaged different perspectives and scales of historical analysis. It has contained tensions and contradictions that slowly unravelled as my narrative unfolded.<sup>148</sup> It does so in a way that mirrors my own research journey. I have described the general situation of war orphans in Greater Syria during World War One, and the emergence of child-centered social policies in the Young Turk regime. While every major Ottoman city had orphanages (which continued to operate during the war), the history of the Aintoura orphanage presents us with a special case. Tracing its history is important in as much as it is a framing story about the end of a multi-ethnic empire and the emergence of modern Turkey. The exchanges between Adivar and the military governor of Syria, Cemal Pasha, about the violence among the children at the orphanage and their plans to bring peace through Turkification tell us much about the post-genocidal memories of both the victims (the children) and the perpetrators (the Young Turks), and about how these leading figures in the Turkish movement intended to deal with memories of the genocide. Whether they acted in concert in all they did at Aintoura and acted together in the crime of genocide are questions that remain open. However, what we do know is that, for them, Turkishness was a concept that was – as we have seen – at once inclusive – every child whether Armenian or Kurdish was forcibly accommodated – but also very exclusionary in that it experimented with concepts of racial superiority that carried overtones of whiteness. Aintoura became a laboratory in which to test their theories on how to civilize different ethnic groups and how to make them live together harmoniously under the leadership of Turks.

I have also tried to answer the question of what role Turkish women played during the Armenian genocide. Halide Edib Adivar is just one example of such a woman. At this point, we do not have enough historical evidence to paint a conclusive picture of how Turkish women participated in these crimes against humanity. However, Halide Edib Adivar's life story is clearly that of a Turkish woman who found herself in a particular historical moment in which she could have

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<sup>148</sup> On the question of how contradictions are highlighted by taking silences into consideration, also see Luisa Passerini's chapter "Memories between Silence and Oblivion," in *Memory and Utopia: The Primacy of Inter-Subjectivity* (London, 2003).

made the right choice. In Brecht's words, she could have said no.<sup>149</sup> In her memoirs, we read how Armenian orphans were assimilated and groomed to become good citizens in post-war Turkey. She did this with Cemal Pasha, one of the three pashas held responsible for the wholesale slaughter of the Armenian nation during World War One. As the *New York Times* wrote already in 1926, "Cemal Pasha and Halide Edib [Adivar] spoke the same language and understood one another's point of view perfectly [...]. The subtle mentality of the Turkish gentleman is revealed in the Turkish lady. She makes her excuses with consummate skill."<sup>150</sup> I agree.

It has been said that "the woman writer who trespasses onto the territory of war fiction transgresses any taboos."<sup>151</sup> But did Adivar really transgress any taboos? I am not so sure any more. I now read her memoirs with much apprehension. I read them as a successful myth of war and genocide crafted by a talented writer who happened to be a woman. So, the question remains: why was she not held accountable? I believe, it was *because* she was a woman. And because she was a talented writer who could write a best-selling story. When the opportunity presented itself, she, like the protagonists of my next chapter, effectively convinced her audience of her innocence. Make no mistake, it was for a Western audience that she wrote her memoirs. And her Western audience was in awe of her story: an educated Turkish woman who fought side by side with men under the banner of nationalism; a Muslim who threw off her veil and divorced her first husband, spoke impeccable English and travelled freely around the world. What we read in her memoirs about Aintoura, however, is fiction. By casting herself in the role of the humanitarian, Adivar deflected any questions about her role in the Armenian genocide and she did so in the name of the nation. "The blood of the dominant race was in her veins," the *New York Times* article of 1926 concludes:

"Today Halide is under the necessity, therefore, of making the best case she can for her fellow countrymen. [...] Armenian massacres helped her diplomacy [...]. The Armenians have been killed. The Greeks have been deported. Both of these embarrassments have been eliminated from territory which they have owned and occupied for centuries before the Turks appeared on the scene. The Turk is now left to himself. What is he making of this life?"<sup>152</sup>

In the following chapter, I will take up the question of what the Turk is making of this life and focus on several memoirs written by Ottoman government officials after the war and during the

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<sup>149</sup> Here I refer to Berthold Brecht's 1930 play *He says yes, he says no*.

<sup>150</sup> P.W. Wilson, "Halidé Edib's Career an Honor to her Sex and Race," 6 June 1926, *New York Times*.

<sup>151</sup> Miriam Cooke, "(Wo)man: Retelling the War Myth," in *Gendering War Talk*, edited by Miriam G. Cooke and Angela Woollacott (Princeton, 2014), 206.

<sup>152</sup> P.W. Wilson, "Halidé Edib's Career an Honor to her Sex and Race."

occupation of Istanbul by the Allies. I will focus on how Turks reckoned with what had happened to the Armenians. Silence and denial will continue to frame my narrative as much as they have done in the present chapter. And while we will continue to hear about massacres and orphans left to die, we will also find out about another dimension of the Armenian genocide: economics.





## CHAPTER TWO

### PLUNDERING AND CONFESSIONS: THE 1915 GENOCIDE IN PARLIAMENTARY RECORDS AND IN THE POST-WAR OTTOMAN PRESS (1918–1919)<sup>153</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

“These mountains haven’t witnessed this much calamitous misery since their creation. This journey, which lasted four days, brutally showed me how wild and relentless so-called human beings could be, so I was scared and felt ashamed to be a member of mankind. The decisions and practices of the Union and Progress government regarding the Armenian people seemed unbelievable to me. What I heard at that time seemed exaggerated [...]. This bloody picture, which I thought of as an exaggeration by my Armenian friends of their concerns and complaints concerning incidents that I didn’t believe at first, came alive in my mind as an absolute truth when I went to visit my sister, who was living in Aleppo in a hotel [...].”<sup>154</sup>

writes Hasan Vasfı Kızıtaşı in Summer 1919. During the war, his duty was to set up an infrastructure in the Syrian regions for those Armenians who had remained alive after the death marches. He observed their suffering and their abandonment to death during their inflicted exile around Aleppo, an area controlled by Cemal Pasha and intimately known by Halide Edib. His is one of few testimonies by Ottoman Turkish state officials that describe the Armenian genocide first-hand. Their testimonies were published in various Istanbul newspapers during the years 1918–1919 just before the Turkish courts-martial in the spring of 1919.

During the years 1919–1921, Turkey held more than 60 trials in an attempt to prosecute war criminals, including accusations of deportations and mass killings of Armenians. In this chapter, I want to draw attention to the period immediately before these trials started. In current scholarship this period is often overlooked, but it is an extremely important one in terms of localized discussions about the Armenian massacres in parliamentary debates, the Istanbul press, and in the memoirs of statesmen and testimonies by regional leaders like Hasan Vasfı Kızıtaşı. I will present a snapshot of the debates in the last Ottoman Parliament and of newspaper articles from October 1918 to February 1919, starting with the closure of the Ottoman parliament and continuing up to the beginning of the Turkish courts-martial in the spring of 1919. I will discuss

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<sup>153</sup> This chapter was published in a shorter and revised version as: Suzan Meryem Rosita Aljadeeah and Ali Sait Çetinoğlu, “The 1915 Genocide in the Post-war Ottoman Press and in Parliamentary Records (1918–1919),” in *Mass Media and the Genocide of the Armenians: One Hundred Years of Uncertain Representation* (2016): 146–179. I want to thank Ali Sait Çetinoğlu for asking me to co-author this chapter and letting me use it as one of the chapters in the present dissertation. Note: If not otherwise stated, all translations in the text were done by Serdar Koçman and Niko Uzunoglu.

<sup>154</sup> *Alemdar* newspaper, 19 June 1919.

demands for justice in parliament through the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry and in the local press by (1) presenting excerpts from three memoirs by Ottoman Turkish state officials published in various Istanbul newspapers during the years 1918–1919; and (2) by presenting selected newspaper articles that dealt with the question of who was to blame for what, at the time, were called the Armenian Massacres. By ‘time-stamping’ the last public debates on these ‘crimes against humanity’ through a historically-embedded survey of these sources, I hope to show that not only was there an awareness of these crimes and a collective attempt to find and prosecute the persecutors after WWI, but also that denial, or what I suggest calling a ‘culture of silence,’ is actually a product of the Republican era and very much intertwined with Turkey’s nation-building project.

In recounting, and essentially remembering what happened to the Armenians and other Christian minorities during the war years, these discussions and testimonies reveal not only how the Genocide was executed and who participated in the massacres but also who benefitted from these genocidal measures. We hear of looting, property confiscation and the rise of a powerful new merchant class that profited from taking over the commerce and trade of non-Muslims who were henceforth prohibited from exercising their professions, or had been killed or disappeared. In the previous chapter, memories of the genocide and atrocities were considered from the perspective of the victims in their encounters with the perpetrators and the attempts by the latter to turkify genocide orphans. In this chapter, the focus will be on the perpetrators, bystanders and rescuers recounting and accounting for these crimes – for the last time – in public. In their accounts the focus is on the homogenization of the Anatolian landscape by killing, massacring and deporting unwanted Ottoman subjects. The emphasis in these accounts is on explaining how and to what end these policies were implemented. Here, we hear how Turanist ideologies were used to justify genocidal policies and Islamist formulas were employed to incite people to participate in or support them. While Halide Edib speaks of how “firm and just” the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) regime was, the state officials who we will encounter in this chapter question the legality of the CUP regime and its policies of cleansing Anatolian lands. In a way, we see Edib’s wishes for the “Turanist movement” to restore “a primitive Turkish nation clean of Byzantine, Levantine and Islamic influences” executed (and questioned) in this chapter.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Also see my discussion in Chapter One, for example, p. 46.

In recent years, scholars have discussed these policies and introduced the concept of social engineering to explain the broad scope of policies ranging from marginalization, deportation, forced assimilation and population exchanges to planned massacres and genocidal extermination of certain ethnic groups in the former Ottoman territories. Uğur Ümit Üngör, for example, explains that the nationalist mind-set of the Young Turk social engineers allowed them to equate certain ethnicities with disloyalty, and asserts – like Ayhan Akter – that in the Young Turks' eyes certain ethnicities were considered “Turkifiable” while others, like the Armenians, Greeks and Jews, were deemed “non-Turkifiable.”<sup>156</sup> In a more recent book entitled *The Making of Modern Turkey*, Uğur Ümit Üngör goes one step further and claims that the population politics of the Young Turks, with whom he also equates the succeeding Atatürk regime, were aimed at homogenizing and Turkifying the Anatolian landscape.<sup>157</sup> Drawing on a recent study by Fuat Dündar, who maintains that statistics played a key role in the social engineering policies of the Young Turks, thus highlighting the fact that new Lebensraum had to be created for the Balkan Muslims after the Balkan Wars of 1912 – 1913, Üngör argues that these homogenization policies found their continuation in the Second Republic, or what he calls the second Young Turk era through the attempted eradication of non-Turkish groups, like the Kurds, or the forced assimilation of these groups through authoritarian state discourse.<sup>158</sup>

Many scholars have also argued that the wide-spread participation of local populations for these genocidal measures was garnered by the promise spoils and plunders.<sup>159</sup> Scholarship on the economic dimension of the Armenian genocide has grown considerably during the last years and has given us insights into not only the mind-sets of the ruling elites but also to why the local Turkish and Kurdish people had economic incentives to participate/become implicated in these genocidal crimes. Uğur Ümit Üngör and Mehmet Polatel, Ali Sait Çetinoğlu, Nevzat Onaran, Taner Akçam and Ümit Kurt, among others, have written on the fate of Armenian (and Greek) properties.<sup>160</sup> The consensus among these scholars is that the state-orchestrated plundering and

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<sup>156</sup> Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Seeing like a Nation-State: Young Turk Social Engineering in Eastern Turkey, 1913–50,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 10.1 (2008): 15-39 and Ayhan Akter, “Homogenising the Nation, Turkifying the Economy: The Turkish Experience of Population Exchange Reconsidered,” in *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey*, 2003, 79-95.

<sup>157</sup> Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 142 & 252ff.

<sup>158</sup> Fuat Dündar, *Crime of Numbers*, (New Brunswick, 2010).

<sup>159</sup> Ümit Kurt, “Legal and official plunder of Armenian and Jewish properties in comparative perspective: the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 17.3 (2015): 306.

<sup>160</sup> For an overview over recent scholarship, please read the excellent summary by Bedross Der Matossian, “The Taboo within the Taboo: The Fate of ‘Armenian Capital’ at the End of the Ottoman Empire,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [Online Submission]. Available here <http://ejts.revues.org/4411> (Last accessed: 31 July 2017). Also see Mehmet Polatel, “İttihat Terakki’den Kemalist Döneme Ermeni Malları” [Armenian properties from the Union

confiscation of Armenian (and Greek) properties has led to the creation of new economic classes and in the strengthening of Turkish control over Anatolia.<sup>161</sup>

From the transformation of the Anatolian human landscape and Ottoman economy, I want to shift the focus to the memory landscape of post-war Istanbul and show that the “crimes against humanity” did not go unnoticed in the local press, government bodies and minds of state officials. This gives us the possibility to debate why and how it was possible for people to become silent about them in the following decades. In the previous chapter and in my introduction, questions regarding an extension of (cultural) genocidal practices well into the Republican times were raised. Where we spoke of Turkification of the minds and people of Anatolia in the previous chapter and of how the Great War is remembered in my introduction, this present chapter helps us to look at the question of who benefitted from these crimes and what happened in the immediate aftermath of the war. While the victims rarely blame the Turkish people for the massacres – as we have seen in the case of the orphans at the Aintoura orphanage and as we will see in the survivor accounts presented here – the debates in the Istanbul press and testimonies of state officials clearly point to those who benefitted.

#### *DISCUSSIONS IN THE OTTOMAN PARLIAMENT AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMISSION OF INQUIRY*

The massacres of the Armenians and their near-extermination by the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), commonly referred to as Young Turks, was questioned and discussed widely in post-war Istanbul. There is no question that this search for the guilty parties was influenced by the occupation of Istanbul by the Allies and the imminent Turkish courts-

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and Progress to the Kemalist periods], *Toplum ve Kuram* 3 (2010), 113–152. Uğur Ümit Üngör and Mehmet Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction: the Young Turk seizure of Armenian property* (London, 2011); Ali Sait Çetinoğlu, “Foundations of Non-Muslim Communities: The Last Object of Confiscation,” *International Criminal Law Review* 14.2 (2014): 396–406; Nevzat Onaran, *Emvali Metruke Olayı: Osmanlı’da ve Cumhuriyet’te Ermeni ve Rum Mallarının Türkleştirilmesi* [The issue of abandoned properties: The Turkification of Armenian and Greek Orthodox properties in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic] (Istanbul, 2010) and *Cumhuriyet’te Ermeni Ve Rum Mallarının Türkleştirilmesi (1920-1930)* [Turkification of Armenian and Greek Properties during the Republic] (Istanbul, 2014); Taner Akçam and Ümit Kurt, *The Spirit of the Laws: the Plunder of Wealth in the Armenian Genocide* (London, 2015).

<sup>161</sup> Ümit Kurt makes an convincing argument comparing state-organized plunder of Armenian properties during the Armenian Genocide and Jewish properties during the Holocaust and found that a “series of laws and decrees as well as complex bureaucratic mechanisms were devised in the Ottoman-Turkish Republican and Nazi Germany periods concerning the administration of the belongings left behind by the deported Armenians and Jews.” In Ümit Kurt, “Legal and official plunder of Armenian and Jewish properties in comparative perspective: the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 17.3 (2015): 317. Also see Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: 2005), 89ff.

martial.<sup>162</sup> In the Ottoman parliament the questions of why and how were raised repeatedly by the Christian members of parliament. Their argument was that the Committee of Union and Progress needed a holy war (Jihad) fatwa by the Caliph to ensure the mass participation of Muslims in the war. After much debate in the parliament, a deputy from Divaniye, Fuad Bey, entered a motion containing ten articles on October 28, 1918 asking the Supreme Court to put former government members on trial. This motion was accepted and the first inquiry into the subject was started with the establishment of a commission of inquiry (Fifth Branch).<sup>163</sup> Very quickly, lawsuits against those responsible were filed and trials began to take place.

In this spirit, in the session on November 4, 1918, Emmanuil Emmanuilidis, a member of Parliament from Aydın, the chief instigator of these debates, revealed that Halil Mentеше, the President of Parliament was among those cited for his responsibility in the government actions: “I want to emphasize that I feel sadness because of the position of Halil Efendi (Mentеше), who is one of the people cited, I don’t know how you can accept his presidency and at the same time pass judgment on these questions.”<sup>164</sup> Following his speech, Emmanuilidis Efendi proposed the election of a new president, but the proposal was rejected in a secret vote. He then proposed a motion containing eight articles, co-signed by Dimitriadis Efendi, a Member of Parliament from Çatalca, and Vangel Mimaroglu Efendi, another Member of Parliament from Izmir.<sup>165</sup> The

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<sup>162</sup> For Turks, the allied occupation of Istanbul – and possibly the loss of Istanbul – raised many concerns about the political future of Turkey. The question of the control over Istanbul, and Anatolia, was further complicated by post-war negotiations among the Allied powers who not only feigned interest in the safety of Ottoman Christians and but were especially looking to gain strategic control over the Bosphorus Straits. The postwar Allied occupation of Istanbul became an important trope in Turkey’s cultural history. Erdağ Göknar writes in his article “Reading Occupied Istanbul: Turkish Subject-Formation from Historical Trauma to Literary Trope,” that nearly hundred novels address the recurring trope of occupied Istanbul in Turkish literature and that “is the first act in the development of a secular master-plot that informs and explains the transition from late Ottomanism to Turkish nationalism [...]” See Erdağ Göknar, “Reading occupied Istanbul: Turkish subject-formation from historical trauma to literary trope,” *Culture, Theory and Critique* 55.3 (2014): 322ff & 332. Amy Mills writes that “[s]cholars understand the postwar armistice era as a transitional period from empire to nation-state. From the point of view of people living in that moment, however, the Ottoman Empire was collapsing, and the future sovereignty of Istanbul hung in the balance.” See Amy Mills, “The Cultural Geopolitics of Ethnic Nationalism: Turkish Urbanism in Occupied Istanbul (1918–1923),” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* (2017): 1180.

<sup>163</sup> Vahakn N. Dadrian and Taner Akçam, *Tebcir ve Taktil* [Deportation and Massacre] (Istanbul, 2008), 20–21.

<sup>164</sup> Emmanouil Emmanuilidis, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Son Yıllar* [The Ottoman Empire’s Last Years] (Istanbul, 2014), 465. For a detailed analysis for Emmanuilidis’ view on the CUP leadership, see Vangelis Kechriotis, “On the Margins of National Historiography: Emmanouil Emmanuilidis” in *Untold Histories of the Middle East: Recovering Voices from the 19th and 20th Centuries*, edited by Amy Singer, Christoph K. Neumann, and S. Aksin Somel (London, 2011), 124–142. In his research on Halil Mentеше, Syed Tanvir Wasti argues, that Mentеше could be even considered the fourth men in the top leadership of the Committee of Union and Progress, besides Enver, Taalat, and Cemal Paşa. He also became Member of Parliament in the Republic of Turkey. See in Syed Tanvir Wasti, “Halil Mentеше—the Quadrumvir,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 32.3 (1996): 92–105.

<sup>165</sup> Here, I want to thank Ali Sait Çetinoğlu for discovering this document for our co-written book chapter: <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/TUTANAK/MECMEB/mmbd03ic05c001/mmbd03ic05c001ink011.pdf>

motion is a document of historical significance raising questions about criminal actions undertaken during the war:

“To the Speakership of the parliament;

As you know, in this country in the last five years a series of unprecedented and depressing incidents have been carried out in the name of [our] government.

1. A million people, including women and children, were killed and disappeared. Their only guilt was their Armenian identity.
2. 250,000 people of Greek origin, who had been citizens of this country for 40 centuries, were thrown out of the Ottoman borders before the war and their property was confiscated.
3. After the declaration of war, a further 500,000 Greeks from the Black Sea, Marmara, Dardanelles and Aegean coast regions, their vicinity, and from other regions were deported, exterminated and their belongings were plundered and confiscated.
4. Trade by non-Muslims was prevented. A powerful class monopoly took control over trade. In this way, entire groups of the population were robbed.
5. [Krikor] Zohrab Efendi and [Ohannes] Varteks Efendi, who were members of parliament, were killed.
6. Bad behavior by the noble Arab part of the population was not considered inappropriate, and executions took place.
7. Mobilization was declared. By this means labour battalions were established and 250,000 people in these battalions were killed by means of misery and hunger.
8. The government participated in the war for no reason. In addition to trying to avoid the blame for this terrible decision they actually surrendered part of this country to Bulgaria.

We ask:

What does the new government know about the perpetrators of these incidents? What does the new government think about the essence of the problem? When are you, the members of the new government, going to try to right the wrongs of our former leaders?

November 2, 1918. [Signed by] E. Emmanuilidis (Aydın), V. Mimaroglu (İzmir), Th. Tokinidis (Çatalaca).<sup>166</sup>

As can be seen from this motion, Ottoman parliamentarians were well aware of what had happened during war, and some of them, like Emmanuilidis Efendi, Tokinidis Efendi and V.

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<sup>166</sup> Emmanouil Emmanuilidis, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Son Yıllar*, 465–466.

Mimaroglu Efendi, were ready to accuse and prosecute state officials – and even fellow parliamentarians – for the killings and disappearance of one million Armenians, for the deportation of 750 000 Greeks and the confiscation of the latter's properties as well as for many other war crimes.<sup>167</sup> They were also not shy in pointing out the obvious, that many Muslims had enriched themselves from the misery and death of their fellow Ottoman citizens: the non-Muslims. The rise of a powerful new merchant class, so their argument goes, was only possible because the new owners were able to take over the commerce and trade of non-Muslims who were henceforth prohibited from exercising professions, or had been killed or disappeared.<sup>168</sup> On November 15, 1918, the Ottoman parliament was closed. According to the Greek newspaper *Empros* it was seen as being too much of a discussion platform, and elderly parliamentarians were considered useless. With the closure of the parliament in November 1918, the majority of these discussions moved to front pages of various Istanbul newspapers.

#### CONFESSIONAL MEMOIRS BY OTTOMAN STATESMEN IN THE POST-WAR ISTANBUL PRESS

After the defeat of the Ottoman State in the First World War, an unconditional ceasefire was signed on October 30, 1918, and the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) escaped to Germany, taking German submarines via Russia. Under these new circumstances, the censorship and pressure on newspapers in Istanbul lessened to some extent. Starting in November 1918, journalists started to write about the war defeat, about those who were responsible for it, and about the inhuman treatment and mass killings of the Armenian people during the war. Newspapers published many articles about the possibility of prosecuting the leaders and directors of the governing Committee for Unity and Progress (CUP), and raised important questions about what was to be defined as the first genocide of the century.

Foremost among them was the journal *Alemdar* and its contributor Refi Cevad Bey (Ulunay).<sup>169</sup> Ali Kemal<sup>170</sup> of the paper *Sabah* also wrote many articles against the Unionist Committee. Other

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<sup>167</sup> Vahakn N. Dadrian and Taner Akçam, *Judgment at Istanbul: the Armenian Genocide Trials* (New York, 2011), 35.

<sup>168</sup> Ayhan Aktar, "Son Osmanlı Meclisi ve Ermeni meselesi: Kasım–Aralık 1918" [Last Ottoman Parliament and the Armenian Issue: November–December 1918], *Toplum ve Bilim* 91 (2002): 353–382.

<sup>169</sup> Refi Cevad raised questions about the deportations of the Armenians in the journal *Alemdar*. Because of this, he was put on the list of traitors, which was called the 'One Hundred and Fifty Undesirable' (*Yüzellilikler*) after the Treaty of Lausanne on January 7, 1924. Three years later, the *Yüzellilikler* were stripped of their citizenship and rights to hold property (May 18, 1927). General amnesty was conferred on them by another decree on June 29, 1938. See Hakan Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to Secular state: Power Struggle in the early Turkish Republic* (Santa Barbara, 2011), 34 & 36; Ali Kemal Meram, "Yüzellilikler olayı: Ankara 150 kişilik bir liste yayınladı" [The Scandal of the One Hundred and Fifty Undesirable: A list was published in Ankara], *Taba Toros Arşivi*, File 326/Yüzellilikler.

papers too, such as *Aravod*, *Vakit*, *İctihad*, *Hadisat* and *Tasvir-i Efkar* paid attention to the issue of the Armenian Genocide, or what was called crimes against humanity at the time, and demanded justice.<sup>171</sup> Here, wide publicity was given to reports and eyewitness accounts from the Armenian-populated regions. This was done in parallel with news on the upcoming Istanbul trials of some of the perpetrators of the massacres. The most important memoirs are of those by Aleppo Governor Mehmet Celal Bey, Hasan Vasfı Kıztaşı (Hasan Amca) and Ahmet Refik (Altınay). Mehmet Celal Bey was governor (*vali*) in Aleppo and Konya, and he witnessed many events that took place during the Genocide. He was dismissed from his position for not obeying orders and for failing to implement the genocidal massacres of Armenians in his region. Hasan Amca's accounts are important, since his duty was to set up an infrastructure in the Syrian regions for those Armenians who had remained alive after the death marches. He observed their suffering and their abandonment to death during their inflicted exile around Aleppo, Damascus (Sham), Beirut, Haifa, Yafa, Akka, or Havran and he did his best to ease their terrible situation. His testimony is very important, as he was one of the few Ottoman officials who showed a humanitarian attitude. Ahmet Refik's testimony is equally as important, because he was in Eskişehir for some time, a region that was the main collecting point for Armenians being deported from the Western provinces of the Ottoman lands towards the Syrian Desert, and he also saw the deportation of local Armenians from around the Eskişehir region.

In his observations about the Armenian massacres, the Governor (*vali*) of Erzurum, Mehmet Celal Bey, comments that the events that were taking place stemmed from a policy of the central state administration. The Armenians were being repressed by the Kurds, and because of this they were forced to emigrate to secure places to live. Mehmet Celal Bey's testimony about the genocide was published in the newspaper *Vakit* between the dates of November 29 and December 12, 1919. He gives important information on his relations with Armenians and the

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<sup>170</sup> Ali Kemal died a cruel death at the hands of Nurettin İbrahim Paşa. Nazim Hikmet gives a passing reference to him in *Human Landscapes* in a conversation between Kazim and the Tartar-faced man: "See that tree near the bridge? [...] They hung Ali Kemal's body from one of those branches. They snuck him out of Istanbul in broad daylight – he was getting a shave in a barbershop in Beyoğlu – in 1922 [...]. 'Who was Ali Kemal?' 'A journalist in the pay of the English. He was a Caliph's man. Fat, wore glasses. His pen dripped blood, but dirty, stinking blood. Sometimes enemy pens open bigger, deeper wounds than Mausers.'" See Nazim Hikmet, *Human Landscapes*, 75. From historical sources we know that Ali Kemal was caught near the Tokatlıyan Hotel in a barber's shop on 6 November 1922 and was taken to İzmit, where a mob killed him. Nurettin İbrahim Paşa allegedly did this to impress Turkey's first prime minister, İsmet İnönü, who was planning to pass through İzmit by train on the way to the Lausanne Conference. A gallows was set up above a small tunnel near the station and the dead body of Ali Kemal was hung from it. Boris Johnson, a parliamentarian in the British Conservative Party who is nowadays known for supporting the BREXIT solution, is the grandson of Ali Kemal.

<sup>171</sup> For a comprehensive review of contemporary newspapers, see Ahmed Emin [Yalman], "The Development of Modern Turkey as Measured by its Press" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1914), 113ff.



central state administration during his governorship in Erzurum (Erzen-i Rum), Aleppo and Konya. As a state administrator, Celal Bey had been in contact with the Armenian communities long before 1915; here especially his duties in Erzurum are important. He points out that he undertook his position as governor of Erzurum just after the March 31, 1909 (April 13, 1909) massacres of Armenians in Cilicia. He gives some examples of the usurping of many Armenian properties by Hamidiye regiments, and emphasizes that the most important issue dividing the Armenians and the Kurds was the question of the lands confiscated from the Armenians by the Kurds:

“Kör Hüseyin Pasha, the head of the Haydaranlı Tribe, had invaded five or six villages in this way. A rebel named Shah Hüseyin Beyzade Haydar Bey controlled a large portion of the district. A huge land holding between Karakilise and Beyazıd, which I was hardly able to cross by car in four hours, was included in the property of one of the high-ranking officers of the Hamidiye cavalcade.”

For him, it was very clear that the lands confiscated by Hamidiye regiment commanders had belonged to Armenian peasants. In the following excerpt from his memoirs, Mehmet Celal Bey gives us insights into the social situation of the region, underlying his own intimate relations with all social and ethnic strata:

“I’ve been all over the province. I’ve been the guest of Kurd rulers in tents and of Armenians in villages. There is no township in the province of Erzurum where I haven’t visited and taken a rest for a day or two [...] There are Kurds who went to Istanbul or Smyrna to be porters or night watchmen [...] Armenians who went to Russia or America to trade.”

On the basis of his experiences during his two-year-duty in Erzurum, he says:

“Those who were closest to us among the non-Muslims and who were most available to accompany us were Armenians. [...] I knew many traders among the Armenians of Erzurum who have in their hearts much love for their country and are highly concerned about the future of our country. None of these men are alive today. Without exception, they all died ghastly deaths, either in the secluded places of Erzincan or in the deserts of Diyarbekir, surrounded by thorns.”

When Celal Bey was governor of Aleppo at the beginning of the First World War, he immediately started to question his orders to deport Armenians: “I presumed that no government would be able to exterminate its own subjects, its human capital and the largest wealth of the

country.”<sup>172</sup> He assumed that this was a measure to temporarily expel Armenians from the war zones as a war requirement, and he requested funds from the government for the purpose of lodging Armenians who were to be relocated to Der-eir- Zor. However, instead of funds they sent an officer with the title Director of Tribes and Immigrants, Şükrü Bey,<sup>173</sup> who was entrusted with deporting the Armenians with their children. This was in fact a means of bypassing Celal Bey,<sup>174</sup> who was dismissed for not carrying out the deportation orders. He tells us with astounding clarity:<sup>175</sup>

“I disobeyed the written order concerning the deportation of Armenians in my capacity as Governor, since I know there is no reason to evict and deport Armenians in the province of Aleppo, who surely did nothing wrong. This disobedience caused my transfer from Aleppo to Ankara, and to Konya three or four days later.”

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<sup>172</sup> Information in relation to Celal Bey is given in German diplomatic documents: German Consul (Aleppo) Rössler wrote the following before the Van rebellion on April 12: “After my return, Mr. Celal the governor of Aleppo notified the following. It is seen that in the Turkish government a current with a tendency to accept all Armenians as enemies or an unreliable group came to the fore.” The Governor commented on this change as a mischance for his country. Also see Wolfgang Gust, *Alman Belgeleri, Ermeni Soykırımı 1915-1916* [The Armenian Genocide 1915-1916 in German Official Documents] (Istanbul, 2012), 105.

<sup>173</sup> The General Directorate of Tribes and Immigrants is a bureaucratic organization which organized all the logistics of the Armenian deportation. Şükrü (Kaya) (1883–1959), who became the head of this organization in 1915 worked as the right-hand man of Talaat Pasha, the Minister of Internal Affairs. After the War of Independence (May 19, 1919–July 24, 1923), Şükrü (Kaya) was taken to Malta by the British, charged with playing a vital role in the killings of Armenians during the so-called deportations. He escaped his imprisonment in Malta early 1921 and joined the Kemalist forces in Anatolia in their struggle for national Independence. After the successful victory of the Kemalist forces led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Şükrü (Kaya) became Member of Parliament of the Menekşe region and then Minister of Internal Affairs in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey between the years 1923 and 1938. In this function he was charged with the resettlement of Kurds from the Dersim region and actively participated in the bombing of Dersim in 1935. He was a close confidante of Atatürk and frequently joined the latter’s legendary dinner table, at which most political decisions were discussed and made.

<sup>174</sup> Şükrü (Kaya), the General Director of Tribes and Immigrants, organized the deportation and was involved in it personally. Şükrü (Kaya) appointed Abdullah Nuri as the General Director of Tribes and Immigrants in Aleppo. Nuri was a fanatical Unionist and the brother of Yusuf Kemal Tengirşek. Tengirşek, who became the Minister of Justice in the Kemalist period. Yusuf Kemal was the member of the CUP who wrote the report on the Cilicia Massacre of 1909. He did not put the Cilicia Report by Babikyan, who was a member of the Ottoman parliament and was disliked by the Unionists, on the parliamentary agenda. Before Babikyan’s questionable death, he is quoted in Yusuf Kemal’s memoirs as saying the following to him: “You are going to be merciful to my children, Kemal, aren’t you?” See Yusuf Kemal Tengirşek, *Vatan Hizmetinde* [In the Service of the Homeland] (Ankara, 1981), 118. Abdullah Nuri was arrested after the war on a charge of genocide. Also see Taner Akçam, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu: İttihat ve Terakki’den Kurtuluş Savaşı’na* [Human Rights and the Armenian Question: From CUP to the Independence War] (Istanbul, 1999), 572–573.

<sup>175</sup> Information in relation to the dismissals is given in German documents: “Many Turkish high-level officers were dismissed because they did not accept the things which were done to Armenians.” German Consul of Aleppo, Rössler wrote the following to Celal Bey, who was one of the most important persons among these officers: “So far, he has not sent any Armenians from the province of Aleppo and he has guaranteed that they will stay calm,” Rössler made a prediction of the future: “The government wants to be a maverick here too.” See Gust *Alman Belgeleri, Ermeni Soykırımı 1915-1916*, 21.



Illustration 11: Armenian Refugees in Aleppo.

In a letter sent to the government, Celal Bey says the following:

“The Armenian race constitutes a significant part of our country’s population. Armenians hold a significant part of the general wealth and they run half of the country’s commercial activities. Trying to destroy them will cause damage to the country, which cannot be healed for centuries. If all our enemies sat down and thought for a month, they couldn’t find a more damaging thing for us.”

After no reply, Celal Bey decided to go to Istanbul, thinking he could explain the situation. There, he understood that he had obtained a promise to stop the deportation of Armenians from Konya and so he returned to Konya. On his way there, he witnessed the following:

“I will never forget the tragic picture I saw in Ilgın. There was a helpless person both of whose legs had been cut off at the top among the hundreds of women, men, young and old persons who had been dispatched to the station and left outdoors waiting for the train for days. A piece of leather was tied around this helpless person’s backside and he had a pair of clogs on his hands and a shoe shining box hanging round his neck. He was earning his living by begging and shining shoes [...]. This unfortunate person was not able to understand the reason he was being deported.”

Celal could not believe that a legless Armenian seemed dangerous to the Unionists. But the nightmare continued:

“When I arrived in the capital [Konya], I saw the Konya Armenians being brought to the train station. Moreover, thousands of Armenians brought from provinces such as İzmit, Eskişehir and Karahisar were living in an open space, inside things looking like tents made from quilts, clothes and felts, living in miserable conditions and the sight of them was heart-breaking. I couldn’t do anything for those brought from other places. I sent the ones from Konya to their homes. I started to provide a stipend from the refugee funds for the others.”

Celal Bey talks about Armenian exiles sent to Konya from other provinces because Konya was another centre in which Armenian exiles were rounded up. He summarizes his position in these words:

“My status in Konya closely resembled that of a man standing on the edge of a river with no rescue equipment. The river was flowing with blood instead of water, and thousands of innocent children, blameless old men, weak women and strong youngsters were streaming along in this flow of blood toward nothingness. I rescued those that I could get a grip on with my hands, my nails, but others floated away, never to return.”

Because of the delay to the convoys, the General Director of Tribes and Immigrants, Şükrü Bey, came to Konya. Among those who came to administer the exiling was Hamal Ferit,<sup>176</sup> who was one of the leaders of the Special Organization<sup>177</sup> (*Teshkilat-ı Mahsusa*) acting on behalf of the Committee of Union and Progress. Celal Bey was no longer governor and was removed from

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<sup>176</sup> Mahmut Ferit Hamal (1887–1951) is one of the figures symbolic of the continuity between the Unionists and the Kemalists. After he had graduated from law school, Hamal worked as a clerk and member of various courts, and as deputy prosecuting attorney in Istanbul. After 1908, he worked as a party secretary of the Union and Progress Party in Emirgan, Istanbul, and in August 1914, when Germany declared war against Russia, he was one of the groups of the Istanbul Union and Progress Party secretaries who had the authority to secretly organize the gangs of the Special Organization at the Russian border. In the summer of 1915, Hamal was appointed as a political secretary in Konya and organized the deportation there. He was exiled to Malta at the end of the war but soon after was released by the British and returned to Turkey. In the Kemalist period, Hamal continued his political career in the Republican People’s Party. In 1939, he was the Istanbul delegate to the Great Congress of the Republican People’s Party; in 1942, he was the leading commission member dealing with the Wealth Tax, which was one of the final instruments of the economic and cultural genocide and targeted non-Muslim minorities during the Republic. Because of his success in the Wealth Tax commissions, he was chosen as a member of parliament for the Republican People’s Party in 1943. Quoted in Ayhan Aktar, ed., *Yorgo Hacıdimitriadis’in Aşkale Günlüğü 1943* [Yorgo Hacıdimitriadis’ Aşkale Diary of 1943] (Istanbul, 2011), 113–125. I have elaborated on Hamal’s biography to show how political biographies during the war years continued well into the Republican era. Erik J. Zürcher’s scholarship on modern Turkey can be credited with pointing out the continuation of Unionist political careers (and ideology) to the Republic. See, for example, Erik J. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement, 1905-1926* (Leyden, 1984). Also see Taner Akçam, *From Empire to Republic: Turkish nationalism and the Armenian genocide* (New York, 2004).

<sup>177</sup> *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* was a widespread secret organization under the orders of Enver Pasha, with the aim of carrying out irregular warfare actions within and outside the Ottoman Army. It organized and carried out crimes such as ethnic cleansing against non-Muslims. For more information, see Polat Safi, “History in the Trench: The Ottoman Special Organization–Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa Literature,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 48.1 (2012): 89-106 and Yücel Yiğit, “The Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa and World War I,” *Middle East Critique* 23.2 (2014): 157-174.

Konya. The Member of Parliament for Konya stated that dispatching Armenians complied with the national mission. Celal Bey replied with the following words: ‘Which national mission...? Calling these kinds of cruelties the national mission is the worst slander and insult to the nation.’ Celal Bey continued – against all odds – to help the Armenians. Approximately thirty thousand Armenians who were brought from other locations were able to stay in Konya; and the Armenians from Konya itself were not deported.

The following two excerpts are again from Celal Bey’s memoirs as published in the *Vakit* newspaper in December of 1919. They are significant in that they ask many important questions that might never truly find answers. Their historical significance cannot be underestimated and they clearly show that (1) while local governors were able to avoid taking part in the atrocities for short periods of time, the Genocide was premeditated by officials on the state level and was followed through until the end goal was achieved; (2) no one was safe, not even close friends of officials; the Armenian nation and race was the target, and this did not allow for anyone to be spared.

“I went to the workplace of the officer<sup>178</sup> who was to replace me and while travelling from Akşehir<sup>179</sup> and Ilgın, he ordered the deportation of Armenians and the group he sent off was executed as I heard later. [...]. The government of that period reasoned as follows: “The Russians will attack the Sakarya valley and the Armenians will help them”. Therefore, they said, ‘As a precaution, we extended the deportation to Ankara, Konya and Eskişehir.’”

[...] Rightly or wrongly, if it was deemed necessary to deport Armenians from their locations in order to save the country, was this the way to carry it out? Did the government that gave the order to deport the Armenians to [Der-eir-] Zor think about the problem of sheltering these poor people without food and housing them among the nomadic Arab clans? If they thought about this, then I ask, ‘How much food did they send and how many houses did they build there in order to accommodate the immigrants? And what was the purpose of deporting Armenian people who had lived a sedentary life for centuries to the [Der-eir-] Zor Desert, which does not have trees, water or construction materials?’”

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<sup>178</sup> Mehmet Hüsni Zâdî was discharged from the Konya governorship in October 1918 and retired. In the Kemalist period he was appointed member of the administrative body of the General Directorate of Monopolies and as member of the administrative body of the National Reassurance Insurance Company. He died in an elevator accident when he was a member of the Board of Consultants of the Istanbul Municipality. See in Ali Çetinkaya, *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi ve Mülkiyeliler* (Istanbul, 1968), 272.

<sup>179</sup> Mr. Ali Fehmi was in charge in Akşehir during the Armenian and Greek deportation. Çetinkaya writes that he was murdered near his tiny farm in Kartal, Istanbul, in May 1919. The reason for the murder could not be determined. See in Çetinkaya, *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi*, 376–377.



Illustration 12: Armenian Leaser Papazian looking at the remains of the dead in the Der-eir-Zor desert. Other Bones have been washed away by the Euphrat.

From this second excerpt, we learn about Krikor Zohrab Efendi and Ohannes Varteks Efendi, who were members of the Ottoman parliament and who were put on the death march:

“Zohrab Efendi and Varteks Efendi were sent to Aleppo under police escort in order to be dispatched to Diyarbakir. These two miserable men, who realized the destiny that was determined for them, were very sad. Many Muslim people appealed to me and to Cemal Paşa, who was in Aleppo at that time, demanding that Zohrab Efendi and Varteks Efendi be allowed to stay in Aleppo. These two men were my friends. It was not possible for me to send them to their death with my own hands. In particular, Zohrab Efendi was suffering from heart disease. I wrote to Istanbul<sup>180</sup> to ensure that they could stay in Aleppo. I never get an answer. I promised not to send them as long as I stayed in Aleppo, and I kept my promise. One day after my resignation, Zohrab Efendi and Varteks Efendi were sent off. These two wretched men were best friends of important people in the government of that period.”

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<sup>180</sup> Celal Bey sent a health certificate regarding Zohrab Efendi's stay in Aleppo for additional ten days because of his inability to travel to Istanbul (Sublime Porte 245 Ministry of Internal Affairs – Origin: Aleppo Cipher Office, Date of sending: June 14; date of arrival in the office: June 15). It reads as follows: “Zohrab Eefendi will be sent to Diyarbakir. Therefore, he was sent here under custody and he has an illness of shortness of breath so he cannot easily travel. This situation was understood as a result of a medical examination. Therefore, he will be kept here for ten days together with Varteks Efendi with the approval of Pasha, who is here now. Respectfully submitted, June 14. [Celal, on behalf of the Governor of Aleppo].” BOA (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivler [Ottoman State Archives]) DAH ŞF 14/36-8. Again my thanks to Sait Çetinoğlu for discovering this document.

More eyewitness testimony from Ottoman officials can be found in the memoirs of Hasan Vasfi Kızıtaşı (Hasan Amca). These were published in the newspaper *Alemdar* between June 19 and June 28, 1919. He had been assigned to dispatching and settling Armenians exiled to the area that was controlled by the Fourth Army under Cemal Paşa. Later, the Armenians did not forget Hasan Amca. At his funeral ceremony, which was held in the Osmanağa Mosque in Kadıköy on March 15, 1961, Hasan Amca's<sup>181</sup> relatives and his nearest journalist friends attended, together with many Armenians. At the funeral ceremony the then Armenian Patriarch, Karekin I. Khachadourian, loudly proclaimed, "We owe him a debt of gratitude. He saved us from hunger and misery during the war. If he had not been there, we would not be here now either." In his memoirs, Hasan Vasfi Kızıtaşı (Hasan Amca) openly states that the Unionists exiled Armenians to Syria with the sole purpose of exterminating them. However, the publication of the memoirs was left unfinished and *Alemdar* made a snap decision to stop their publication.<sup>182</sup>

His memoirs are invaluable in that they attribute the rise of a Muslim bourgeoisie during the First World War and in the immediate post-war years directly to the disappearance of the Christian merchant class during and after the Genocide. He had observed state bureaucrats taking their first steps in commerce. He recounts seeing them stealing small things from stores, but also distributing rights to purchase railway wagons. Corruption was opening up ways for some functionaries to easily become rich. They steadily developed into a commercial bourgeois class while getting rid of those who had previously been the commercial and industrial entrepreneurs: the Armenians. Often, bureaucrats active during the deportations later became merchants and entrepreneurs. It is clear that at first, Hasan Amca had not believed the rumors of the mass extermination of the Armenians in the Turkish Empire. When he visited his sister in Aleppo, he was overwhelmed with disbelief and guilt as we have seen in the excerpt at the beginning of this chapter. Describing his mission to help wretched people who had been deported from their home towns, Hasan Amca comes back to the wretched situation of the Armenians and the violence of their deaths:

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<sup>181</sup> Hasan Amca was an opponent of the Committee of Union and Progress and in the Kemalist period he was also an opponent of the Republican People's Party, the party Kemal Mustafa Atatürk founded. He lived in Istanbul, Sophia, and Athens until 1959, in hiding. In the 1950s, two books by Hasan Amca, who was working for the *Dünya* (*The World*) newspaper, were published with the following titles: *Unborn Freedom* and *Main Entrance of the Regular Army*. After *Unborn Freedom*, three additional books were planned but none of them were published. Hasan Amca lived the last two years of his life wrestling with illnesses and died in 1961 of cardiac insufficiency.

<sup>182</sup> *Ağos* newspaper, 23 April 2012.

“Suffering and the lack of necessities bring human beings to the level of animals. What does a human being feel when he sees and hears his fellow creatures eating grass, dead bodies and even their children? What words can he use to describe this feeling and effect?”<sup>183</sup>

Hasan Amca witnessed the death of refugees en masse every day. He notes that even the simplest disease resulted in mass deaths, since there was no medicine and there was no chance of medical attention. We know this also from Aram Andonian’s personal testimonies in *Der-eir-Zor*:<sup>184</sup>

“I preferred to sleep in the field that night. I could not stay. I saw a child choked by lice there. These billions of impure creatures that invaded the entire body of the innocent child from his fingernail scratches completely covered the corpse. I waited for the morning to come leaning against the trunk of a plane tree.”

Hasan Amca made an extraordinary effort to save many Armenians in little time, and he also transported a considerable number of Armenian exiles to safe places in the face of many administrative difficulties. However, the Istanbul government did not like this. In response to Hasan Amca’s statement that “the Committee is not aiming to provide for the settlement of the Armenian people and their lives but it is proposing to handle this issue by ethnic cleansing,”<sup>185</sup> there was an immediate intervention:

“The Ministry of Internal Affairs at once repeated its death command to the province: ‘Command of the Ministry of Internal Affairs: The settlement issue of deported Armenian refugees is among the duties of the government. The interventions of the Army’s commanders are not valid anymore. Therefore, the transportation of any Armenian refugee from one town to another will only be possible with the command and permission of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.’”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> *Alemdar* newspaper, 22 June 1919.

<sup>184</sup> Aram Andonian, (1875, Constantinople–December 23, 1952, Paris) was an Armenian journalist, historian and writer. He edited the Armenian journals *Lıys* [Light] and *Dzaghik* [Flower] and the newspaper *Surbandak* [Herald]. He then went on to serve in the department of military censorship of the Ottoman Empire. He was arrested by order of Interior Minister Talaat Pasha of the Ottoman Empire on the eve of April 24, 1915, and joined the large number of Armenian notables who were deported from the Ottoman capital. Andonian was deported to Çankırı. Halfway there, he returned to Ankara and was deported again to the camps in Ra’s al-ʿAyn and Meskene. However, he survived in Aleppo, living in the underground. When British forces occupied Aleppo, a low-level Turkish official, Naim Bey, collaborated with Aram Andonian in publishing his memoirs. *The Memoirs of Naim Bey* were published in 1920, and are sometimes referred to as the *Andonian Telegrams* or the “*Talaat Pasha Telegrams*.” The telegrams are purported to constitute direct evidence that the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1917 was state policy of the Ottoman Empire. They were introduced as evidence in the trial of Soghomon Tehlirian. From 1928 to 1951 Andonian directed the Nubarian Library in Paris, and succeeded in hiding and saving most of the collection during the German occupation of Paris. Other selected works by him: *Shirvanzade* [Biography of Alexander Shirvanzade] (Constantinople, 1911); *Badkerazard endardzak batmutiun Balkanean baderazmin* [Complete Illustrated History of the Balkan War], 5 vols. (Constantinople, 1912) *Ayn sev orerun* [Reminiscences of the Armenian Genocide] (Boston 1919); *The Memoirs of Naim Bey* (London, 1920).

<sup>185</sup> *Alemdar* newspaper, 28 June 1919.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*



The memoirs of Hasan Amca end at this point. The censor cut their publication. The narrative was left half-finished. Ahmet Refik Bey's memoirs were published in the İkdam Newspaper between December 17, 1918, and January 13, 1919, under the heading "Two Committees; Two Massacres."<sup>187</sup> Here, Ahmet Refik Bey argues that constitutionalism was an illusion, and summarizes the period of the Union and Progress government:

"Since the July 23rd [1908] incident the country has been under martial law. Constitutionalism exists only in name. The Constitution was trampled upon in every act. The government was not implementing justice and the law. In any case, its existence was illegal and illegitimate."<sup>188</sup>

He underlines the role of the Special Organization (Teşkilatı- Mahusa) in the Armenian Genocide:

"At the beginning of the war many gangs were sent to Anatolia from Istanbul. The gangs consisted of murderers and thieves who had been released from prisons. These people were trained for one week in the Department of Interior and were sent to the Caucasus border on the orders of the Special Organization. In the Armenian massacres, these gangs committed the most serious murders."

To what Ahmet Refik calls gangs of murders, we can also add army deserters that feature prominently in Nazim Hikmet's *Human Landscapes from my Country*, a work of poetry I referred to in my introduction. With war raging in the Ottoman empire for over a decade, and with farmers at the front as soldiers and agriculture not able to produce enough food even to feed the Ottoman armies, and industry unable to manufacture enough weapons,<sup>189</sup> the desertion rate among Ottoman soldiers was extremely high (compared to that of the Western powers) and can

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<sup>187</sup> Ahmet Refik was dismissed from the university during the university redundancies in 1934. The last years of his life were spent in poverty and misery.

<sup>188</sup> Ahmet Refik, *İki komite, İki kütâl* [Two Committees, Two Massacres] (Ankara, 1994), 20.

<sup>189</sup> As a comparison, the Ottoman empire produced in a year just 1 per cent of the coal the British empire produced, and even in colonial India the length of railway track was five times more than in the Ottoman empire. As a result, feeding and transporting the troops was an impossible task, and Ottoman soldiers often went on week-long marches from battlefield to battlefield without so much as a slice of bread, not to mention meat. Erik Zürcher, "What is different about the Ottoman War?," Keynote delivered at the *Not All Quiet on the Ottoman Fronts Conference*, April 2014, in the General Consulate of Germany, Istanbul. For academic articles about the subject, see Süleyman Özmucur and Şevket Pamuk, "Real Wages and Standards of Living in the Ottoman empire, 1489–1914," *The Journal of Economic History* 62.2 (2002): 293–321; Şevket Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I," *The Economics of World War I* (2009): 112; Erik-Jan Zürcher, "The Ottoman conscription system in theory and practice, 1844–1918," *International Review of Social History* 43.3 (1998): 437–449 and "Between Death and Desertion. The Experience of Ottoman Soldiers in World War I," *Turcica*, 28 (1996): 235–258.

be put at one in six.<sup>190</sup> We learn, for example, from survivor testimonies or memoirs that army deserters that were caught and put into army prison were often able to redeem themselves as guards on the Armenian death marches; one of the many literary examples is the historical novel *A Gift in the Sunlight: an Armenian Story* by Kay Mouradian.<sup>191</sup> The author's haunting description of her mother's survival of the Armenian genocide will never cease to shock us; or as Kafka would say, it is one of "those books that come upon us like ill-fortune and distress us deeply, like the death of one we love better than ourselves, like suicide."<sup>192</sup> Here, we follow her mother's story from the packing up of their household goods and provisions to the long death march, in which the author's mother loses her family members, one by one. While the story also tells us about an army officer who helps the family greatly during the march, we are terrified to find out that this good Turkish man and soldier is called back to the front lines (as soldiers and officers are scarce), thus leaving the family and the rest of the Armenian caravan in the hands of a bunch of brutal army deserters that are headed by two evil brothers.<sup>193</sup> Girls are raped and

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<sup>190</sup> Erik-Jan Zürcher, "What is different about the Ottoman War?," Keynote delivered at *Not All Quiet on the Ottoman Fronts Conference*.

<sup>191</sup> See Kay Mouradian, *A Gift in the Sunlight: An Armenian Story* (New York, 2005).

<sup>192</sup> When he was twenty years old, Kafka wrote this in a letter. As cited in Georg Steiner, *Language and Silence*, 65.

<sup>193</sup> The lack of military personnel resulted in drawing more and more civilians into the war, either send them to various frontlines or using them in "internal battlefields." Not seldom, convicts and criminals were released from prison and used as part of a gendarmerie or as members of a special organization, called Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa, both of which were responsible for much of the "resettlement policies" in the Ottoman empire. Taner Akçam writes in this context: "In the wake of their devastating defeat in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, the Unionist leaders, increasingly convinced that tolerating the Ottoman Christians would lead to national collapse, made a series of policy decisions aimed at the ethno-religious homogenization of Anatolia." (Taner Akçam, 2012: xv) The Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa, in his opinion, was the special organization that was charged with the demographic engineering policies in Anatolia by the Young Turks. He explains that after the Balkan wars the Greek Ottoman subjects of Thrace and the Aegean coastal provinces were the first to be targeted (and forced into expulsion to Greece) and that the Armenians, at the time still considered 'loyal subjects', were only considered a threat after the Russian armies advanced into Anatolia and took power over areas such as the Erzurum provinces (Ibid.: xvii and Chapter 4-8). Historical documents that are not cited in Akçam's book support his argument. The generally underused Jäckh Papers at Yale University archives give great insight into not only the mentality of the German war office and diplomatic corps in Istanbul but also into the mind-set of the Young Turks. Biographical note on Jäckh: Ernst Jäckh, a journalist and academic, was born in Urach, Germany. He promoted the German-Turkish Alliance (1908-1914), founded the German-Turkish Association (1912), and became professor of Turkish history at the University of Berlin (1914). Jäckh was a member of the diplomatic service during World War I. Margaret L. Anderson, who has recently started working on the German involvement in the Armenian Genocide and who also uses the Jäckh Papers, argues, however, that they should be used with caution as they are sometimes written for the very purpose of disclaiming Germany's involvement in the Armenian genocide (as discussed with Margaret L. Anderson during the *Not Everything Quiet on the Eastern Front Conference* in Istanbul held at Bilgi University, April 2014). While I agree that the reports that are sent from the German Ambassador, Hans Freiherr von Wangenheim, to the German war office in Berlin are in parts 'sanitized', the drafts of these reports and the correspondence in this collection are still very valuable to reconstruct the German official opinion on the – what they called – "Armenian extermination." What Anderson has overlooked and is extremely important are two short handwritten autobiographies, authored by both Enver Pasha and Talaat Pasha. Why they are in the Jäckh papers is open to speculation, my opinion, however, is that Jäckh, a close friend of both Talaat and Enver Pasha asked them to send them to him, to be sent to the German war office which trusted neither Talaat nor Enver Pasha. Taner Akçam's argument, then, is supported in the Jäckh papers, in which we can read that Talaat Pasha said in a meeting with the other ministers of the Young Turk government: "we need to create a Turkish bloc to ensure in future no interference from the Western powers in our internal affairs." Ernst Jäckh, who

stabbed to death (there are no able-bodied men or boys in the group that could defend these girls) or sold into sex slavery or on slave markets en route to Deir-el Zor.<sup>194</sup> As the only member of her immediate family to make it to Aleppo, the author's mother makes an escape before being taken into the camps of Deir-el Zor, and manages to find shelter in an orphanage. After a few days, however, she is given away to an Arab family, who wanted her for unpaid household help, and from there she finally escapes and is captured once again. She is then sold into Cemal Paşa's harem. She escapes once again, and finally – after the war has ended – comes back to her native village. The story ends with her being married off to an Armenian man in America. Needless to say, the haunting pictures painted by this book cannot easily be forgotten. Still, as always, literature, even when based on a true story, only provides us with a very small window into the collective psyche – in this case of the Armenian survivors.

Ahmet Refik similarly continues to be shocked in his account and writes as follows: “In no period was the Ottoman Millet [in this context: nation] misdirected with such cruelty by its own members. In no period did the Ottoman State suffer a disaster of this magnitude, due to the villainy of four or five bullies.”<sup>195</sup> He then describes Eskişehir on October 3, 1915, when the palace and the government were in the process of moving to Anatolia due to the imminent danger of Istanbul being occupied.

“The Imperial treasury had already relocated to Konya. The elegant Armenian houses around the railway station were empty. This ethnic group, with its wealth and commerce had shown superiority, obeyed the orders of the government, evacuated their houses and withdrawn to the suburbs of Upper Eskişehir and now their vacated houses with dozens of valuable carpets, elegant rooms and closed doors, were as though they were expectantly waiting for the arrival of the fugitives. Eskişehir's most beautiful and most refined houses were around the railway station. The houses near the railway station, suitable for residence, were assigned to İttihad's most important officials: the German school, with its exterior lacking paint and plaster went to Sultan Mehmet Resat; a huge

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summarized the position of Talaat Pasha, continues to say that the only one that has been preventing radical actions such as the extermination of the Armenians, was Grand Vesir, Salim Halim, who is now “relieved from his position,” and therefore more radical policies could be expected from the – as he calls them – *Radicalissimi*. Quoted in Ernst Jäckh Papers, Call No: MS 467, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, Folio 731.

<sup>194</sup> Rubina Perroomian writes in this context: “There is virtually no survivor account or memoir that does not speak of scenes of ‘slave markets’ where Armenian boys and girls and young women were sold [...]” (Rubina Perroomian, 2008: 62). In his book *The Story of the Near East Relief*, James L. Barton tells us that there were practically no men or older boys in the caravans or marches to the Syrian desert. The lucky men and boys that had escaped at the beginning of 1915 (with or without their families) were living in Persia and Russia. (James L. Barton, 1930: 177-178). Also see Keith Wattenpaugh's interview in *Orphans of Genocide* (2010), where he says that Armenian men and older boys were either killed at the outset of the genocide or conscripted into labour battalions. He also says that the prettier girls in the caravans would be taken by the locals and integrated into Muslim households as concubines or household help.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 10.

Armenian mansion to the prince; two canary yellow houses side by side in the area of Sarisu Bridge to Talaat Bey and to his assistant Canbolat Bey; a magnificent villa in the Armenian neighbourhood to Topal Ismail Hakkı.”<sup>196</sup>

After that, the deportations started and the convoys of Armenian exiles arrived at the Eskişehir railway station.

“One morning, an extraordinary scene was witnessed at Eskişehir railway station: The arriving convoys consisted of children and their mothers, old men and young women. This small convoy constituted such a sad, such a painful view that it would break your heart to see small children embracing their mothers with their soft arms, under the scorching June sun, hungry, sweating and hanging their heads. Was that all, one wondered? It was said that they were going to Konya [...] But in their pockets they had no money for the train ticket. They were all poor, unfortunate villagers. In the railway station, in front of the railing, was an old woman with a blond blue-eyed girl five or six years of age in her lap and next to her a boy, sitting with his head bowed. I inquired. They were the family of a soldier; their father had been sent away with the army. Their mother had died. She was raising these unlucky orphans. I asked the girl’s name: Siranoush. The poor innocent child dipped a piece of dry bread into water and ate it that way.”<sup>197</sup>

He tells us that diseases continued to take many lives and that many Armenians were buried in the small Armenian graveyard behind the railway station. But the horrors continued and he remembers:

“Eventually, one day a sinister order arrived. Eskişehir was also to be evacuated. The next day, the helpless families, with baskets in their hands and their coats under their arms, boarded animal compartments on the train. Their eyes full of tears, their hearts broken, they left the houses they loved, where their families had lived for many centuries, their flower gardens, their cherished memories, and bade farewell to Eskişehir’s pretty skyline, the historic city which reflected Heroic Osman’s justice. They went towards the mountains, which surround Konya Valley, the rugged mountain pass of Pozanti, Mesopotamia’s hellish deserts, to hunger, to misery, to wretchedness and towards death [...]”<sup>198</sup>

Ahmet Refik tried to find solutions to save them. However, he was not able to. He remembers:

“Was there no opportunity to save these innocent people? I talked to the German priest in Eskişehir. I asked him to send a telegraph to Istanbul, through the Austrian Ambassador, to at least get permission for the Catholic Armenians to remain in the village. He agreed. The next day, an order arrived from Istanbul stating that the Catholic

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<sup>196</sup> Ahmet Refik, *Two Committees, Two Massacres* (Firodol, 2006), 12.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 29–32.

Armenians, families of people in the military, and employees of the railway company could stay. These relationships were able to save a lot of families' lives. Some among them wanted to become Muslims, but the government would not allow it.”<sup>199</sup>

The nightmare of the Armenians, in his opinion, was often the work of the Special Organization who used both Turanist ideologies and extreme interpretations of Islam to justify their brutal policies in the local arenas.

“The Armenians’ greatest fear was Pozanti. The attacks by the gangs over there made their hearts shiver. Who constituted these gangs? There were two gangs that the İttihat government sent to the Caucasus in the name of its Turan policy, in the name of Islamic unity. These people were gang chiefs sent on the orders of the Special Organization. [...] The correspondent of a German newspaper, who hated the murders of the loathsome gangs, said: “If you saw how cruelly they behaved! I will be damned if I ever travel with these people again. Neither Islam nor Christianity; they do not recognize anything.”<sup>200</sup>

What Refik tells us here is also – in much more gory detail – remembered in the testimonies of Armenian genocide survivors. Who were these Turks that “cut off the woman’s head like a hen?” Who “prepare[d] hand-beads and necklace charms from the nipples of the girls and women?” A survivor, Khoren Gyulbenikan (born in 1900) tries to make sense of it all: “The government had incited the Turkish people against the Armenians, [stating] that the latter were infidels, that they coveted the Turkish lands; consequently, to tear them to pieces and to kill them would not be sinful.”<sup>201</sup> Like Refik Bey and the German journalist, Gyulbenikan believed that nationalism, but even more so religion, served as a justification for the brutalities carried out by the CUP. The local Turkish people are not blamed directly in Gyulbenikan’s analysis. However, from historical sources, such as local property registers or registers from state-organized auctions, we know that often these local Turks (or Kurds) benefitted the most from the deportations of their Armenian neighbours: they pillaged or started living in their deserted houses, took over businesses, sometimes even married their wives or daughters.<sup>202</sup> Also in Refik Bey’s account, we read of plundered houses but again it is not the Turkish people but the local police, turning a blind eye on the village-wide pillages, who are blamed. He writes:

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>201</sup> Souren Sargsian’s Testimony (born 1902, Sebastia, Koçhisar Village). Cited from *The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eye-Witness Survivors*, collected and edited by Verjine Svaslian (Gitutjun: Yerevan, 2011), Testimony 155, p. 315-326.

<sup>202</sup> See Uğur Ümit Üngör and Mehmet Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* (London, 2011).

“The police supposedly protected the houses with absentee owners. However, at night the carpets, possessions and valuable belongings were stolen in their entirety. The same situation emerged during the evacuation of İzmit and Adapazarı, where, after the goods were stolen, the houses were set on fire to cover any traces.”<sup>203</sup>

While Refik Bey watched houses being plundered and set on fire, more miserable Armenians were coming from various provinces and passing through Eskişehir; the deportations continued day after day. Not being able to do anything but not able to turn his eyes away from the direction in which the victims were sent to an unknown destination, he remembers:

“My eyes turned involuntarily towards the railway and the land, which ends by the purple mountains and the yellow trees. I thought of families, who, once, in the cold, in the darkness of night, slept, crying and seeing horrible dreams. Who knows where they are, in which mountain they became victims in the paws of which ruthless gang? Poor Siranoush, beautiful innocent girl, where are you?”<sup>204</sup>

Pozantı as everyone, including the Armenians, knew was the destination of the death march and the end-point of the journey of the Armenian exiles who came from the west of Asia Minor. Many were tortured and killed or died on the way. We know from the final accounts in his memoirs that Ahmet Refik was obsessed by Siranoush’s fate and asked himself often whether she died in this bloody passage or not.

In their memoirs, Mehmet Celal Bey, Hasan Vasfı Kızıtaşı (Hasan Amca) and Ahmet Refik (Altınay) took a clear position to what was at the time referred to as the ‘Armenian Massacres’. Their respective testimonies and eyewitness accounts from Aleppo and Konya, Eskişehir and the Syrian territories recognize the Armenian massacres in all of its brutal dimensions. While Celal Bey and Hasan Amca speak of who benefitted from the Armenian deportations, Refik Bey is shattered by the cruelty he witnessed in Eskişehir and its surroundings. How is it possible that this was happening in front of his eyes? Refik blamed religion – as many Armenian survivors did. Celal Bey and Hasan Amca saw economics, the wealth that changed hands during the time, as the major motivation behind the crimes. Still, like Hasan Amca, Celal Bey was very doubtful that the Turkification of Armenian wealth would bring any sustainable benefit to the CUP government and its collaborators. He foresaw the damage that could result in giving Armenian businesses to inexperienced Turkish handlers. He had – like Hasan Amca – seen state officials taking their first, shaky steps in commerce. What all of them knew, and realized very early, was that the

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<sup>203</sup> Refik, *Two Committees, Two Massacres*, 34.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 45.

deportations were just a ploy to destroy or send Armenians out of their ancestral homelands in order to homogenize and turkify Anatolia.

Like the rest of the post-war Ottoman press that is surveyed in this essay, their memoirs represent extremely important historical testimonies for establishing and recognizing the Armenian Genocide of 1915 through Turkish-Ottoman sources. However we should also not forget that they are subjective representations of the massacres, and were written and published shortly before and during the Turkish courts-martial began. One could argue that they are a bit too quick to finger-point the guilty (the CUP and collaborators) in the process relieving themselves and the rest of the Turkish people of a collective guilt.

#### *DISCUSSIONS OF GUILT IN THE OTTOMAN POST-WAR PRESS*

Starting with the closure of the Ottoman parliament up to the beginning of the Turkish courts martial in the spring of 1919, the local press, in addition to publishing the memoirs of Governor Mehmet Celal Bey, Hasan Vasfi Kızıtaşı (Hasan Amca) and by Ahmet Refik (Altınay), started to discuss the Armenian massacres on a daily basis. By and large, it is clear that some reports escaped censorship or were at the time not seen controversial or deemed dangerous. This was true, as we have seen in parts, in the published memoirs written by the Governor of Aleppo Mehmet Celal Bey, by Ahmet Refik and by Hasan Amca (whose memoirs were the only one cut short by official censorship). An example of such oversight or uncontroversial news item can be found in the Sabah newspaper of December 11, 1918. There we learn that two important documents were captured in a search carried out at the headquarters of the Party of Union and Progress. Although few details are provided, we read that these documents were telegrams sent to Malatya by Talaat Pasha and that in one of the telegrams, Talaat Pasha forcefully ordered: “Exterminate the Armenians, material and moral responsibility belongs to me (...).”<sup>205</sup> Two days later (December 13, 1918), *Le Spectateur d'Orient* and the Renaissance newspapers, which were published in French, followed the Sabah newspaper. A heated discussion among rival journalists across the media spectrum ensued: Yunus Nadi of the *Yeniğün* newspaper (December 13, 1918) attacked the editor of the Sabah newspaper and wrote everything is “untrue” in relation to the alleged document that was published. A sharp rebuttal to *Yeniğün* appeared on December 14,

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<sup>205</sup> Orhan Koloğlu, *Aydınlarımızın Bunalım Yılı 1918* [1918 the Year of Depression for Our Intellectuals] (Istanbul, 2000), 24-26; Vahakn N. Dadrian and Taner Akçam, *Tehcir ve Taktıl* [Deportations and Murder], vol. 2. (Istanbul, 2008), 17.

1918, published in another newspaper, under the heading “Answer to *Yenigün*” On December 11, 1919, the *Akşam* newspaper wrote:

“In a search, which was performed on suspicion of documents being hidden in the house of Ahmed Ramiz, the chamber counsellor in the Ministry of War and the son-in-law of Bahâeddîn Şakir, documents were captured in a suitcase. These documents had been lost from the headquarters of the Union and Progress Party.”<sup>206</sup>

The article continues as follows:

“These documents were opened four days later by the court authorities and it was found that they related to meetings during which conversations of the senior executives of The Union and Progress Party in relation to the extermination of the Armenian population of the Empire were partly recorded.”<sup>207</sup>

But examples are numerous, and many journalists of the time were not shy to put the blame either on Ottoman officials or even on the Turkish nation as a whole. Here, is an overview of what was written in the Ottoman Turkish press, in November 1918 to February 1919, immediately after Istanbul was occupied by the Allies and the press enjoyed the most freedom in terms of local censorship. Lest, is that this was also a time when the Allied forces set up their own military administration and were looking for suspects to be tried in the Turkish courts martial of 1919–1920. Therefore, we see not only a vague admission of a general collective guilt in the pages of these newspapers but also, and especially, a very clear categorization of who was to blame, and who was not. This nationwide and broad search for the guilty parties started in the Sabah newspaper on November 5, 1918, when Ali Kemal described the typical all-out perpetrator of the massacres as follows:

“In this 20th century, a perpetrator whose bloodline and lineage is low, who has no insight, who is uneducated, and who has no idea about law, freedom and government, comes into the picture, finds roughnecks like himself – we have a lot of roughnecks in this country – and performs irrational, unconscionable murders and insanities [...] We worshipped these skunks as chiefs and rulers for years. Now, if we examine lots of disasters like this, this is the punishment for our actions, we are going to suffer.”

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<sup>206</sup> *Akşam*, 12 December 1918.

<sup>207</sup> Dadrian and Akçam, *Tebcir ve Taktil*, 46.



This search for the guilty in the upper echelons of the Ottoman state returned on November 21, 1918, when *Yeni Sabah* published an article entitled “Letter from the Senate to Mr. Ibrahim, Former Minister of Justice.” It asked the following questions:

“Didn’t you get your inhuman orders from the gang as relayed by the house of Talaat? After the decision by the gang to follow the orders received from the headquarters of the Party of Union and Progress to deport innocent Armenians from their legal domiciles and to exterminate them in a brutal and barbaric way, didn’t you release from prison the most monstrous murderers, the most bloodthirsty galley slaves who had been sentenced to death in order to carry out the killing of the innocent Armenians in the vicinity of their cities, towns and villages?”

*Tasvir-i Efkar* on November 29, 1918, agreed and wrote: “The people responsible (for the massacres) have positions in the upper levels of our polity and their number is very large. Ministers, governors, members of parliament, and especially the 250 members of the House of Representatives and public servants, are among them.” We see a change in course in *Yeni Istanbul* on November 30, 1918, which admits very bluntly that “We are all perpetrators”. *Zaman*, on November 23, 1918, agreed and wrote that, indeed, “Turkey is under the shadow of a criminal charge.” Finally, on December 26, 1918, Muşir İzzet Fuad Pasha wrote for the *İctihâd* newspaper:

“Disastrous ‘Unionist’ behavior against humanity, which cannot be denied, took place. Confession is the only solution. Therefore, an honorable, dignified unhesitating and glorious declaration about these events is the most urgent mission of such a great nation.”

In *İkdam* on December 29, 1918 wrote, it is again “the governors who influenced the murderers in order to realize their felonious desires [who] were with few exceptions the abettors” and *Söz*, on December 28, 1918, sought out those guilty by classifying them into seven different categories: (1) persons who actively committed evil acts; (2) persons who operated in secret using the active perpetrators as lightning conductors – key players from the headquarters of the Party of Union and Progress and heads of country clubs; (3) persons who worked for the secret organization, officers with relatively low ranks, and soldiers and bullies who had been released from prison; (4) members of parliament who said nothing and approved and profited from the killings; (5) journalists and writers who applauded all kinds of murders; (6) people who pursued profit and wealth; and finally (7) sycophants. Just two months before the Turkish court-martial began, amidst heated discussions in the press, the *Alemdar* journalist Refi’ Jevad (Ulunay) tried to stifle the debate and wrote on February 20, 1919:

“The deportation and massacre problem [...] is not a complex incident. The problem is very simple. The Union and Progress gang ordered it. It destroyed entire basic elements of the Armenian population. It hanged some of them, it cut off other parts and burned and finished the other parts. The mind which thought up this order, the mouth which gave this order, the hand which executed this order are all in the paw of justice. It doesn’t take any particular investigation to analyze this incident with a fine-toothed comb.”

Likewise, the Armenian newspapers in Istanbul give us much information about the ‘what’ and ‘who’ of the Armenian massacres. For example, *Aravot* newspaper on April 28, 1919, published information about the trials of the Genocide perpetrators and it discussed the worsening conditions of the miserable exiles gathered in Giresun. It also mentioned a request for the restitution of confiscated food. An article by M. Suryan was entitled “Exile and Massacre” and mentioned the Genocide explicitly. It appeared on the front page and gave accounts of the massacres in Stanoz in Ankara, which contained 800 Armenian houses, and in Gradz Kar (Kireçtaşı), which was another Armenian village of 20 Armenian houses located one hour away from Stanos. The article observed that:

“The Armenian men of these two villages were all taken away and slaughtered. The women were sent to different Turkish villages and tortured and abused. In Ayash a military officer named Zeki with a Sergeant Hurşit from Crete slaughtered 23 (some witnesses gave this number as 33) intellectuals who had been exiled to Ayash from Istanbul, and then he went to Stanoz. In Stanoz, this bloodthirsty murderer took away all the men in the town in order to satisfy his bloodlust. All of these men disappeared. Some of the first group of them were slaughtered in Stanoz and Ankara and the others were slaughtered a short distance from Ankara. In the second group, more than 50 Protestant Armenians were slaughtered. The massacre was carried out at a rocky place in the Belören hillside, a place called Incirce, which was an hour’s walking distance away from Stanoz. The bones could be found in the wells of this place.”

The article goes on to narrate the massacre of the children of Stanoz and the despair of their mothers. It gives the exact locations and the methods used in the massacres. For example, it held that Dr. Garabed Khan Pashayan, who was the Member of Parliament from Sivas, died a horrible death: he was slaughtered by having his eyes scooped out. Alongside the article, a murder list was published, incriminating the district governor, police and military offices and even the villagers of Gayi.<sup>208</sup> The murderers list in *Aravot* overlaps with the “Exterminators list” put together by

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<sup>208</sup> The list of the murderers in Stanoz: The District Governor of Ayaş; Bayraktar Hasan; İbrahim – police officer; Shehirli İsmail; Ziya, the military officer from Crete; Sergeant Hurşit; Bıygın Ali; Kadir, the military police officer of Beypazarı; Seraylı Hamdi; Bacılı Halil; Kütükçü Hasan; Mustafa, the military police officer of Stanoz; the villagers of Gayi.

Patriarch Zaven.<sup>209</sup> Aravot also focused on the fate of the Armenian intellectuals who were exiled from Istanbul to Ayaş on April 24, 1915. In an article entitled “Corpses of the Martyr Intellectuals” that appeared on its second page, the paper provided information regarding the slaughtering of the Armenian leaders and noted that the gaps in the rocks and wells at the bottom of a hill near Bas Ayaş<sup>210</sup> village were used to dispose of the corpses. It requested the Patriarchate to transfer the bones to Istanbul:

“We request the Patriarchate to send a priest there and to transfer these corpses to Istanbul under his supervision. If this is not possible, at least bury them in the Stanoz Armenian Cemetery. At the present time, treasure hunters and looters have desecrated the Stanoz Armenian Cemetery. The gravestones were used as decoration material in the municipality garden a few years ago. I sent a file concerning the situation to the Patriarchate and suggested taking these gravestones from the municipality garden to the Armenian cemetery in Istanbul – Şişli.”

The answer was: “We have many things like that.”

As we can see from this example, and from others quoted above, a close reading of the post-war Istanbul press, does lead us to the discovery of vital historical material that document the crimes but also opens up a pathway into the minds of local and state officials and how it was justified internally.

#### *PERPETRATORS, BYSTANDERS OR RESCUERS?*

In this chapter, we saw a complicated picture emerging. One that not only speaks publically of the genocide of the Armenians, first of its kind in modern history, but also one that shows us that there was always a way and place to raise one’s voice for help. The question of who is a perpetrator, bystander or rescuer is one that is often raised in this context. There is much leeway for gray zones, and many incidents and stories that are too nebulous to reliably reconstruct. In particular, the stories and reports of the state officials mentioned in this chapter open up more questions. Were they really rescuers? Or maybe they were just bystanders at times, and even perpetrators? Why did they feel the need to tell their stories to the local press? Just to bear

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<sup>209</sup> In the Armenian Patriarch Zaven Der Yeghiayan’s (1868–1947) ‘List of the organizers of the Armenian Genocide: Exterminators and Virtuous Muslims’ the names and biographies of those who have killed or come to help Armenians were recorded by the Patriarch himself. See Sait Çetinoğlu, *Exterminators Yok Ediciler ve Erdemli Müslümanlar: Patrik Zaven’in Ermeni Soykırımı Örgütleyicilerinin Listesi* [The List of Murderers of Zaven Patriarch: the Biographies of Genocide Perpetrators] (Istanbul, 2011).

<sup>210</sup> <http://www.nisanyanmap.com/?yer=2426&z=13&mt=Karma>

witness to the persecutions, or to better position themselves in the face of their political opponents? Were they trying to avoid prosecution by the allies? Were they simply trying to set the record straight? We need to look at their accounts again, more closely and in more depth.

This debate also reminds us of the memoirs of the Turkish feminist, Halide Edib, that were in part discussed in the previous chapter. Here she presented herself as the saviour of Armenian orphans in Greater Syria, but then actually appears in historical testimonies of the time as a someone who assisted “when [Cemal] Pasha was feeding Turkishness with human corpses like a Moloch” and followed— as we have seen— a very clear political calculi.<sup>211</sup> In 1909, she speaks of the Turanist movement as one that could clean Anatolia. Ahmet Refik as we have seen above witnesses gangs acting “in the name of its Turan policy” committing inhuman crimes, murdering, raping and plundering. My cautious approach is to not use these unique historical sources to find a few good ones among the many bad, which seems to be developing into a new trend in our field of scholarship. Instead, I have tried to present these historical sources for what they are: subjective narratives that were written at a time when the whole world, including the Ottoman Empire, was searching for someone to blame and convict. In effect, they are subjective representations of the Armenian massacres and its political, economic and social aftermath. None spoke of culture, shared heritage or of rightful historical ancestry to the lands of Asia Minor. For them, religion and money were to blame. Often construed as a religious hate crime against the Ottoman Christian citizenry, or portrayed as an Islamic jihad, the “Islamic factor” is one of the more obvious explanatory tropes describing the intent behind genocidal policies of the CUP. However, we need to be careful not to allow for simplistic explanations for the sake of a straightforward historical argument or to attribute an ontological status to religion for what were to be called crimes against humanity.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Ahmet Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim 1888- 1918* [What I have Witnessed during the Years 1888- 1918] (Istanbul, 1970), 279–280.

<sup>212</sup> Using a unique collection of German propaganda postcards and a German-printed *fatwa* proclaiming jihad, Haig Demoyan cautions us to put the “jihad phenomenon” into the perspective of German wartime politics and propaganda efforts. Like Alfred Lütcke, he argues that – at least for the German War Office – the proclamation of holy war was perceived as a unique way to figuratively kill two birds with one stone: (1) to unite the Muslim *mucajir* hailing in from the Balkans (and some from Morocco) after the Balkan wars and the Anatolian Turks; and (2) to instigate Islamist insurgencies in the colonial territories of the Allied forces. Hayk Demoyan, “The Last Jihad of the Ottoman Empire: Confessional Basis of the Genocide,” Paper presented at *The Caucasus Frontline of the First World War: Genocide, Refugees and Humanitarian Assistance Conference*, organized by and held at the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute, Yerevan, April 2014. Also see Tilman Lütcke, “Jihad made in Germany: Ottoman and German Propaganda,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2006). Reports of the German war office substantiate his argument and provide us with detailed information not only about how the German War Office planned and recruited for “their jihad” abroad and sold it at home, but also how the Armenian massacres, in the end, endangered German domestic support for these wartime policies. From a report prepared by the diplomatic personnel in Constantinople for the ambassador (a sanitized version of the report was later sent by the ambassador to the

As two decades later in Nazi Germany, the religious momentum was clearly used to deepen the already existing divisions among the different populations of Turkey. Refik Bey, the German journalist, and the Armenian survivor, Khoren Gyulbenikan, both attest to this. Also, we should not forget that the memories of the Balkan wars, and of atrocities that were committed there by Christian populations against Muslims, were still fresh in the minds of the *mujadirs* who fled their native (Balkan) homelands and were now looking to settle down in Anatolia. We learned from Khoren Gyulbenikan's testimony that the Young Turk government had used religion to dehumanize the Armenians and allowed the infidels to be torn apart, as to kill them would not be sinful.<sup>213</sup> Another survivor, Souren Sargsian, who had met Enver Pasha twice when he came to his village in 1914 and 1915, remembers how the local gendarmes started torturing the local priest – after rumors of Armenian insurgency had spread, and also how they “gradually changed the local gendarmes, replacing them with gendarmes from Albania, who looked and acted like wild beasts.” But not all Turks were the same, as Celal Bey, Hasan Amca and Refik Bey asserted. And also Souren tells us that after being put on the road with the rest of the Armenian children and women, and after weeks of marching, Souren – by a sheer twist of fate – was discovered by two old village men when he was looking for water; they brought him to the village and Souren continued to live in the village and became as he tells us in his memoirs “a round-faced, blond, curly-haired, blue-eyed boy.”

The story of Souren is not the story of just one individual; in fact, most survivor testimonies or memoirs tell us about the Turks (in this context they seldom mention Kurds) who helped, who gave them clothes, bread, food or shelter – not unlike Celal Bey, Hasan Amca and Refik Bey did. From survivor testimonies we also learn that the Armenian survivors of the Genocide generally

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German War Office in Berlin), we learn that the German diplomats were not so much concerned with the extermination of what they believed, in 1915, to be around one million Armenians, and the disastrous consequences this extermination would have for the economic future of the Ottoman empire, but that the extermination of the Armenians (“*Ausrottung der Armenier*”) could damage the image of the German empire abroad and at home. Not speaking up against the atrocities, according to the report, could implicate the Germans in the crimes, as they are believed to be the only Christian Western power that could influence Ottoman affairs. Here, it is not the fact that the Armenians were being exterminated (“*ausgerottet*”), to which the report repeatedly refers, that is emphasized but the possible repercussions this could have in terms of winning or losing the war and retaining support for it at home. We learn that the German proclamation of jihad was an extremely difficult bargain to sell at home and could only be justified by bringing enormous advantages in terms of war strategy. The extermination of a Christian population, through religious fanaticism, could be misunderstood as a side effect of the Islamic holy war and could lead to unrest among the German population at home. As can be seen from this summary of German diplomatic reports of the year 1915, the jihad phenomenon during the First World War in the Ottoman territories was not a precondition of the Armenian massacres but an essential part of wartime politics that were believed to help win the war.

<sup>213</sup> Souren Sargsian's Testimony is cited from *The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eye-Witness Survivors*.

divided the Muslim Turks, in which they included the Kurdish population, into three categories: the government, who master-minded and perpetrated the genocide; the Kurds and bandits, who executed the genocide; and the villagers and simple people, who helped them. There are very few stories about evil deeds committed by the villagers and simple people, and if mentioned – as in Souren’s story – they are mentioned as exceptions or in passing. The Armenian historian Suren Manukyan rightly question this as a nostalgic yearning for the old times and the native lands, and argues that the number of the so-called “good Turks” who – in one way or another – rescued or helped Armenians in 1915 is in fact the same as the number of Turkish people recognizing the Armenian genocide openly today. In his opinion, we need to look deeper into what made the Turks so Turkish and turned them from respectable Ottoman citizens into murderous Turks who believed in nothing but what Talaat Pasha so tellingly phrased as “a Turkey for the Turks!”<sup>214</sup>

#### *TURKEY FOR THE TURKS*

“Turkey for the Turks” is, then, also what influenced how the Armenian genocide was remembered – and not remembered. In the political economy of historical memory the Armenian massacres were not important enough to headline Turkish Ottoman newspapers for more than a few months. Soon after the Turkish courts-martial began topics such as the condition of political prisoners, the Peace Conference in Paris, and possible reparations that were to be paid to the Allies were taking centre stage. Who could be blamed in an occupied post-war Istanbul where even the Armenian patriarch was quoted in the Armenian Press as being overwhelmed with what he could, and could not, handle in terms of the preservation of historical memory? The looting of Armenian gravestones in the municipality gardens and their transfer to a safer location such as the Armenian graveyard in Şişli, for example, was simply not important enough and was rejected by him with a brusque “We have many things like that.”<sup>215</sup> Instead of answering to individual demands, and in an effort to create a collective mourning symbol, the Armenian patriarch chose to erect a monument the middle of Istanbul testifying to the Armenian massacres. Not much is known about this monument. Today we are left with a single photograph in the Archives of the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute in Yerevan. What happened to this monument?

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<sup>214</sup> I want to thank Suren Manukyan, Deputy Director at the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute Yerevan, for the many insightful conversations on the topic and for his continuous support.

<sup>215</sup> I will come back to this particular graveyard in chapter 4.

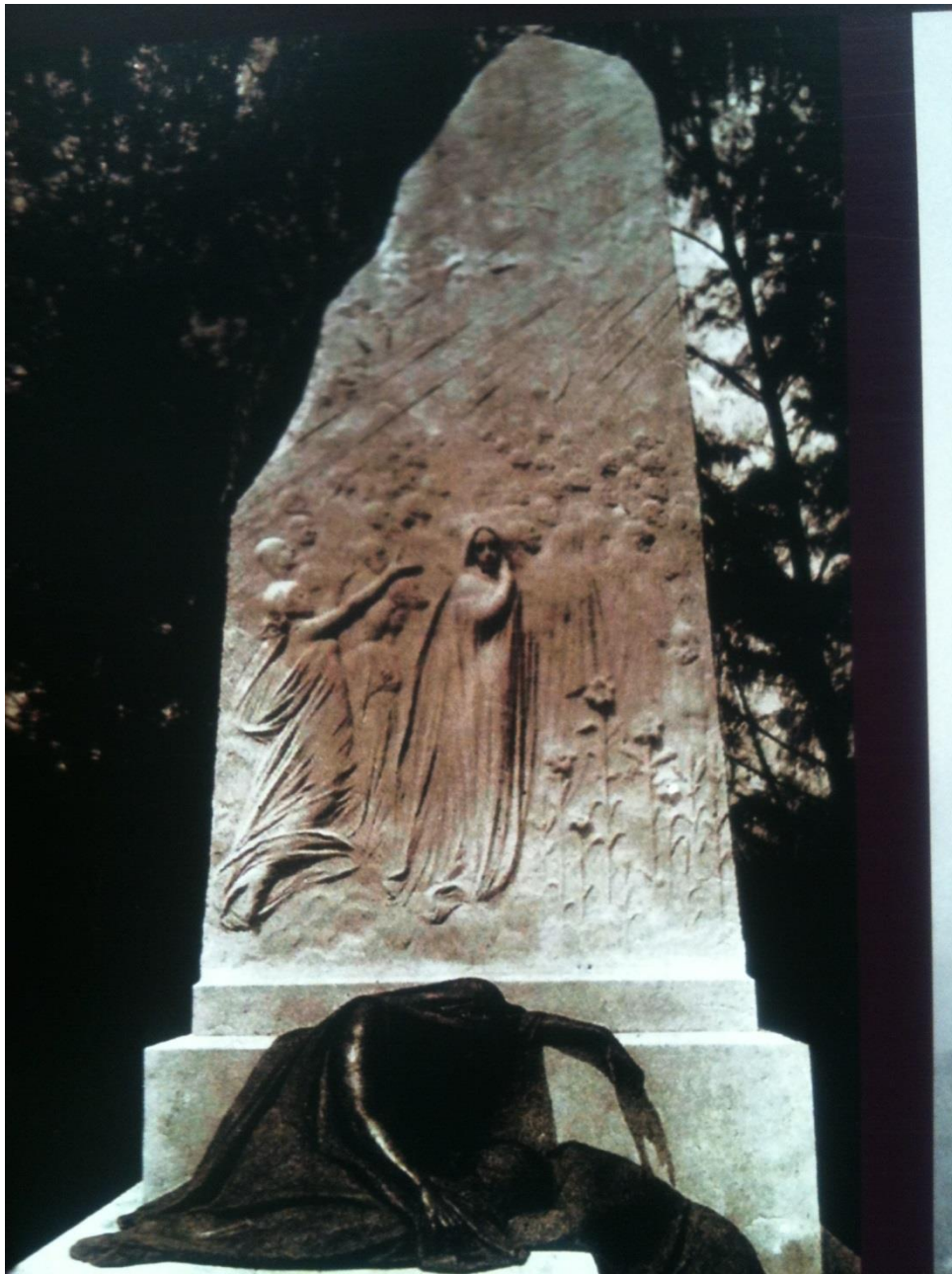


Illustration 13: Genocide Memorial in Taksim Square, Istanbul, circa 1916.

We know that it was destroyed when the Kemalist forces arrived in Istanbul November 1922. Whether this was done by the Kemalists or by the Armenian community themselves, we do not know. We can only speculate as to who is responsible for this act, what we know with certainty however is that even before Kemal Mustafa Atatürk entered Istanbul with his forces all documents pertaining to the Armenian massacres were sent to Europe (and later to Jerusalem) by

the Armenian Patriarch of the time, Zaven Ter- Yeghiaian. We can assume, that the Armenian Church was simply too afraid that the Kemalists would raid and purge their archives. When asked, the official story was (and still is to some extent) that all the archives of the Istanbul Patriarchate were lost in a fire. From this fear of the Armenian church for having documents that possibly incriminated the Kemalists, one could infer that the Armenians were well aware that not only was Mustafa Kemal Atatürk surrounded by people who had actively participated in the massacres but that he would also not allow any public demonstrations of mourning, victimhood or remembrance of the Armenian massacres to take place in his republic.<sup>216</sup>

As for Atatürk's general attitude to the Armenians, one could say, that it was motivated by tactics and definitely changed with his audiences. In an article he wrote for the *Minber* newspaper on November 9, 1919, for example, he described the deportations as a mistake made by certain people (and induced by their mentalities).<sup>217</sup> In a later speech at a clandestine meeting of the parliament, we hear him justifying the actions taken by arguing that the Armenians had tried to exterminate the Muslim people. And in a conversation with his close friend Rauf Bey, he complained that "in America, France and England, killings and other murders are occurring, but no one is being accused. Only Turks are deemed to be responsible for the massacre of eight hundred thousand of their own people [...]"<sup>218</sup> As Atatürk became stronger, he became also bolder and a policy of denial and obfuscation gradually emerged.

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<sup>216</sup> Was keeping what was unrightfully theirs the provincial Muslim middle class's main incentive for backing the nationalist cause and supporting Atatürk's 'independence war'? The historical evidence presented in this chapter seems to suggest so and offers insights into how the confiscation of Armenian capital and the subsequent enrichment of Muslims were the key elements in the historical continuity of genocidal practices from the Empire to the Republic. There is a passage on this in Yaşar Kemal's novel *They Burn Thistles* which says it all:

"The whole of Chukurova knew Arif Saim Bey very well. When the French occupied Adana [...] he came to an understanding with them. Then he realized that the French would not be staying, and went over to Mustafa Kemal's side; in a short time he became Mustafa Kemal's most trusted man. [...] But it never occurred to him that if the War of Independence had not taken place, he would not have owned a foot of that land. Most of this land had belonged to [...] the Armenians (Yaşar Kemal 2016 [1972]), 144- 145).

I thank Seyyid Ramazan and Metin Doğan for drawing my attention to this novel by Kemal again. Studying the Armenian genocide of 1915 through its economic ramifications not only enables us to see how the genocidal process contributed to the emergence of Turkish economic nationalism but also brings our attention to "dissociated and dislocated histories of the present, [to] those sites and circumstances of dispossession" that people in modern Turkey "disavow as not of their making" (Stoler 2013, 8).

<sup>217</sup> "This mistake, which was the product of a few people's minds, could not have had any other result than upsetting the serenity of these two populations which had lived together as neighbours for centuries in the same country, which participated together in social life, policy, economy and society, and thusly it did not. In all nations of the world fanatics can emerge; naturally these kinds of people also exist among Armenians. However, are you not becoming more fanatical when you fantasize a more fanatic dream than those pathetic people when you fantasize the extermination of an entire nation by getting angry with a small fraction?"

<sup>218</sup> Rauf Orbay, *Cebennem Değimeni, Siyasi Hatıralar* [New Hell, Political Memories] (Ankara, 1993), 276.



## CHAPTER THREE

### ON THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE: READING SABIHA GÖKÇEN'S MEMOIRS<sup>219</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter will look at the way in which Sabiha Gökçen, the adopted daughter of Kemal Atatürk, narrated her life story in the liminal space between silence and speech. I hypothesize that by recognizing the traditional and oedipal familial structures that were shaping the day-to-day life of Turkey's first family we are able to understand how Atatürk and his adopted children – among them Sabiha Gökçen, his favourite daughter – interpreted their life stories not only in the intimate space of their family but also on the symbolic plane of the nation. As the citizens of Turkey sought ways to find the meaning of the catastrophic losses of the Great War, but were urged to look forward rather than backwards, the figure of the orphan played an essential role in affirming the symbolic meaning of Atatürk as the Father of the Turks in the context of nation-building and identity formation in post-genocide Turkey. Following Paul Federn, we can see how the historical Atatürk became a powerful reformulation of the father figure in post-war Turkey.<sup>220</sup> I hold that Sabiha Gökçen's memoir is an unusual example of autobiographical writing which can tell us much about the gender constraints placed on public women in nationalist projects as well as the silences that come along with them – *the other side of silence*, as the late Cambridge historian Julia Swindells put it.<sup>221</sup>

Feminist scholarship has established that women were crucial to Atatürk's modernization and to "the reinvention of national culture," raising questions about how women in Turkey participated in the representation of the nation and how gender, and especially the image of women, acted as visual and discursive symbols in the making of the Turkish nation state.<sup>222</sup> For this reason a host of images, inspirational stories, and legends about how Atatürk empowered women proliferated,

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<sup>219</sup> An abbreviated version of this chapter was translated by Tommaso Giordani and published as Suzan Meryem Rosita, "Atatürk: un culto lungo un secolo" [Atatürk: a cult lasting a century] *Memoria e Ricerca*, 3 (2016): 515-539.

<sup>220</sup> Paul Federn, *Zur Psychologie der Revolution: Die vaterlose Gesellschaft* [On the Psychology of the Revolution: the Fatherless Society] (Leipzig, 1919).

<sup>221</sup> See Julia Swindells, *Victorian Writing and Working Women: The Other Side of Silence* (Oxford, 1986).

<sup>222</sup> Nermin Abadan-Unat, "The Modernization of Turkish women," *Middle East Journal* 32.3 (1978): 291-306 and "Social Change and Turkish women," in *Women in Turkish Society*, edited by Nermin Abadan-Unat, Deniz Kandiyoti and Mübeccel Belik Kiray (Leiden, 1981), 5-31; Deniz Kandiyoti, "Emancipated but unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish case," *Feminist Studies* 13.2 (1987): 317-338; Yesim Arat, "From Emancipation to Liberation: The Changing Role of Women in Turkey's Public Realm," *Journal of International Affairs* 54.1 (2000): 108. Ayşe Durakbaşı and Aynur Ilyasoglu, "Formation of Gender Identities in Republican Turkey and Women's Narratives as Transmitters of 'Herstory' of Modernization," *Research Note*, Mimar Sinan University, 2001, 195-203.

which have become part of our oral, visual and written traditions. The conspicuous visual and narrative presence of women in the master narrative(s) of Turkish national identity reveals a complicated entanglement of gender with nation in the context of modern-day Turkey. Scholars agree that no image does more to explicate this than the photograph of Sabiha Gökçen in her air force uniform surrounded by respectful men, including her father Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.<sup>223</sup>



Illustration 14: Sabiha Gökçen in her uniform surrounded by Atatürk and others.

In another no less iconic image, Sabiha Gökçen flies in her plane over the skyline of Istanbul. In a cartoonist's rendition of this image from the year 1937, we see a small boy walking with his mother in the streets of Istanbul. The boy is pointing at the sky and excitedly tells his mother,

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<sup>223</sup> In the words of feminist scholar Yeşim Arat (1997): "the image of Sabiha Gökçen in her air force uniform, with respectful male onlookers, including her proud father is ingrained in the collective consciousness of at least the educated urbanites in Turkey." As cited in Ayşegül Altınay, *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey* (New York, 2004), 34. Also, see Serpil Atamaz, "The Sky is the Limit: Feminism, Nationalism, Modernity, and Turkish Historiography," *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 20 (2014): 85-101; Jenny B. White, "State feminism, modernization, and the Turkish republican woman," *NWSA Journal* 15.3 (2003): 145-159.

“Look Mama, Sabiha Gökçen is flying.” His mother, clad in a full burka, tells her son: “I cannot see, my eyes are covered in black.”<sup>224</sup>



Illustration 15: Cartoon from the year 1937.

These images of Sabiha Gökçen depict contemporary views on the modernization process of the Turkish nation during the first decades of the Turkish republic. Here and elsewhere, Atatürk's achievements are seen in a revolutionary light and his reforms as part of a radical modernization of the country and its people.<sup>225</sup> The discrepancy between these images and the popular

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<sup>224</sup> Cemal Nadir Güler for *Akbaba*, 02.07.1937. Taken from: Turgut Çeviker, ed., *Karikatürkiye, Karikatürlerle Cumhuriyet Tarihi 1923-2008* [Karikatürkiye, the History of the Republic of Turkey through Caricatures 1923-2008], vol 1. (İstanbul, 2010), 151.

<sup>225</sup> This is not the place to go into an exhaustive examination of the Kemalist reforms that were undertaken in Turkey by the new republic. They are well-known and have received thorough attention. They swept away the *ancient regime*. The Ottoman sultanate (1922) and the Islamic caliphate (1924) were, of course, abolished. The culture associated with the old regime received a mortal blow. The symbolism that was selected is important. Veiling and religious head gear were strictly forbidden and the Islamic calendar was abolished (1926). The call to prayer was

experience of Turkish nationhood in the early republican era have since inspired historians to re-examine these images, stories and legends and to explore ways in which Turkey's past can be narrated differently. By taking gender as an analytical category, feminist critiques have been able to show how women in Turkey participated in the representation of the nation while in other ways effacing their subjectivities. In this context, Sabiha Gökçen's biography is of real significance.

Feminist researchers and historians of gender, Ayşegül Altınay and Hülya Adak have looked at Gökçen's memoirs in terms of their symbolic use of "predominant mythologies of nationalism and militarism asserted through the text."<sup>226</sup> Here, the ubiquitous fairy tale of an orphan girl meeting the leader of a nascent nation, who then adopts her and encourages her to follow her dreams to become the first female combat pilot (in the world), is criticized for absenting the female voice and female existence from the story in lieu of "charged signs of nationalism and militarism."<sup>227</sup> Sabiha Gökçen's participation in the Dersim military operations in 1937 as a fighter pilot dropping bombs on civilian populations has further been examined by scholars addressing past human rights violations and, more recently, by feminist activists in the framework of anti-militarism.<sup>228</sup>

The revelation that Sabiha Gökçen was an orphan taken from an Armenian orphanage and adopted by none other than Atatürk has resulted in a spate of new works on her biography, not without political reverberations and personal losses. When reading Sabiha Gökçen's life story, one enters a terrain requiring continual reconfiguration, antagonism and scrutiny. Because most research on Sabiha Gökçen has explored her biography through the spectre of woman-as-nation, her personal voice in the story has often been neglected. This made it difficult for scholars "to go beyond or inside that scale of experience."<sup>229</sup> Rarely, if ever, have scholars quoted directly from

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changed from Arabic to Turkish (until 1962); all religious endowments were taken over by the state (1920/1924/1935);<sup>225</sup> the Italian penal code, the Swiss civil code and German commercial laws were adopted (1926); and the Ottoman Arabic script was replaced with the Latin alphabet (1928). A good starting point to familiarize oneself with the Kemalist reforms is Erik J. Zürcher's seminal work *Turkey: A Modern History* (London, 2004).

<sup>226</sup> Hülya Adak, "Gendering Denial Narratives of the Decade of Terror (1975–85): the Case of Sâmiha Ayverdi/Neşide Kerem Demir and Hatun Sebirciyan/Sabiha Gökçen," *Journal of Genocide Research* 17.3 (2015): 337.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 339.

<sup>228</sup> Ayşegül Altınay, "Sabiha Gökçen'den Sevgi Soysal'a, Kezbanlar'dan Kadın Vicdani Retçilere: Militarizmin Feminist Eleştirileri," *Dipnot* 7 (2011): 23-42 and "Refusing to identify as obedient wives, sacrificing mothers and proud warriors," in *Conscientious Objection: Resisting Militarized Society*, edited by Özgür Heval Çınar and Coşkun Üsterci (London, 2013), 88-104.

<sup>229</sup> I am indebted to Leyla Neyiz and Amy Mills' innovative studies of Turkish national identity from within. Together with methodological and (to a certain extent) disciplinary differences, this research has gained much from their works. See, for example Leyla Neyzi, "Remembering Smyrna/Izmir: Shared History, Shared Trauma," *History*

Sabiha Gökçen's memoirs or reproduced the dialogues that we find in them. In their attempts to liberate her voice from silence, it appears that even the most careful feminist historian could not avoid taking her story and making it her own.<sup>230</sup> By speaking for her, it seems that we have forgotten to consider her voice. And while it was important for me to discover more details about Sabiha Gökçen's Armenian identity, it was unexpectedly her voice (and not her silences) that led me beyond nationalist readings of her biography. Her voice, I found, speaks to the conflict between social expectation and her own personal dreams, hopes and desires. Her "coming to voice" as she grows up in the presidential household of Atatürk is at the heart of this chapter.<sup>231</sup>

### *AM I THAT NAME?*<sup>232</sup>

Sabiha Gökçen was born in 1913 in Bursa. Her parents died when she was a young child. At the age of twelve she was officially adopted into the family of Kemal Mustafa Atatürk. She credits her thirst for learning and knowledge for the way in which her life turned out. She tells us that she knew from an early age she wanted something different for her life and, being an orphan, education was her only and maybe "biggest" chance. She told Atatürk:

"Sir, I want to study. [...] My family does not have any money. They do not have enough money to send me to boarding school. I believe that if I could find some way to study at such a school I could benefit our nation and people [...] Now I count as a child of the Republic. [As an orphan] my biggest chance, really, is to be a child of the Republic [...]"<sup>233</sup>

Rewarded for her courage to speak to Atatürk so openly, he offers to adopt her. In her memoirs, she proudly repeats his words to her at this turning point in her life:

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& *Memory* 20.2 (2008): 106-127; and Amy Mills, "The Cultural Geopolitics of Ethnic Nationalism: Turkish Urbanism in Occupied Istanbul (1918–1923)," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* (2017): 1-15. For a comprehensive, yet personal account of the development of oral history and memory studies, see Leyla Neyzi, "Oral history and memory studies in Turkey," in *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity*, edited by Kerem Öktem (London, 2010), 443-459.

<sup>230</sup> On this point see Julia Swindell's essay "Liberating the Subject? Autobiography and Women's History," in *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives* (Indiana, 1989), 24-38.

<sup>231</sup> I use the term "coming to voice," as Gloria Anzaldúa once explained it, as the reconciliation "between our intersubjective personhood and the persona we present to the world." Gloria Anzaldúa, *Making Face, Making = Haciendo Caras* (San Francisco, 1990), xv. As cited in Gail Summerskill Cummins, "Coming to Voice," in *Voices on Voice: Perspectives, Definitions, Inquiry*, edited by Kathleen Blake Yancey (Urbana, 1994), 50. For the term "coming to voice," see also bell hooks, *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black* (New York, 1989), Chapter 3.

<sup>232</sup> Denise Riley, *'Am I That Name?': Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History* (New York, 1988).

<sup>233</sup> Sabiha Gökçen, *Atatürk'ün İzinde Bir Ömür Böyle Geçti* [How A Life Passed in the Path of Atatürk] edited by Oktay Verel (Istanbul, 1982), 17.

“Listen closely child, what would you say if I adopted you? Would you come with me? Together we could go to Ankara. And we would find a way to educate you. [...] You will see, Sabiha, we will have wonderful days together. [...] You will – as you dream and wish for – study and become useful for your people.”<sup>234</sup>

Despite the paucity of detailed information about Sabiha’s life before Atatürk, it is not difficult to imagine the reasons why no one questioned her sudden adoption into the presidential family. Certainly, it was not unusual in Turkey for orphans to be adopted into wealthy households.<sup>235</sup> In Sabiha’s particular case, her adoption by Atatürk was of greater symbolic value and of great honour to her family. As we shall see, this was something Sabiha was deeply aware of. Her life became a life purposely lived out in front of the eyes of a nation which struggled and dreamt of a better future as much as she had done. At the roots of her – and the nation’s – memory laid rupture.<sup>236</sup> At once rejecting their own familial past and choosing orphanhood, their political birth coincided with Atatürk’s appearance in their lives. Many contemporaries shared Sabiha’s feeling. Turkey’s first female parliamentarian, the village woman Satı Hanim, for example, proudly told reporters that she only started to live when Atatürk landed in Samsun and started the Independence war against the Allied forces on 19 May 1919.<sup>237</sup> Fathers would teach their children Atatürk’s name before their own;<sup>238</sup> villagers offered their livers to save Atatürk from his

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>235</sup> Foster care practices were very common in the Ottoman Empire and early Republican times; formal adoption, however, was forbidden by Islamic law. See, for example, Nazan Maksudyan, “Foster-Daughter or Servant, Charity or Abuse: Beslemes in the Late Ottoman Empire,” *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 21.4 (2008): 492ff. Ferhunde Özbay has argued in her seminal work on kinship relations in modern Turkey that even though formal adoption was made possible through the Turkish Civil Code of 1926, common practices of ‘adopting’ children without taking the necessary legal steps to confirm the adoption before the law continued. None of Atatürk’s daughters were legally recognized as his daughters, and could therefore not take his name. See Ferhunde Özbay, “Türkiye’de evlatlık kurumu: köle mi, evlat mı? [The Situation of Foster care in Turkey: Slave or Foster Child?], Working paper, Faculty of Sociology, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi (Istanbul, 1999), 24 and Footnote 36.

<sup>236</sup> See also Luisa Passerini’s discussion on the notion of rupture in relation to a generation’s memory, in *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy, 1968* (Hannover & London, 1996), esp. 21-22.

<sup>237</sup> This anecdote about Satı Hanim and other inspirational stories about the love of the Turkish people towards Atatürk are related to us in a book for children entitled *His Children* from the year 1983. From the stories told us in this book, it becomes clear that with “his children” the author doesn’t mean children per se but makes the implication that anyone who is willing to show his love towards or sacrifice for (as the story about the villager below shows) Atatürk can be considered a child of the father of the Turks, Atatürk. Vedat Demirci, ed., *O’nun Çocukları* [His Children] (Ankara, 1983), 212. I want to extend my gratitude to the archivists at the *Atatürk Document Archives* at the National Library of Turkey in Ankara for providing me with access to a variety of children books published from the 1930s to the 1980s which are otherwise not available.

<sup>238</sup> This quote is taken from a poem about Atatürk in a poetry collection for Turkish children. This poetry collection was published in 1955, two years after Atatürk was buried in his final resting place at Anıtkabir. In the poem, Atatürk is portrayed as an all-knowing god who “can be seen everywhere, in the soil, in the sea, in the skies.” The Turks, so the poem continues, “owe him” so that “a father would first teach [Atatürk’s] name to his son before teaching his own.” Cited from Rami Akman and Ferit Ragıp Tuncor, *Çocuklar için Atatürk Şiirleri* [Atatürk Poems for Children] (Ankara, 1955), 10.

liver disease;<sup>239</sup> Atatürk could not go anywhere without hundreds, sometimes even thousands, of people immediately surrounding him.<sup>240</sup> He had celebrity status and was photographed probably more than any other man alive at the time.

*“I WANTED TO HAVE A PART IN THIS. BUT HOW AND ...?”*

Sabiha was twelve when she had this conversation with Atatürk. In her memoirs, she describes her departure from Bursa as follows: “I am leaving Bursa for the first time, and I am boarding a ship for the first time. [...] This is how I took my first steps into the new world.”<sup>241</sup> She continues: “‘How is it,’ [Atatürk] asked me, ‘is the start of your new life nice? Are you happy to be with me?’” They were both looking out over the sea when Atatürk told her about his own youth and the dreams of studying he had when he was working in his uncle’s fields, chasing away birds. “But let’s not talk about [the old times] but about the life you are about start.” He then tells her:

“A few things you have to learn immediately [...] Table manners, how to greet visitors, dressing etiquette. Your family has brought you up right, they gave you a good education so I feel that you will get used to our ways soon [...] I also wanted to tell you something else. I have two more daughters. One is called Rukiye, the other one Zehra [...]. They came with me to Bursa. Right now they are on the ship, in their own cabins. You will meet them when we arrive [in four days] in İzmir.”<sup>242</sup>

Sabiha confesses that “it was awkward at first” when she met Rukiye and Zehra, but that she soon learned to love them like her own siblings.<sup>243</sup> She became very close, especially with Zehra.<sup>244</sup> They had all lost one or both parents and found a new family life with Atatürk. Zehra was adopted from an orphanage in Amasya and not much is known about her family. Rukiye’s father was a close army friend of Atatürk, and when the latter heard that his friend had died he arranged for Rukiye to come from Konya to Ankara. In fact, the mayor of Konya was called and

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<sup>239</sup> An anecdote tells the story of a sturdy village boy who is admired by state officials for his strength and bodily constitution and being a good example of the “Turkish race.” Upon hearing these compliments, the villager says that he heard rumours about Atatürk’s illness and would like to donate his liver to him. Vedat Demirci, ed., *O’nun Çocukları*, 217.

<sup>240</sup> This is, for example, recounted by Atatürk’s butler Cemal Granda and is apparent from photographs of the time. Cemal Granda, *Atatürk’ün Uşağının Gizli Defteri* [The Secret Book of Atatürk’s Butler] (Ankara, 2010 [1927]), 39.

<sup>241</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk’ün İzinde*, 29.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 32.

tasked with going to Rukiye's family house to get the youngest of the four daughters and bring her to Ankara immediately.<sup>245</sup>

In Izmir, dresses were bought for everyone and Sabiha was given a quick course on table manners and etiquette. She remembers:

“The Ghazi [Atatürk] constantly bought us three new dresses. In fact, he chose quite a few himself. He was such a nice person. He liked [us] to wear matching outfits, and so he would often get them tailored. One more important point: at the Naim Palace I started taking my first [etiquette] classes with the Ghazi. Actually, his dinner table was always like a school. There, one constantly had the feeling that one was learning something.”<sup>246</sup>

It was also in Izmir that she met Afet İnan for the first time. Sabiha writes:

“She was one of the people whom [Atatürk] loved the most. I met her the first time when I came to Izmir. [...] She was so warm and friendly towards me when we met at her house in Izmir, she took me to the side and, while hugging and kissing me, she said: ‘welcome to your house, Sabiha!’”<sup>247</sup>

As can be seen from these glances into Sabiha's memoirs, her arrival in the ‘family’ was very sudden, but no less cordial for this and it had an air of normality. After a few days in Izmir, the ‘family’ – now complete with Sabiha – left for Ankara, about which Sabiha speaks with great admiration: “This is Ankara, the new Turkey, the Republican Turkey's capital, Turkey's heart.” Upon seeing Ankara's castle, Sabiha remembers her dead parents and writes:

“When we arrived, I saw our flag on the castle. These castles are now ours, these flags are ours, these lands are now ours. Suddenly I saw my dead father before my eyes; my dead mother. They had always told [me] during those days of misery [of war]: ‘One day we will be rescued from the boots of our enemies and we will be able to put our own flags on our castles and houses!’”<sup>248</sup>

Without a break in her narrative, she continues to write:

“I immediately felt at home at the Çankaya palace. I don't know why but I fell instantly in love with Ankara with its wooden houses, people [and] busy life. I quickly became friends with Zehra; we shared our problems with each other and there was no difference to my

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<sup>245</sup> Rukiye Erkin, Interview by Nazmi Kal, “Atatürk ile olan anılarını anlatıyor” [Those around Atatürk talk about their memories], *TRT* (1973).

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 32.



biological siblings. Rukiye was also a lovely child. But for no reason at all I was drawn more to Zehra.”<sup>249</sup>

The feeling of ‘coming home’ and starting a new life overshadowed Sabiha’s memories of her life as an orphan. Her sense of a bright future lying ahead was shared with the people of Ankara. At the time, it was considered an honour to live in Ankara and people were looked down upon if they continued to live in Istanbul<sup>250</sup> – a city that Atatürk left in 1919 and would not return to until 1927 when his daughters started boarding school there.



Illustration 16: Left to right: Rukiye, Sabiha, Afet, and Zehra in the late 1920s.

In Ankara, the family took up their everyday lives and soon the girls started their schooling. In the backyard of Çankaya palace, a small garage-type house was built and furnished as a school. Sabiha recounts how one morning Atatürk called to tell them something: “It was obvious that he wanted to tell us something [important]. I was really excited. I felt my heart pounding [...]. I could see from their faces that Rukiye and Zehra were as excited as I was.”<sup>251</sup>

“Now running around and playing in the garden is over. You will start school tomorrow. You probably noticed that there is a small one-storey building in the garden of the

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> This is related to us in the biography of Latife Uşşaki. See Ipek Çalışlar, *Madam Atatürk* (London, 2013), 190-191.

<sup>251</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk’ün İzinde*, 32.

[Cankaya] palace. This is a primary school. A two-room primary school. Now you will study there. Your notebooks, books, erasers, pens and schoolbags are ready. These things I did not give you. The Republican government [of Turkey] is giving [them to you]. You will study and become somebody and all doors will be open to you. Hopefully soon these doors will be open to all Turkish children [...].”<sup>252</sup>

The girls soon found out that the children of Atatürk’s aides Ali Kiliç, Fuat Bulca and Salih Bozok also went to their school. Every day after school, Atatürk would oversee their homework and meet with their teacher to check on their progress. A young and inexperienced teacher was soon replaced with an older and more experienced one when Atatürk noticed that the girls did not learn enough and were instead playing pranks on their poor teacher.<sup>253</sup> “*Tath ama kararlı*” – “sweet but firm” – was Atatürk’s recommendation for their new teacher, Nüveyre Uyguç, on how to handle his daughters, and soon the girls were back on track and making progress with their schoolwork. Sabiha remembers that they were all going through puberty and struggled with ‘complexes’ and self-doubts and physical changes. Atatürk, she tells us, was even “more forgiving” and “gentle” with them during that time.<sup>254</sup>

In the year 1927, at the ages of fourteen, fifteen and sixteen (with Sabiha being the youngest) the girls were suddenly sent to boarding schools in Istanbul. Until then, their lives had been carefree and happy. In an interview, Rukiye tells us that they never experienced money problems and just went to Atatürk’s private secretary, Hasan Rıza Soyak, if they needed anything.<sup>255</sup> He ran a rather tight ship, and the girls would often complain to Atatürk about Soyak’s stinginess but in the end would get their way. The afternoons were spent meeting friends, driving around in horse carriages, or going to the cinema. Their bodyguard, Nesip Efendi, was always with them.<sup>256</sup> Even though just two years earlier it had been Sabiha’s dream to go to a boarding school, she now did not want to leave – what she now considered – her family home. But left with no choice, the family left for Istanbul, and Atatürk entered the city for the first time since he had left it eight years earlier to re-conquer Anatolia. In original footage from the year 1927, we see the family

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>255</sup> When Rukiye studied at Notre Dame de Sion high school in Istanbul and was living away from home, Atatürk opened up a bank account at İş Bankası, a bank founded by Atatürk in 1924, for her. This is conveyed to us in Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyân’s memoirs, which I will analyse in chapter 4.

<sup>256</sup> Cited from interviews with Rukiye Erkin as published in *Milliyet* newspaper, 10 and 11 November 1989.

standing on the state-owned yacht *Ertuğrul* – the three girls in front and Atatürk just beside them – making their entry into Istanbul.<sup>257</sup>



Illustrations 17: Atatürk with Sabiha and Zehra on the yacht *Ertuğrul* coming to Istanbul.

Flanked by a flotilla of torpedo boats, they passed in front of a packed waterfront and Atatürk was filmed waving at a crowded passenger ship passing their yacht. Smiling, he turned around to Salih Bozok and Nuri Conker, his friends since childhood, and said something to them, which Conker wrote down immediately.<sup>258</sup> That night the family stayed at the Dolmabahçe Palace and had dinner there.<sup>259</sup>

Afet Uzmay (İnan), who had spent the previous two years at a finishing school in Lausanne, tells us that when she came back to Turkey Atatürk was already in Istanbul and had started working on his epic and exaggerated narrative of the Independence Struggle of Turkey.<sup>260</sup> Simply called *Nutuk*, or ‘the Speech,’ Atatürk’s *Nutuk* is the self-narrative of the “new individual” who represented the history of his new life by inscribing it in the narrative of the nation; it “is a linear,

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<sup>257</sup> *Mustapha Kemal. Makes state entry into Turkish capital from Angora*, silent film strip, 02:41 min (London, British Pathé, 1927) Watch online here: <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/mustapha-kemal-1>

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Granda, *Atatürk'ün Uşağının Gizli Defteri*, 16.

<sup>260</sup> Arı Inan, *Prof. Dr. Inan*, 99.

progressive account of historical events beginning in 1919.”<sup>261</sup> Written in 36 hours, in which Atatürk neither slept nor drank, in the course of six days *Nutuk* was delivered to the Congress of the Republican People’s Party in Ankara in late autumn 1927.<sup>262</sup>

After repeated illnesses and nervous breakdowns at her boarding schools in Istanbul, Atatürk decided to let Sabiha come home at the end of 1928.<sup>263</sup> However, life in Ankara was tiring and she soon fell ill again. “Maybe we were living our lives too fast,” Atatürk commented and sent her to a sanatorium in Istanbul.<sup>264</sup> After four days, Sabiha escaped and took the train back to Ankara. There, Atatürk, ever so understanding, says to her: “Well done, Sabiha. I missed you in the last four days,” but continues:

“Every person goes through difficult times. This is human but it is also human to overcome these difficulties. Myself, I went to therapy in Karlsbad and then to Vienna. In Vienna there is a famous sanatorium. Koteş [Cottage] Sanatorium. I went there for therapy. [...] Would you go if I sent you there? Look, if you accept I will order them to give you the same room as I had when I stayed there.”<sup>265</sup>

Sabiha agreed and travelled to Vienna. In her letters to Atatürk, she writes that her recovery was fast and that soon she would be able to return: “I am bored, is this not a sign that I am well again?”<sup>266</sup> Atatürk writes back and tells her to have patience: “My little one, tell me about your weight and send me some pictures of yourself!” Sabiha sends pictures and writes: “Behold the soil of the motherland, behold my people, my wind, my rain, my Mustafa Kemal Pasha!”<sup>267</sup> When she finally returns, she kisses the ground and finds herself in the arms of Atatürk:

“He did not let me go for minutes upon minutes. We both tried to overcome the excitement of our reunion and grasp the intensity of the love between daughter and father. I cried. He had tears in his eyes.”<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Hulya Adak, “National Myths and Self-Narrations: Mustafa Kemal's *Nutuk* and Halide Edib's *Memoirs and The Turkish Ordeal*,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102.2 (2003): 514-515.

<sup>262</sup> Granda, 48. Atatürk's butler Cemal Granda describes this in his memoirs as an example that Atatürk, if he wanted and when he worked, did not touch alcohol.

<sup>263</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk'ün İzinde*, 41.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46. About his stay in Karlsbad and Vienna, we have a detailed account written by Atatürk himself where he describes his strict regimen and his – at first – lazy attitude. “My doctor asked me: ‘did you come here to get treatment or to have a luxury holiday’ [...]” After this rather harsh welcome, Atatürk writes that – apart from occasional cheating – he followed the regimen correctly and took some additional French literary classes and German language classes. Afet Inan, ed., *Kemal Atatürk'ün Karlsbad Hatıraları* [Kemal Atatürk's Karlsbad Memories], 41ff.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

But Sabiha also knew that on her return to Ankara she had to pull through with either continuing her education or choosing a profession that Atatürk would support. The expectations were high in the Atatürk household, especially for the girls and young women at Atatürk's side. The girls had all heard stories about Fikriye, Atatürk's first life companion in Ankara. Fikriye had fallen into disgrace and was sent to a sanatorium in Europe, only to find upon her return that Latife Hanim, Atatürk's new wife, had already replaced her.<sup>269</sup> Unable to live without Atatürk, Fikriye shot herself in front of the Çankaya palace in Ankara.

Zehra was trying her best to succeed at her boarding school in Istanbul and told Atatürk that she was planning to study in England afterwards. For Rukiye, who was neither very bright nor particularly gifted, an afternoon with Atatürk's sister Makbule sealed her fate. It was during a shopping trip with Makbule after school one afternoon that she saw a sewing machine and asked Makbule whether they could buy it so that she could start sewing her own dresses. On hearing this, Atatürk supposedly said that "she would make a great housewife and told everyone to find an appropriate husband for his daughter. A suitable candidate was soon found and Rukiye was married off at a spectacular wedding where she and Atatürk shared the first dance."<sup>270</sup>

For Sabiha, neither marriage nor leaving Turkey was an option, and fate had it that she would soon know which profession to choose.<sup>271</sup> While attending the opening ceremony of the 'Turkish Bird' aviation society in 1935 she expressed an interest in flying to Atatürk.<sup>272</sup> She makes it clear that at first she was scared, but soon found herself parachuting and flying at 'Turkish Bird,' often "lying awake at night because [she] was so excited."<sup>273</sup> For her, flying was a way to impress and

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<sup>269</sup> For a comprehensive biography of Latife Hanim, see the above cited book *Madam Atatürk* by Ipek Çalışlar.

<sup>270</sup> Cited from *Milliyet* newspaper, 11 November 1985.

<sup>271</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk'ün İzinde*, 55.

<sup>272</sup> As in Europe, the development of aviation was of paramount importance for Turkey: here and there, the skies stood for the future. But it soon proved to be too expensive for the young country. The Turkish Aviation Association, which was founded in 1925, ran into difficulties not only in financing its activities and purchasing new planes, but also in finding widespread support and qualified manpower among Turkey's largely uneducated population. Under the leadership of Atatürk, the government immediately embarked on a publicity campaign and came up with rather creative ways to raise money for its aviation project: special aviation days, raffles, lotteries and other events and activities were organized to get the citizens involved. Sabiha Gökçen's taking up flying was instrumental to getting men and women involved alike. See Demo Ahmet Aslan, "Tayyare Cemiyeti'nin Propaganda Faaliyetleri ve Tayyare Bayramları" [Propaganda Activities of Turkish Aeronautical Association and Aeronautics Days], *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 14.3 (2014). A contemporary visitor to Turkey, in the 1930s, writes that civil servants had to pay 2% of their salary to the Turkish Aviation Association. See Lilo Linke, *Allah Dethroned: A Journey Through Modern Turkey* (New York, 1937), 553. For a comprehensive history of the development of aviation in Europe, see Robert Wohl, *A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Western Imagination* (New Haven, 1994).

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

please Atatürk. No woman before her had done this. A few months prior to the aviation ceremony, she had lain awake at night thinking what profession to choose. In her memoirs, she tells us that “the Ghazi [Atatürk] trusted Turkish women a lot” and that “he was right – in just a short time women succeeded in the work force and were sometimes better than men.” It was them, in her opinion, “who were laying down the foundation for a civilized Turkey.” She writes: “I wanted to have a part in this. But how and in which field?”<sup>274</sup> Completing her training course at ‘Turkish Bird’ flying school, she did not disappoint ‘her father,’ who proudly told everyone over dinner about her success and that soon he would be able to send her on an airplane to Australia.<sup>275</sup> In a private conversation with her, Atatürk tells her:

“Your success pleased me as much as if it was my own. You proved to me that I was right in trusting Turkish women. But I don’t want you to leave it at that. Would you like to pursue higher education in aviation? In this way, you could receive the education you need and become a teacher for our youth later on.”<sup>276</sup>

Sabiha did not think long before answering: “It would be a sacred duty for me, Sir,” and travelled together with seven male students to Russia to study at the Koktebel Flight School. During her training in Russia, Sabiha heard that Zehra died. “How could I stay in Russia? No! [...] I sat down and wrote a long letter to Atatürk telling him about my situation and feelings and asking him to have me sent back [home].”<sup>277</sup> During an interview some forty years later, Sabiha affirmed that Zehra had killed herself because she could not live with the fact that she had failed Atatürk. “I have her letters [...] I am certain [...] We all felt like we owed him something,” she told the journalist.<sup>278</sup>

Like Sabiha, Zehra had become interested in aviation but soon dropped out and was sent to London, where she studied at St. Hilda’s. Atatürk’s wish was for her to continue her studies at Oxford University but Zehra became severely depressed in London and asked to come back.<sup>279</sup> On her way to Turkey, Zehra threw herself from the train and died in a hospital close to Ailly-sur-Noye in Northern France.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>277</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk’ün İzinde*, 93.

<sup>278</sup> Sabiha Gökçen, Interview by Nazmi Kal, “Atatürk ile olan anılarını anlatıyor” [Those with Atatürk tell their memories], *TRT* (1973).

<sup>279</sup> *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, 25 Kasım 1935.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.



Illustration 18: Sabiha, Atatürk, and Zehra.



Illustrations 19: Atatürk with Zehra.



Back in Turkey, “[a] life without Zehra began,” Sabiha writes in her memoirs.<sup>281</sup> We do not learn how Zehra was buried or how Atatürk dealt with his grief.<sup>282</sup> We find only a vague account of how “this life without Zehra” continued. As much as possible, Sabiha writes, she and Atatürk tried to fill the void Zehra’s death had created by occupying themselves with various activities.<sup>283</sup> It was also during this time that Atatürk became more and more interested in Sabiha flying powered aircrafts. The idea that one day Sabiha could possibly become a combat pilot came to Atatürk during these dark months, Sabiha writes. The issue of women’s participation in the military, though, was contested at the time, as Sabiha tells us in her memoirs and other contemporary accounts confirm,<sup>284</sup> but to Atatürk it was of utmost concern. She underlines throughout her memoirs that he wanted women and men to have equal status everywhere, especially now that women had just got the rights to vote and hold office.<sup>285</sup> The problem, however, was that even the closest friends of Atatürk, among them Chief of the General Staff Mustafa Fevzi Çakmak, were vehemently against an inclusion of women in the army and that he had not found a way to convince them otherwise.<sup>286</sup>

Then, one day Atatürk came to Sabiha and told her: “Enough resting. Tomorrow you will go to ‘Turkish Bird’ [Aviation School] and continue your training. I still have other plans for you!” Sabiha writes that Atatürk brought two teachers and a powered airplane from the Turkish Airforce base in Eskişehir to Ankara to give her special training but then suddenly moved them all to Istanbul when he had to go there on state business. In Istanbul, she started training at Yeşilköy airport and her teachers were asked to submit daily reports on her progress to Atatürk. Atatürk wanted to watch her training closely and talked about it every night over dinner, she tells us in her memoirs.

Dinners at the Atatürk household, however, were anything but a private affair: presence was mandatory for cabinet ministers and anyone who was summoned – examinations would often

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<sup>281</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk’ün İzinde*, 93.

<sup>282</sup> Vamik D. Volkan and Norman Itzkowitz, *Atatürk, Anıtlık* [Father Turk, Mother Turk] (Istanbul, 2011), 446. For their psychobiography of Atatürk, Vamik D. Volkan interviewed Sabiha Gökçen at the age of 49. During their interview she also told Volkan that Zehra felt close to Fikriye, Atatürk’s lover in Ankara, even though she had never met her.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 348ff. On this specific point, I am indebted to the scholarship of Ayşe Gül Altınay, who stresses in her book *The Myth of the Military Nation* that nationalist projects are indeed gender projects (83). See also her more recent contribution on the topic: “Refusing to identify as obedient wives, sacrificing mothers and proud warriors,” published in *Conscientious Objection: Resisting Militarized Society*, edited by Özgür Heval Çınar and Coşkun Üsterci.

<sup>285</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk’ün İzinde*, 69 & 93 & 108 & 348ff & 391.

<sup>286</sup> Women were first officially accepted in military academies in 1955, and then again in 1992. See “Turkey,” Committee on Women in NATO Forces, <https://www.nato.int/ims/2001/win/turkey.htm> (accessed 10.12.2017).



take the whole night, and sometimes even continue in the private houses of the dinner guests or of absentees. On such occasions, everyone at the dinner table would be packed into Atatürk's various cars and driven to the house in question where everyone was woken up to receive Atatürk and his nightly entourage and entertain them well into the morning hours. At these legendary dinner tables, ideas were tossed around and reforms were made with dinner guests keeping books under their chairs in case Atatürk asked something or needed to know something.<sup>287</sup> Sabiha, a frequent guest at these dinner parties, tells us that "one needed a lot of physical stamina and a solid nervous system" to survive Atatürk's dinners, which frequently continued until the early morning hours.<sup>288</sup> Sabiha's flying career was one of many examples illustrating the blurring of the borders between the personal and the political.

When Sabiha and Atatürk took up residence at Dolmabahçe Palace, their main family quarters in Istanbul during this particular winter, the dinner table was crowded as ever. "I think," so she tells us in her memoirs, "Atatürk made me talk about my training [...] to prepare and convince everyone of [me] joining the army."<sup>289</sup> And indeed, after she flew alone for the first time in a motored airplane in late January 1937, Atatürk managed to convince everyone and sent her to the Eskişehir Airforce Academy as a special student in her own personalized uniform.<sup>290</sup> On the day of her departure Atatürk told her:

"The years passed very quickly, Gökçen. It seems like it was only yesterday that you came to me in that garden of that villa in Bursa; your school years; your difficult years; when you first started aviation, your [various] successes in this profession [...] So that you aren't alone and have some help with your theoretical coursework I will send your beloved primary teacher Nüveyre [Uyguç] along with you, the one that you and dear Zehra got fired because of your mischievousness and spoiltness. You know the one whose worth you only came to understand later and then could not part from. First you will stay in a good hotel, and then you two will find a house to stay in. From the palace, I will send your beloved Hatice Baci to help you two, so you have no excuse not to be successful."<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Sabiha Gökçen, *Atatürk'ün İzinde*, 153.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>290</sup> Kodal, Tahir. "Atatürk Dönemi Türkiye-Balkan Ülkeleri İlişkileri ve Türk Havacılığı Hakkında Bilinmeyen Bir Kaynak: 'Sabiha Gökçen'in Balkan Turne Notları' [An Unknown Resource About the Relationship Between Turkey and the Balkan States in Atatürk's Time and Turkish Aviation: 'Sabiha Gökçen's Memories of the Balkan Tours']," Presentation to the *VII. Atatürk Congress* organized by the Atatürk Research Center et al., Ankara, 17-22 October 2011, 410.

<sup>291</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk'ün İzinde*, 96.

After eleven months at the academy, Sabiha started her training as a combat pilot with the 1st Aircraft Regiment in Eskişehir just like Atatürk had asked her to do.<sup>292</sup> Always next to her was Nüveyre Uyguç. Of her teacher, Sabiha writes “how could I ever forget your work [and kindness], Nüveyre?”



Illustration 20: Sabiha with Nüveyre Uyguç in Eskişehir at the Airforce Station.

After training with the 1st Aircraft Regiment in Eskişehir for six months, Sabiha asked to be included in a military operation that her colleagues were assigned to. Her commander refused her request and told her to ask her father, the President of Turkey, instead.<sup>293</sup>

“I went straight to Ankara with my airplane, landed in the dark, and went to Cankaya [palace to see Atatürk] [...] before I could say anything [he said]: ‘I want to fulfil your wish [...] but let me tell you something, my daughter: if they did something bad to you [...] I

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 102.

would be sad.’ My answer was the following: ‘Be assured they will not capture me alive.’”<sup>294</sup>

The next day, Sabiha remembers, Atatürk woke her at 5:30 am.

“He was still wearing the clothes from the night before. I later learnt that he had not slept the whole night. We had breakfast together and then he brought me in his own car to the meeting place [...] The [military] operations in Dersim continued for one month [...] when I came back to Cankaya [palace], I found him waiting for me in the garden. I was really excited, ran up to him, and kissed his hand. When he told me how proud he was his voice was shaky. He kissed my forehead. After seeing him like this, I worked even harder.”<sup>295</sup>

After her military mission in Dersim, Sabiha was celebrated in Turkey and worldwide for being the ‘world’s first female combat pilot.’ Atatürk told her:

“My little girl, since yesterday all news outlets are reporting about you and not only our Anadolu Agency and radios, but [news outlets] from all four corners of the world. They talk about your life and about your success. I don’t know whether I should repeat how proud I am of you. You have made yourself known to the world not only as my daughter, but as a determined, ambitious and courageous Turkish girl. I want to thank you my child.”<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Sabiha Gökçen, Interview with T. Dilligil, “Atatürkün kızı neler anlatıyor [What Atatürk’s daughter talks about],” on 10 November 1963, Newspaper Clipping (unidentified newspaper source), Taha Toros Archive, Sehir University, Atatürk’ün Ölümü ve Cenaze Töreni [Atatürk’s Death and Funeral Ceremony] Dossier 520613. A similar story is also related to us in her memoirs *Atatürk’ün İzinde*, 102ff. This version of the story has been frequently cited by scholars. See, for example, Ayşe Gül Altınay, *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey* (New York, 2004), 45.

<sup>295</sup> Sabiha Gökçen, Interview with T. Dilligil, “Atatürkün kızı neler anlatıyor [What Atatürk’s daughter talks about],” on 10.11.1963, Newspaper Clipping (unidentified newspaper source), Taha Toros Archive, Atatürk’ün Ölümü ve Cenaze Töreni Dossier 520613.

<sup>296</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk’ün İzinde*, 109.



Illustrations 21 and 22: Sabiha and Atatürk in Dersim just a few months after the military operations; *Son Posta*, 18 November 1937 reporting on their trip to Dersim on 16-17 November 1937.

The international news reporting on the killing of 5000 Kurds was overshadowed by Sabiha's 'heroic role' in this internal war. The *New York Times*, for example, wrote on 20 June 1937:

“The effect on the shaken Kurds of the appearance of a woman military flier must have been a bombshell in itself. The advance in little more than a decade from the veil and the harem to the air pilot’s helmet and the battlefield is a leap that makes even Western imagination reel.”<sup>297</sup>

In just a few years, Sabiha had transformed from the shy girl who was sitting on the boat with Atatürk to a female soldier who had no regrets about dropping bombs on the Kurdish provinces. Ahmet Emin Yalman, a well-known Turkish journalist, confronted her about this during an interview just a few days after her return from Dersim: “[...] You threw bombs on people you did not know. As a woman did you not hesitate to [to do this]?” Sabiha told him that “[when] serving the fatherland there is no difference between women and men” and “no” she had not regretted anything. “She was like steel,” the journalist writes.<sup>298</sup> Some forty years later and looking back on her life, Sabiha gave us some insight into why.

In addressing us, her readers, directly for the first time in her memoirs (on page 119 no less), it seems like she opens her heart to us. She makes it clear that we understand that what she is about to tell us is important to her.

“Just think, once, an orphan, a destitute girl from Bursa, one day sees the Commander in Chief of the Independence War in the house next to hers [...], runs towards him [and] despite her young age tells him her sorrows, and so she lives out her life next to him. It came to this [...] Little Sabiha from Bursa now has a place as Atatürk’s daughter Sabiha Gökçen in the Turkish air force [...].”<sup>299</sup>

#### *FATHER AND PRESIDENT, ATATÜRK?*

As we have now seen, the relationship between Atatürk and Sabiha was characterized by warmth and affection. They were fond of each other and were constantly communicating their mutual appreciation. Atatürk was a proud father, but he was also a president. While his other adopted daughters, like Afet Uzman, might have been a role model for the average modern middle-class woman, Sabiha’s chosen character, complete with her makeshift uniform, was more outrageous

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<sup>297</sup> Cited from Ayşe Gül Altınay, *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey*, 38ff.

<sup>298</sup> Sabiha Gökçen, Interview with Ahmet Emin Yalman, “Sabiha Gökçen’le bir konuşma” [A conversation with Sabiha Gökçen], 10 November 1941, *Vatan*, Taha Toros Archive, Dossier: 1939-2000, Atatürk’ü Anma Törenleri. Ahmet Emin Yalman remembers asking Sabiha Gökçen this question during an interview in 1938 but writes about it in this published interview. Was it because writing about the Dersim massacres was easier after Atatürk’s death? Or, was he merely filling in space as the 1941 interview had gone unexpectedly awry? All this is speculation but well worth pursuing in a different context. I will come back to this particular interview in my concluding remarks.

<sup>299</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk’ün İzinde*, 119.

and not only represented courage and endless possibilities to the Turkish women of the day but was also meant to send a strong message to the outside world. An anecdote from Sabiha's memoirs illustrates this point.

"It was the year 1937. In the south there was the problem about Hatay [...] He lit a cigarette, stood up [from dinner] and told me. 'After dinner, wear your uniform, your soldier uniform, take your gun and come with me. Tonight I will give you a very important task. A historical, yet strange task. Our French friends will learn with whom they are trying to play.'"<sup>300</sup>

That night, they both went to Karpıç, Atatürk's favourite restaurant in Ankara. Sabiha remembers that the family and a few members of the government cabinet and their wives were sitting at the back while a group of French diplomats were at the front of the restaurant. After a loud conversation about Hatay at their table, Sabiha stood up and shot into the air three times. Atatürk had warned her earlier: "After your speech and your shooting the police will come. Naturally, they will arrest you. According to the law, they have to put you in prison. Are you ready for this?"<sup>301</sup>

Sabiha was arrested and put into prison, where Atatürk's sister Makbule and a family friend, Semiha Inanç, who both also fired their revolvers "to express their nationalist feelings," followed.<sup>302</sup> They were put in a cell with other women, thieves, drug dealers and murderers, and talked all night long with them about their crimes. "It was like a different type of school, a school of life," Sabiha writes simply about this experience.<sup>303</sup> She writes that Atatürk had given her an order and she had no choice but to execute it.<sup>304</sup>

Her uniform, said Sabiha later during an interview, had no actual significance beyond its symbolic value. "It had no stars, no nothing."<sup>305</sup> It was a costume. Sabiha's wardrobe was Atatürk's invention, no more and no less. This combination of invention and restricted privilege was reflected in the mix of discursive and visual signs – of modernity and nationalism – that characterized not only their lives but also how the Turkish nation was narrated and imagined in

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 376.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 377.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 378.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 380.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 375.

<sup>305</sup> Sabiha Gökçen, Interview by Nazmi Kal (1973).



the early Republican years.<sup>306</sup> Sabiha's social mobility thus resulted from her individual talent for performing the role given to her, personal striving and historically prescribed circumstances.

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Women's public experience of representing the Turkish nation was one of pride and much admiration. While in the Ottoman Empire, at least in the cities women were shielded away in harems or separate quarters, in Republican Turkey they were brought out and paraded around.<sup>307</sup> As a cartoon and real-life story from the year 1932 suggest, it was the women of Turkey who put Turkey on the map of the male-and-western-dominated world. In the cartoon, we see Turkey's Miss World winner, Keriman Halis, sticking the Turkish flag into a globe.<sup>308</sup>

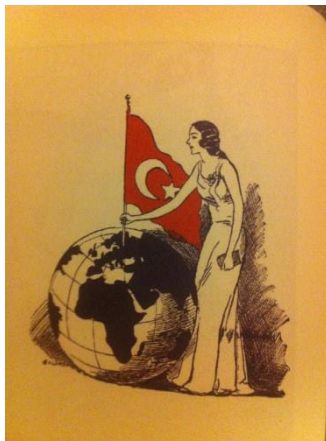


Illustration 23: Turkish Beauty Queen Keriman Halis 1932.

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<sup>306</sup> The Atatürk era brought – as Deniz Kandiyoti argues – “an onslaught on practically every aspect of Ottoman social life” and was “reliant upon imaginings of the nation centred around a new notion of ‘Turkishness.’” (Kandiyoti 2001, 10). Wardrobe is just one of many examples of how the Turkish nation was imagined and narrated. It is therefore not surprising that notions like ‘imagined communities’ or ‘invention of tradition’ that were inspired by the seminal works of Benedict Anderson (1983), Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Osborn Ranger (1983), amongst others, have had such a huge impact on historical writing in Turkey since the 1990s. The literature taking this methodological approach is vast. Examples that I found particular useful are (in chronological order): Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Eds.), *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Washington, 1997); Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Washington, 2001); Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber (Eds.), *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey* (New Brunswick, 2002); Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish* (Syracuse, 2011); Camilla Trud Nereid, “Domesticating Modernity: The Turkish Magazine *Yedigün*, 1933-9,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 47.3 (2012): 483-504.

<sup>307</sup> See, for example, Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London, 1993), 84. The same segregation applied to Armenian women in Anatolian villages according to Hasmik Khalapyan. See Hasmik Khalapyan, “Theater as Career for Ottoman Armenian Women 1850 to 1910,” in *A Social History of Ottoman Women*, edited by Duygu Köksal and Anastasia Falierou (Leiden, 2013), 33ff.

<sup>308</sup> Ercümant Kalmuk for *Cumhuriyet newspaper*, 03 August 1932. Taken from *Karikatürlerle Cumhuriyet Tarihi*, 126.

Women's studies concerned with the Middle East have recently suggested turning away from writing about "outstanding patriotic women who acted as representatives or embodiments of the nationalist/modernization project" and studying the everyday lives of normal and less well-known women.<sup>309</sup> In Turkey, however, this quick overlooking of publicly-known female figures often makes us easily forget that the women in the public eye, at least during the time of Atatürk, were actually women and girls from humble backgrounds, often orphans who were groomed by Atatürk to become republican role models.<sup>310</sup>

Unlike Latife Uşşaki, Atatürk's divorced wife, who came from a privileged and educated upper middle-class background, most of Atatürk's adopted daughters had to learn everything from scratch. Dressed and educated by Atatürk himself, we see their lives not only being constantly monitored but also exploited for positive publicity. For them, joining the Atatürk household was an opportunity for upward social mobility and a chance to continue their education. Taken from their families and familiar environments, they took wobbly steps towards adulthood under the watchful eyes of Atatürk. In their memoirs, letter exchanges with Atatürk and numerous TV interviews, they tell us how it was to grow up so close to Atatürk. As can be seen from the example of Sabiha's life story, it is here that we get an unusually intimate glimpse into Atatürk's private quarters and everyday life and are therefore able to trace the origins of Atatürk's new modern state, and also observe Turkey's difficult road to nationhood.

And a difficult road it was, as a look at the sources reveals. Like Sabiha and her other siblings, the Turkish people – whether from the cities or from the countryside – were taken from their familiar environments and entered a new experiential space of becoming Turkish by pleasing their named father.<sup>311</sup> Exploring the everyday life of the Atatürk household, I argue – whether

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<sup>309</sup> See, for example, Duygu Köksal and Anastasia Falierou, eds., *A Social History of Late Ottoman Women* (Leiden, 2013), 9-10.

<sup>310</sup> Also see Aksu Bora, "Annesiz Kızlar: Modern Babaların Modern Kızları" [Girls Without Mothers: Modern Daughters of Modern Fathers] *Folklor/Edebiyat* 16.61 (2010/1): 7. For a fairly recent oral history project that looks at the impact of gender roles on women's lives in Republican Turkey, see Ayse Durakbaşı and Aynur Ilyasoglu, "Formation of Gender Identities in Republican Turkey and Women's Narratives as Transmitters of 'herstory' of Modernization," *Journal of Social History* 35.1 (2001): 195-203. Especially interesting is that the women they interviewed often brought up their father's role in emancipating them.

<sup>311</sup> The re-turkification of life and its concurrent modernization confused but also exhilarated the Turkish people. "Re-turkification" is an expression that General Charles Hitchcock Sherrill, American Ambassador to Turkey during the years 1932-1934, repeatedly used in his glowing biography of Atatürk or the latter's modernization effort "in the name of the Turk" (Charles Hitchcock Sherrill, 1934). It is quite telling that foreign diplomats would use such a description for Turkey's nation-building project. The story of the exhibition boat *SS Karadeniz* is probably one of the most blatant examples of this. *SS Karadeniz*, originally the idea of a sassy Istanbul businessman, soon became a national project and set sail in June 1926 to tour a total of 16 European cities in 12 different countries on a promotional voyage to exhibit the very best of modern Turkey. In the original film footage we see the crew members



through the life story of Sabiha or other members of Turkey's first First Family— helps us to see what was going on behind the official story of identity formation in Turkey. Sabiha's accounts of her time with Turkey's founder and first president capture the history of the early years of modern Turkey from the perspective of a young woman, but curiously from a male, Atatürk's, point of view, or so we are made to believe.<sup>312</sup>

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Towards the end of his life, after retiring from active political duties, Atatürk was tired and bored. In a private conversation with his chief of staff, Atatürk reportedly said the following:

“During the day I am very alone, everybody is at work. During most of my days, I have nothing to do, not even for an hour. So I sleep, sometimes I read or write a little. To relax or to get fresh air, I take the car for a little tour around the city. And, then? Then, I return to my prison, play a little bit of pool, and wait for supper time. And wherever the dinner table is set, I always see the same people, same faces, have the same conversations. I am bored [...].”<sup>313</sup>

Could it have been that, with Sabiha and the others busy with their studies or in their marriages, Atatürk was experiencing empty nest syndrome? We cannot know. But, what we do know is that soon a new child – in fact an infant – moved in with Atatürk. Ülkü – who was already appropriated for Atatürk's purposes when still in her mother's womb, and who moved in with Atatürk at the age of six months – was indeed instrumental for the ailing alcoholic Atatürk to present himself as a caring father figure and role model to the Turkish nation during his last years. However, it was precisely this role that came under direct challenge during the last years of his life. Ülkü's presence is perhaps illustrative of the powerful way in which the father role had been attached to Atatürk for propaganda purposes.

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– which included half of the government's cabinet, the president's personal orchestra, Turkey's Miss World Beauty pageant winner, high school students, businessmen, artists, and one – more or less confused – imam (what could have been his duty in representing a pronounced secular republic?) – very eager, if not ecstatic, to show *their* Turkish products to thousands of European visitors in different ports. For original footage see *Stamboul in the Thames*, silent film, black and white, 2:39min (British pathé, 08 July 1926). Available online: <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/stamboul-bazaar-in-the-thames> (last accessed 01.08.2015); additional historical sources regarding the promotional voyage of *SS Karadeniz* can be found at the Archives of the Ottoman Bank in Istanbul, currently housed at SALT Galata library.

<sup>312</sup> Aysegül Altınay raises this point in *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey*, 51.

<sup>313</sup> Hasan Rıza Soyak, *Atatürk'ten Hatıralar* [Memories about Atatürk] (Istanbul 2010), 66-67.

During these last years of his life, we see Atatürk travelling through the country quizzing his nation about his own achievements, and what he thought was important for people to know.<sup>314</sup> Always at his side was Ülkü.<sup>315</sup> His trips were legendary and feared by everyone; including foreign bystanders, who also often did not escape Atatürk's sharp eyes.<sup>316</sup> He could turn up anywhere, anytime and ask anything. At an embassy party a Polish woman, for example, was questioned about the existence of God, a married woman was asked about her sex life with her husband,<sup>317</sup> a young Turkish high school student about "which Arab army was the first to conquer North Africa and Spain and how many Turks were fighting with this army" and "who signed the Armistice of Mudanya" and "why we don't have referendums, and which countries have them,"<sup>318</sup> a female high school student about the history of India, the different races in the world, and the political rights and duties of Turkey's national assembly,<sup>319</sup> and a villager about the fighting legacy of Tamerlane in the middle of Anatolia.<sup>320</sup> Usually, the Turkish newspapers would report these encounters with Atatürk during the following week, and often such encounters would be celebrated as "a historical day,"<sup>321</sup> or "a page in history."<sup>322</sup> Legend has it that children would not wash their hands for weeks after they had touched Atatürk during one of his visits.

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<sup>314</sup> From his butler's memoirs, we hear of many sudden departures either in the middle of the night or in the early morning. Cemal Granda remembers: "Atatürk could not be comfortable if he didn't see his people all the time. This is why we would often go on unannounced trips. [Also] the balls, entertainments and invitations would come adhoc, he would often go to schools unannounced and sit in on the classes. Trips around the country would also be like this. There was never a travel itinerary [...] often people would show up clean-shaved but with uncoordinated clothing [...]" Cemal Granda, *Atatürk'ün Uşağının Gizli Defteri*, 63.

<sup>315</sup> Ülkü Çukurluoğlu (Adatepe), Interview with Nazmi Kal, "Atatürk ile olan anılarını anlatıyor" [Those around Atatürk talk about their memories], TRT (1973).

<sup>316</sup> On 13 September 1937, the émigré professor Ernst Arndt happened to be at one of Atatürk's dinner parties and was asked to recite a German poem. To his dismay, he could not remember a single line of German poetry and sang a German sailor song instead. Luckily, Atatürk liked the song so much that Arndt could sit down again and continue enjoying his dinner. This was remembered by another dinner guest, the Armenian linguist Agop Dilacar, who – as we will see later – was tested on the origins of several Latin and Greek words. Cited from *Atatürk'ün Bütün Eserleri* [All Works of Atatürk], vol 28, 288. Note on the sources: *Atatürk'ün Bütün Eserleri* (hereafter ABE) is a comprehensive collection of everything Atatürk said, wrote or dictated. There are 30 volumes, which span the years 1903-1938. I have cross-checked over twenty personal letters written by Afet Inan, which are also printed in this collection, with the original ones as printed in *Atatürk'ten Mektuplar* (Ankara, 1981) and I have not found any differences – there is just one additional letter in ABE.

<sup>317</sup> Lord Kinross, *Ataturk: The Rebirth of a Nation* (London, 1964), 478.

<sup>318</sup> In this example, Atatürk visited the renowned French high school *Galatasaray Lisesi* and took part in various history and geography classes. He examined two students, Hayrullah and Ahmet, and both knew the answers to his questions. The students were later interviewed by three newspapers *Vakit*, *Milliyet* and *Cumhuriyet* and proudly told the reporters about their meeting with Atatürk on 1 July 1933. Cited from ABE, vol. 26 (1932-1934), 199-201.

<sup>319</sup> The student Melahat told the newspapers that during Atatürk's visit to the girls school in Ankara on 24 June 1933 she only gave one wrong answer (when asked about India) and that Atatürk stayed 12 hours in the school testing different students and was generally satisfied with most answers. She said: "Those who didn't know, he taught [the right answers]. Who knows how tired he was?" Cited from ABE, Vol. 26, 191-192.

<sup>320</sup> This exchange between Atatürk and an elderly villager happened on 16 June 1935 when the former was on his way back from a picnic in the hills near Ankara and was reported in *Akşam* newspaper a week later. Cited from ABE, Vol. 27 (1934-1935), 271.

<sup>321</sup> When Atatürk visited the university in Istanbul on 3 July 1933, *Cumhuriyet* newspaper called it "a day of history" for the institution. Cited from ABE, Vol 26, 204.



Illustrations 24 and 25: Atatürk with Ülkü.

At the time of his death, Atatürk had already been in a coma for more than 38 hours.<sup>323</sup> He had been officially diagnosed with advanced cirrhosis months earlier, but according to his French doctor Noel Fiessinger much too late.<sup>324</sup> The truth was that Atatürk had been ill for many years. A scene from the propaganda movie *Ankara – serdtse Turtsii* (“Türkiye'nin Kalbi Ankara”), from the year 1933 and shot by the Soviet filmmaker Sergei Iosifovich Yutkevich, already shows a pale and strained Atatürk delivering a speech on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic.<sup>325</sup> With him on the platform stand his inner circle – trusted army generals – and standing at the very back his doctors. Myth has it that three soldiers with the same blood group as Atatürk were kept close by to provide him with fresh blood in case he needed it.

When Atatürk died on November 10 1938, the clock in his bedroom, so we are told, stopped when he stopped breathing. His death sent shock waves throughout the country.<sup>326</sup> Although it was hardly a surprise to anyone, and least of all to the people who knew him well, as the story of Salih Bozok suggests,<sup>327</sup> no funeral arrangements had been made. A few days after Atatürk's death, the public was informed that no burial site had been chosen yet and that a blank book would be laid open at the presidential palace so anyone could write their suggestions on where or when to bury Turkey's first president.<sup>328</sup>

We do not know what happened to this book, but reading the newspapers of the day we know that no one in Turkey was really discussing how to bury Atatürk. The newspapers were instead flooded with poems, essays and memorabilia about Atatürk, his immortality and god-like status

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<sup>323</sup> Medical reports had been published in *Ulus* newspaper since 16 October 1938. Cited from *AEB*, Vol. 30, 294–306.

<sup>324</sup> Lord Kinross, *Ataturk: A Biography of Mustafa Kemal, Father of Modern Turkey* (London and New York, 1965), 556.

<sup>325</sup> Sergei Iosifovich Yutkevich, *Ankara - serdtse Turtsii* [The Heart of Turkey is Ankara], documentary, black and white, 56 min (Soviet Union, 1934). You can watch the film here: <http://webtv.ankara.edu.tr/video/turkiyenin-kalbi-ankara>

<sup>326</sup> For original footage of Atatürk's funeral cortege from Istanbul to Ankara, in which women, men and children are seen crying, see <http://www.trtarsiv.com/izle/118966/10-kasim-1938-mustafa-kemal-ataturk-un-vefati>. I am grateful to the archive team at the Atatürk archives for telling me about this footage.

<sup>327</sup> A few minutes after Atatürk died in his bed in the former harem section of the Dolmabahçe Palace on a cloudy and rainy November morning, the sound of a shot rang through the long halls of the palace. Salih Bozok, Atatürk's childhood friend and life-long companion, had shot himself because he could not “imagine a life without his friend.” (Salih Bozok and Can Dünder, 2015: 8). Just minutes before, and seconds after Atatürk drew his final breath, Bozok approached the bed of Turkey's first president in a military salute and kissed the latter's still warm hand in the customary tradition and then stepped out of the room. With a Smith & Wesson special edition pearl grip revolver tucked into his belt, but hidden under his suit jacket, Bozok descended the famous spiral stairwell of the Dolmabahçe Palace and found a room to kill himself. The bullet was intended to complete his suicidal mission, but missed his heart by a few millimetres and it was only a few years later that Atatürk's closest friend and confidante died of a heart attack and was reunited with Atatürk. Like so many others in Atatürk's close circle, Bozok left us with memoirs of his life with Atatürk.

<sup>328</sup> *Tan* newspaper, 11 November 1938.

for the Turks.<sup>329</sup> The very popular suggestion of renaming the Turkish capital Ankara Atatürk was rejected, and it was decided a week later not to bury Atatürk at all but to exhibit his coffin in Ankara's ethnographic museum.<sup>330</sup> So it was that until 1953 a simple marble coffin holding Atatürk's embalmed body became the sole item on view at the Ankara Ethnographic Museum. It was, perhaps, the museum's most morbid, but also most successful instance of showcasing 'Turkishness' in its entire history.<sup>331</sup>

Atatürk's immortality did not take shape gradually and nor was it something that had to wait until his death. Atatürk had already made himself immortal during his own lifetime, saying:

There are two of me. One is just me, I will disappear. And there is the other me. Actually, I should call it we. This [we] will live on with the nation, it will be represented by the nation and therefore live on forever.<sup>332</sup>

An anecdote from the year 1925, the same year the Ankara Ethnographic Museum was built, leaves no doubt about what Atatürk thought his legacy would be and how he thought he should be remembered. That year, the Ministry of Education was busy designing a national emblem for the Turkish Republic. It was decided that a national competition should be held and that the winning entry would become the new national symbol for Turkey. After long deliberations, the winning entries were chosen and sent to Atatürk for his final approval. Atatürk, however, rejected them all. In her diaries, Afet remembers:

He called me to his study and showed them to me. He said: 'none of these can be the symbol of the new [Turkey] which was built in this new world. The symbol of a state

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<sup>329</sup> Cited from various poems sent to and published in *Tan* newspaper in the week following Atatürk's death.

<sup>330</sup> After being on public view for 11 days in the grand ceremonial hall of Dolmabahçe palace, Atatürk's coffin, draped in a Turkish flag, was carried through Istanbul on a gun carriage and then brought to *Sarayburnu*, where it was picked up by the torpedo boat *Zafer* and transferred to the battleship *Yavuz*. A 101-gun salute followed and, accompanied by ships from the Soviet Union, Great Britain, Germany, France, Greece and Romania, the coffin was again transferred to the torpedo boat *Zafer* and brought to Izmir, where it boarded a special flower-decked train headed for Ankara. In Ankara, Atatürk's coffin was greeted by the newly elected President İsmet İnönü and an official delegation and carried on another gun carriage to a catafalque that was designed by the German architect Bruno Taut, and remained there for one day on public display. From there, the coffin was brought to its temporary resting place at the Ankara Ethnographic Museum, where it would stay for a total of 15 years.

<sup>331</sup> The Ethnographic museum was built and commissioned by Atatürk in 1925 with the purpose and mission to showcase Turkish art and artefacts and to serve as "as a model to the memory and the art of a nation." During the 15 years in which the museum served as its temporary resting place, Atatürk's coffin was the sole item on view at the Ankara Ethnographic Museum and was the first place foreign dignitaries and visitors to Turkey were taken to.

<sup>332</sup> *Tan* newspaper, 12 November 1938.

needs to be the head of a person. In this world, everything comes from a human's head'.<sup>333</sup>

Turkey never adopted a national symbol, but Atatürk's head looms everywhere – on coins and banknotes, in paintings and pictures in every official building, as required by law, even on the alphabet rulers of primary school students. His head is simply engraved, pictured and represented everywhere. With his death, Atatürk provided the nation with a symbol. He probably knew this. A man with an ego of epic proportions, who never allowed anyone to ask him a random question or impose on his freedom, Atatürk did not write his own memoirs. He demanded that people should write about him after his death. One of the first publications to come out, entitled *Thank you, Father* and published by the Turkish police forces, lists all of Atatürk's achievements and underlines that it was not only the Turkish people that were grateful to Atatürk, but that even in America Atatürk had been considered the most powerful man of his time.<sup>334</sup>

#### LOSING THE FATHER

When Atatürk died, a nation went into mourning. Sabiha Gökçen was devastated at losing her beloved father. In her memoirs we read that on the very day of Atatürk's death she suddenly found herself in a train to Ankara.<sup>335</sup> "Together with [my] big sister Afet, they took us from Dolmabahçe Palace, and sent us straight to Ankara. Why? [Apparently,] we had been too

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<sup>333</sup> Inan, *Herkesin bir Dünyası Var*, 2-3. This quote has reminded me of Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz's classic study *The King's Two Bodies*, where he discusses a number of medieval antecedents to the legal precept of the king's two bodies – the body politic of kingship and the natural body of the king. He writes, for example: "The challenge to ridicule the theory of the King's Two Bodies is indeed great [...] Moreover, that king is invisible and, though he may never judge despite being the 'Fountain of Justice,' he yet has legal ubiquity [...] The state of superhuman 'absolute perfection' [...] is, so to speak, the result of a fiction within a fiction." See Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1957), 3-4.

<sup>334</sup> D. Okçabol, ed., *Sağol Ata'm* (Ankara, 1938), 3. Atatürk Archives Call No: A 761. Still, Atatürk had become the symbol of the new Turkey and was admired internationally (Bilal N. Şimşir, 1993). In the Nazi imagination, for example, Atatürk had "a paramount Führer personality" and had created "the most modern state of the twentieth century," which was not only "republican, nationalist, völkisch [and] laicist" and resolved all minority problems quickly, but which also referred "to the coming time of the twentieth century" (Stephan Ihrig, 2014: 172 and 173). Many other countries and their presidents and leaders, their kings and queens, came to admire Atatürk and the new Turkey; Hollywood stars kick-started their careers by claiming to have been deflowered by Atatürk himself (Zsa Zsa Gabor, 1991:25); *Time Magazine* ran a cover with his picture twice (1923 and 1927); Mussolini sent him a sculpture; and Hitler kept a bronze bust of Atatürk in his office at the Reich Chancellery. Atatürk had become a cult figure internationally, and knowingly so. Bozdoğan argues in this context that "[t]he publications of the 1930s display a pervasive obsession with the image of the new republic abroad" (Bozdoğan, 2001: 58). I would add that the cult around Atatürk was probably instrumental in creating the Turco-mania after WWI. From Atatürk's logbook and from memoirs by his close friends we learn that during international negotiations about the possible future of the Hatay province in late summer 1938 it was decided that Atatürk had to travel – even though he could barely walk – to the province to show that he was not too ill and was still representing Turkey as president in these negotiations. There are countless other instances when foreign dignitaries came to see and negotiate with Atatürk even though he was in fact retired from Turkish politics.

<sup>335</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk'ün İzinde*, 425.

agitated,” she writes, “behaving disrespectfully to Atatürk, disturbing his eternal peace.”<sup>336</sup> In my interpretation, there was no more use for them, so they were unceremoniously shipped off to Ankara.<sup>337</sup>

In the train, Sabiha writes, there was a moment of realization. It washed over her in alternating waves of pain and despair. “He was not in Ankara. He would not meet me anymore at the gate of Cankaya Palace with his smiling blue eyes. Nobody would ever greet me again with ‘Welcome Gökçen!’”<sup>338</sup> Sabiha had realized that she was alone. From her memoirs, we learn that she collapsed the very next day and was taken to the Numune Hospital in Ankara.<sup>339</sup> It would take her ten months to recover and leave her bed.<sup>340</sup> “When I left the hospital, they rented me an apartment [...] my friends did not leave my side. They would try anything to make me smile [at least a little bit].”<sup>341</sup> It took much urging from her friends and family, but she returned to the Turkish Aviation Association after one and a half years, where she worked as the chief instructor until 1954. We hear little about Sabiha Gökçen afterwards, except, of course, for the odd interview with her on the anniversaries of Atatürk’s death.

In such an interview from the year 1941, she tells Ahmet Emin Yalman that it took her a long time to recover. “She was in so much pain,” the journalist writes. “I could not find anything to ask her.” Halfway through the interview, Yalman decided to stop. “I did not want to disturb [her] peace just to write about her life as a noteworthy newspaper item.”<sup>342</sup> As I read this interview again and again, I began to wonder how to approach Sabiha Gökçen’s biography and how to deal with the question surrounding her Armenian ancestry. From all the interviews Sabiha Gökçen gave during her lifetime that I found and read, this interview stands out, not just because of the tactfulness of the journalist but also because of how honest and frank Sabiha Gökçen was about her private life, revealing the type of information usually shielded away from the public. We learn for example that Atatürk met her father during a visit to Bursa and that her father had approved of the profession Atatürk chose for his daughter. We also hear briefly about her husband (whom

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> At the time, little Ülkü was not in Istanbul anymore. In an interview with *Vatan* newspaper in 1940, the seven-year-old Ülkü told the reporter that already weeks before his death Atatürk had sent her back to Ankara telling her that he will join her there soon. Ülkü Çukurluoğlu (Adatepe), Interview with Ertuğrul Şevket, *Vatan*, 10 November 1940.

<sup>338</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk’ün İzinde*, 426.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Sabiha Gökçen, Interview with Ahmet Emin Yalman, “Sabiha Gökçen’le bir konuşma,” 10 November 1941.

<sup>341</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk’ün İzinde*, 426.

<sup>342</sup> Sabiha Gökçen, Interview with Ahmet Emin Yalman, “Sabiha Gökçen’le bir konuşma.”

she married in 1940 and who died in 1943 from typhus) and about the life she had created with him.

I am convinced that Sabiha Gökçen felt deep affection towards Atatürk and that her feelings were reciprocated. As we have seen, on more than one occasion she describes Atatürk as a loving and doting father who cared for his daughter(s) and spent many sleepless nights because of them. This is a side to her life story (and to Atatürk's life story) that we rarely read about. Like any other child growing up under the watchful eyes of a nation, Sabiha Gökçen was held accountable for her family's reputation and often buckled under the pressure. We know this from her memoirs and interviews, in which she openly writes and talks about her fear of failure and symptoms of fatigue and depression. As a single parent, Atatürk appears to have been a hands-on father who was involved in everything Sabiha did and who truly cared for her. He was also not shy to ask for help and provided Sabiha with much-needed maternal figures, like her teacher Nüveyre Uyguç and their housekeeper Hatice Baci; and to a certain extent Afet Uzmay, whom Sabiha considered to be her big sister. It is a complicated story, this story about Turkey's first 'First Family.' More so because it came to an abrupt ending when Atatürk died. So successful was Sabiha, so much loved by Atatürk, so secure was her position among the uppermost echelon of the regime, so omnipresent in the public arena, that the fact she was an Armenian orphan in a land living on Turkish nationalist sentiments might appear irrelevant to her life story. She had shown Turkey and the world that the sky was the limit for women in Turkey and elsewhere. She had not allowed herself to become a victim. And instead, had become the most celebrated woman of her time – that is, until Atatürk died.

#### *CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS*

What I wanted to avoid in this chapter was reading Sabiha's story as a fairy-tale-like fantasy. It is not just a tale that was written for little girls to encourage them to follow their dreams with the sky being the limit (there could not have been a profession with a better metaphorical allusion to this than the one Sabiha chose for herself). Nor, I think, is it simply an inspirational message for a generation of men (and women), or the equivalent Turkish rags-to-riches story to the American dream. This is, rather, the story of a woman who refused to belong anywhere else than in the world she lived in – and that ended so abruptly with Atatürk's death. It seems to me that "she did



not wish to be real for people outside of her history and daily life.”<sup>343</sup> Reading her memoirs, we note that she rarely speaks aloud to anyone but Atatürk. Her “coming to voice” is intimately bound up with her relationship with Atatürk and her identity as his daughter. Revealing a typical effect of gender, she demonstrates “an inability to see the value of her own contribution within larger social and historical narratives.”<sup>344</sup> Although her narrative might not take the “I am my own heroine” form we want to hear and uncover, it does not indicate an absence of agency either.<sup>345</sup> Remember what she told us above:

“Just think about this: once an orphan, a destitute girl from Bursa [...]. Little Sabiha from Bursa now has a place as Atatürk’s daughter Sabiha Gökçen in the Turkish air force [...].”<sup>346</sup>

Neither a victim nor a heroine, Sabiha presents herself not so much as a subject of history but of memory – Atatürk’s memory.<sup>347</sup> This, in fact, should come as a surprise to nobody as her memoirs were commissioned by the Turkish Aeronautical Association on the occasion of Atatürk’s 100th anniversary (and co-written by Oktay Verel). As such, her memoirs might be no more, and no less, than a work of mourning.

And yet one cannot but notice that the year Sabiha finished writing her memoirs was no ordinary year in the history of twentieth-century Turkey. The previous year, a military junta led by Chief of the General Staff General Kenan Evren took power in what is known as the bloodiest coup d’état in the political genealogy of Turkey, a country not entirely foreign to military takeovers. Although in old age Kenan Evren was a picture of innocence living in a coastal village close to Marmaris and painting oil portraits of puppies and the like, there is no doubt that he had the blood of a generation on his hands.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, 62.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid. 69. Indeed, she might have felt that way: although she had become a combat pilot, she had not been able to pave the way for women to become soldiers in their own right.

<sup>345</sup> Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory* (Cambridge, 1987), 19. Cf. Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, 69.

<sup>346</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk’ün İzinde*, 109.

<sup>347</sup> Following Kamala Visweswaran’s suggestion in her thought-provoking essay “Refusing the Subject,” it could be argued that if “we consider that one of the functions of nationalism is to constitute subjects (citizenship again), then refusing the subject is implicitly to refuse the nation.” See Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, 68.

<sup>348</sup> For an overview of literary narratives about the 1980 coup, see: Tahir Abacı, “Die Militärputsche und die Literatur” [The military take-overs and the literature], in *Hundert Jahre Türkei, Zeitzeugen erzählen* [100 Years of Turkey, Eyewitnesses recount], edited by Hülya Adak and Erika Glassen (Zürich, 2014), esp. 451ff.

That he is also one of the most controversial and contested figures in Turkish politics was vividly brought back to our memories when an ailing 94 year old Kenan Evren was escorted back into public life in a spectacular show trial sentencing him to life imprisonment for his role in staging the 1980 putsch forty years later.<sup>349</sup> “It was symbolically significant and equally inconsequential,” writes Ece Temelkuran in her recent book *Turkey: The Insane and the Melancholy*.<sup>350</sup> “With yesterday at a constantly shifting distance, it must be easy to play games with people’s memories,” Ece concludes and reminds us of a tweet that was posted on 4 April 2012 – the day when Kenan Evren’s trial began: “‘Ironic,’ read the tweet, ‘In order to reach the courtroom to attend Kenan Evren’s trial, you have to pass along Kenan Evren Boulevard, then Kenan Evren Street.’”<sup>351</sup> Reading this widely shared tweet again in Ece’s book, I cannot but notice again the contradiction that lies in our separating the past, present and future when writing about Turkey.

Thinking even more about 1981, the year when I was born, the year Sabiha finished writing her memoirs, and the year Turks in Turkey and around the world commemorated the 100th anniversary of Atatürk’s birth, I am reminded of another equally symbolically significant but historically inconsequential gesture that is very much part of my family’s history: the time when the EC/EU not only froze all relations with Turkey and suspended all financial assistance because of the severe human rights violations committed by the military junta of Kenan Evren but also when it raised an issue that “had been awaited with apprehension by the Turks, with hope by the Armenians (and their tactical allies, the Greeks) and indifference by everyone else:” the recognition of the Armenian genocide.<sup>352</sup> Granted, a series of assassinations by the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (and to a lesser extent the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide), which started in 1975 and mostly targeted Turkish diplomatic personnel, had already brought genocide recognition to public attention,<sup>353</sup> but it was only when a small group of MEPs raised the problem in a plenary session of the European Parliament in 1981 (by then 19 Turkish diplomats had been killed) that it became an issue of public concern which

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<sup>349</sup> Also put on trial was the former airforce commander and former colleague of Sabiha, Tahsin Şahinkaya, the only other surviving member of the military junta that organized the 1980 putsch.

<sup>350</sup> Ece Temelkuran, *Turkey: The Insane and the Melancholy* (London, 2015), 56.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>352</sup> See [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-91-46\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-91-46_en.htm) and Andrew Mango, “Historiography by political committee and committed historians,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 25.4 (1989): 532ff. In contrast, the European Parliament voted 471 to 37 to halt Turkey’s EU accession talks following the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016 but failed to implement a formal freeze on relations because of a migration deal struck with Turkey in March 2016.

<sup>353</sup> The stated intention of the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) was to pressure the Turkish Government to publicly acknowledge its responsibility for the Armenian Genocide in 1915, pay reparations, and give back Western Armenia. During my research trips to Armenia in 2015, I met former members of this organization and conducted interviews with them for an oral history project (“Babamın Arkadaşları” or “My Father’s Friends”) based on my father’s recollections of the 1980s.

would dominate EU-Turkey relations for decades to come and would lead to the historic European Parliament Resolution on a political solution to the Armenian question (Doc. A2-33/87) on June 18, 1987, making the European Parliament the first major international body to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

I mentioned earlier that reading Sabiha Gökçen's life story one enters a terrain requiring continual reconfiguration, antagonism and scrutiny. Set against this historical backdrop, it is difficult not to become antagonized and even embittered by Sabiha's silence about the political situation inside Turkey. Certainly, although Sabiha could be said to have been propagating myths of egalitarian nationalism and militarism in her memoirs while the military junta detained 650,000 people, persecuted 230,000 in military courts, killed 300 in prison (171 of them using torture), and tortured and made disappear thousands more, evidence of her personal involvement in or support for these events remains weak.<sup>354</sup> And yet it is hard not to wonder whether what Kenan Evren said after the 1980 coup ("Such a generation we shall raise that they will not remember you") was not already well underway in 1981.<sup>355</sup>

Remembering gets you killed in Turkey. Sabiha must have known that. In fact, everyone in Turkey probably knows that. That someone would get killed remembering her, however, Sabiha could not have known when she took the secret about her Armenian ancestry to the grave.

When Hrant Dink, the Armenian journalist and editor of the bilingual Turkish-Armenian newspaper *Ağos*, published his article "The Secret of Sabiha-Hatun" on 6 February 2004,<sup>356</sup> revealing her life-long kept secret to the Turkish public, people in Turkey were outraged at his disclosure of Sabiha Gökçen's Armenian origins.<sup>357</sup> Had she not been Turkey's first female pilot, Atatürk's beloved daughter and a national symbol of female emancipation?<sup>358</sup> That Atatürk's daughter Sabiha Gökçen was an Armenian orphan "unsettled many nationalist myths" in

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<sup>354</sup> These numbers are taken from Ece Temelkuran, *Turkey: The Insane and the Melancholy*, 56.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>356</sup> Hrant Dink, "Sabiha-Hatun'un sırrı" [The Secret of Sabiha-Hatun], *Ağos*, 6 February 2004.

<sup>357</sup> On the public reverberations of this article and its media representations in the Turkish press, see Fatma Ulgen, "Sabiha Gökçen's 80-year-old secret: Kemalist nation formation and the Ottoman Armenian" (PhD diss., University of San Diego, 2013), 151ff.

<sup>358</sup> The General Chief of Staff reacted to the article with a press statement declaring that "Regardless of its aim, opening a national symbol like this up to discussion is a crime against national integrity and social peace." Statement by the Turkish Chief of Staff, as reported by the Turkish daily *Milliyet* on 23 February 2004.

Turkey.<sup>359</sup> “Genocide allegations had never haunted Atatürk [...] the myth-maker, the moral compass of the Turkish nation [...] in such a vital way before.”<sup>360</sup> Hrant’s research into Sabiha Gökçen’s family background and the subsequent publication of his article “The Secret of Sabiha-Hatun” revealed a deep-seated fear among Turks that these revelations would have far-reaching implications for the legitimacy, in fact the integrity, of the Turkish state.<sup>361</sup> In short, an Armenian Sabiha Gökçen was perceived to be an insult to the Turkishness upheld in Article 301.<sup>362</sup> The following story is what caused most upset. It was told by one Hripsime Gazaryan (Sebelican), an Armenian citizen and a former undocumented housecleaner in Turkey:

“Sabiha Gökçen is my aunt. We are originally from Gaziantep. From the Sebilciyan family. The mother of the family was Meryem Sebelciyan, the father Nerses Sebelciyan. Nerses died in the 1915 massacres. They had two girls, in total seven children. One of the girls is Diruhi, my mother, and the other Hatun. This Hatun is actually Sabiha Gökçen, my aunt. [...] she and my mother were in the orphanage in Cibiñ [close to Gaziantep]. [...] It was there that Atatürk spotted my aunt, who was a very cute girl, and pointed his finger at her, and said, ‘I want this girl.’”<sup>363</sup>

Following the publication of his article on Sabiha, Hrant Dink became a target of public violence that would eventually lead to his death. In a full disclosure, just two days before his murder, Hrant writes:

“A foreword before I begin: I have been sentenced to 6 months imprisonment for ‘insulting Turkishness,’ a crime I haven’t committed. [...] Of course, when I put the things I know and the things I sense together, I do have an answer to this question. This is how it can be summed up: certain people decided and said, ‘This Hrant Dink man has gone too far. He needs to learn a lesson,’ and pushed the button. I know this is a claim which puts myself and my Armenian identity at centre stage. You may argue that I exaggerate. But nevertheless, this is my perception of it. The facts I have and my life

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<sup>359</sup> Hülya Adak, “Gendering Denial Narratives of the Decade of Terror (1975–85): the Case of Sâmiha Ayverdi/Neşide Kerem Demir and Hatun Sebilciyan/Sabiha Gökçen,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, 17.3 (2015): 337.

<sup>360</sup> Fatma Ülgen, “Sabiha Gökçen’s 80-year-old secret: Kemalist nation formation and the Ottoman Armenians,” 47.

<sup>361</sup> Vicken Cheterian, *Open Wounds: Armenians, Turks and a Century of Genocide*, 27.

<sup>362</sup> Hrant Dink, “Niçin hedef seçildim?” [Why was I chosen as a target?], *Agos*, 12 January 2007. For an English translation of the article, see <https://hrantdink.org/en/hrant-dink/hrant-dink-articles/728-why-was-i-chosen-as-a-target>

<sup>363</sup> In an interview recorded on 29 January 2004 and transcribed by Diran Lokmagözyan.

experiences leave me no other explanation. My task now is to tell you everything I have lived and sensed. Then, you can decide for yourself. [...].

Hrant continues by telling us how he was called into the office of the Istanbul governor for an unofficial meeting about his article on Sabiha. During the meeting he realized, so he writes, “Now I was the target.” His wife, Rakel Dink later remembers that during this meeting “there were [also] two representatives of the secret police. And they told him what would happen. They told him if something happened to him it was going to be in the street, in daylight.”<sup>364</sup>

Hrant Dink was killed outside the offices of the *Agos* newspaper on 19 January 2007 by a seventeen-year-old man from Trabzon. Kenan Evren, the seemingly innocent granddad from Marmaris and hangman of the 1980s, would a few days later comment that “this was not a job done by a child or his friends” there was a “larger organization behind the crime” and that Hrant’s killer “was chosen and trained for the job,” affirming the suspicions of not only Hrant Dink’s family and friends but many people in Turkey.<sup>365</sup>

To my knowledge, no more historical evidence has been uncovered about Sabiha’s Armenian ancestry than what Hrant unearthed before his death, except, maybe, for Alev Er’s meticulous research into the whereabouts of an orphanage in Bursa where Sabiha *could* have been when she first met Atatürk at the age of 12.<sup>366</sup> I have certainly not uncovered any more. When I think back to the day when Hrant Dink’s article “The Secret of Sabiha-Hatun” was published revealing her Armenian ancestry more than thirteen years ago, and also to the day when Hrant Dink was found dead more than eleven years ago, it strikes me as significant that many of us started writing and researching Sabiha’s life story in the following years. I have come to the realization that we might be writing about her not as a subject of history but of memory: his memory, Hrant’s memory.

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<sup>364</sup> Rakel Dink as quoted in Vicken Cheterian, *Open Wounds: Armenians, Turks and a Century of Genocide* (Oxford, 2015), 29.

<sup>365</sup> Kenan Evren as quoted in *Hürriyet* newspaper, 22 January 2007.

<sup>366</sup> Alev Er, “Hrant’ın, kayıp Ermeni yetimin pesinde” [In pursuit of Hrant’s lost orphan], *Agos*, 24 July 2015.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### WHAT IS SEEN AND WHAT IS NOT SAID: LIJİ PULCU ÇİZMECIYAN AND HER ARMENIAN MEMOIR.<sup>367</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the predicament of marginality – “that liminal situation, between two worlds,” as Leo Spitzer once explained it, “in which assimilating individuals find themselves” through the life story of Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyan.<sup>368</sup>

Liji was born in Istanbul in 1924 to a Catholic Armenian family. Her father, Jan Pulcu, an artist and designer, owned a shop in the historic *Hazza Pulo Pasaji* in the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul. Her mother, Katrin, moved to Istanbul from Bursa during the war years – the time of the genocide, although Liji does not speak about this.<sup>369</sup> Liji spent most of her early childhood in Sarıyer, where her family owned a wooden villa overlooking the Bosphorus. After her father’s sudden death, the family moved to a house at 233 Tavukçu Fethi Street in the Osmanbey neighbourhood of Istanbul. Her father had built the house in 1898. At the age of six, Liji was enrolled in the elementary school, L’Ecole, located in the same neighbourhood, and she continued her secondary schooling at the French Notre Dame de Sion lyceum. She graduated from there in 1944 at the age of 20. After her high school graduation, she studied English philology at Istanbul University, where Halide Edib Adivar was her teacher, and she then started teaching English at her old high school. At the behest of her husband, she applied for a CNRS scholarship in 1956, and spent a year in France conducting research for her doctoral dissertation on Marcel Proust. She has one daughter, who lives in the United States. Her husband died in

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<sup>367</sup> An abbreviated version of this chapter was accepted to be part of “Istanbul through the Looking Glass: Heterogeneous Histories, Disparate Spaces, Divergent Images,” Special Issue of *the International Journal of Turkish Studies*, proposed and edited by Jeremy F. Walton, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity.

<sup>368</sup> Leo Spitzer, *Lives in Between*, 4.

<sup>369</sup> According to an official Ottoman pre-war census, there had been 58,921 Apostolic Armenians, 1,278 Catholic Armenians, and 992 Protestants (mostly Armenians) in the Bursa province. In 1917, only 2,999 Armenians remained. Of these, 84 were Apostolic Armenians, 1,136 Catholic Armenians, 1,032 Protestant Armenians, 536 were members of ‘soldiers’ families’ 52 were converts to Islam and 159 people remained by special permission. Cited in Ara Sarafian, *Talaat Pasha’s Report on the Armenian Genocide* (London: 2011), footnote 18. In recent years, scholars have debated whether the Ottoman government exempted Catholic and Protestant Armenians (and those who sent their sons to war) from the deportations as a result of pressure from the German government. Taner Akçam’s meticulous research, however, has shown that, while indeed selected Armenians were not deported at first, they faced deportation and death at a later stage. See, for example, Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks’ crime against humanity: The Armenian genocide and ethnic cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, 2012), 376ff. Although Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyan does not talk about this in her memoirs, we can assume that it was with this background that the maternal side of her family came to Istanbul.

1999 and she now lives alone in Istanbul. She spends the summer months on Büyükada, an island in the Marmara Sea near Istanbul. This is where I met her for the first time in summer 2014.

I started reading Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyan's memoir in 2015. I was fascinated by her account of growing up as an Armenian girl in Istanbul – at a time when Atatürk was still alive. Initially, I read her memoirs as plain autobiographical writing which could tell us much about how Armenians assimilated and were able to celebrate Turkish nationhood at the symbolic level of Atatürk, but soon I thought that it might be a perfect memoir to use in a reflection on the autobiographical gesture and its relation to silence, memory and identity construction in the aftermath of genocide and war.

At first, I was hesitant, maybe even resistant to the idea of writing about Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyan. She was the upstairs summertime neighbour of my 'auntie' on Büyükada and I had already been to her house numerous times to drink tea. I was afraid that I might produce a reading of her autobiography that would either come across as patronizing or one that might be "thought a mere holy hearing of voices."<sup>370</sup> I sought advice from a friend of mine, Marianna Hovhannisyan.<sup>371</sup> At the time, Marianna was preparing her exhibition *Empty Fields* (2016), and although our practices were very different we shared many convergences between our respective works. Initially, Marianna and I had met by email after both of us had been nominated for the Hrant Dink Turkey-Armenia Fellowship Scheme Award (2014-2015).<sup>372</sup> We were both required to share our research with the public and bonded over a certain discomfort that we felt when our work was contextualized and understood as a form of counter-history or political advocacy on behalf of Armenian genocide victims and their descendants. On the one hand, we did not want to settle for a narrow account of what really happened but instead we wanted to draw attention to what keeps on happening to *our* historical experiences. On the other hand, we were both fascinated with the idea of history as a way to produce an archive as well as being a way to analyse one.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> For an excellent discussion of this problem, see Julia Swindells' superb essay "Liberating the Subject? Autobiography and 'Women's History': A Reading of the Diaries of Hannah Cullwick" in *The Personal Narratives Group* (Eds.) *Interpreting Women's Lives* (Indiana, 1989), 27ff.

<sup>371</sup> Email correspondence and conversations with Marianna Hovhannisyan, 11.01.2015 – ongoing.

<sup>372</sup> For more information on the fellowship scheme, see: <http://www.armtr-beyondborders.org/en/turkey-armenia-fellowship-scheme/>

<sup>373</sup> Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*, 8.



“What do we owe the victims? How can we best carry their stories forward, without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn, having our own stories displaced by them? How are we implicated in the aftermath of crimes we did not ourselves witness?”<sup>374</sup> These are questions raised by studies of the Holocaust but that had not yet been asked about the Armenian genocide. And there were more. I felt that the notion of denial was too limiting and narrow to describe the aftermath of a catastrophe whose effects continue to be felt in our present. What about the absence of archival sources? The nothingness of the archive?<sup>375</sup> How are we to represent its visual silence? Don’t we owe it to the victims to tell their stories? How are we to collect their stories, in Turkey, without risking their children’s and grandchildren’s livelihoods, without unduly calling attention to them, and without making ourselves victims in the process? The question ‘which archive for the survivor?’ was one that Marianna and I both struggled with.<sup>376</sup> Moving beyond commonly held notions about archives, I was drawn to the category of silence (which I soon realized was also the very notion that made it so difficult for me to interpret Liji’s memoirs) while Marianna began to explore the visuality of ‘empty fields’ and ‘blank spaces.’

As Marianna was continuing her research into what would become the source material for her exhibition *Empty Fields*, and her research team made a major discovery in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions collection that is housed at the SALT Archives, I decided to stop working on Liji’s memoirs. Indeed, I had not been able to find the connection between the questions I was asking about the testimony of silence in Western Armenian memoirs, like Liji’s, and the workings of memory in the aftermath of historic trauma to which I was slowly turning after reading Hagob Oshagan’s hauntingly beautiful novel *Remnants*. What Marianna and the research team had found was a bound handwritten book authored by Johannes Jacob Manissadjian (1862, Niksar, Ottoman Empire – 1942, Detroit, Michigan, U.S.), who by sheer historical coincidence turned out to be my grandaunt Charlotte Lorenz’s Ottoman (and possibly

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<sup>374</sup> Marianna Hirsch, *Postmemory*, 2.

<sup>375</sup> See Marc Nichanian, *Writers of Disaster. Volume One: The National Revolution* (Princeton and London, 2002), 13. ff.

<sup>376</sup> See Marc Nichanian’s compelling commentary on Marianna Hovhannisyan’s exhibition *Empty Fields*, in a talk entitled “Which Archive for the Survivor,” that took place on 10 May 2016 at SALT Galata. It can be watched at [https://youtu.be/h5LVUJ9W\\_DA](https://youtu.be/h5LVUJ9W_DA)

Armenian) teacher.<sup>377</sup> The book Marianna and the research team found in 2015 bears the title *Catalogue of the Museum of Anatolia College*.

As I struggled with my decision not to write about Liji's memoirs and Marianna struggled to answer questions of her own, like what she would do with the *Catalogue of the Museum of Anatolia College* and how she should visualize the gaps in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions collection, we met for a final time (before I left Istanbul). "That's it. Let's see Liji," Marianna told me. "Maybe I can interview her for my exhibition, and you can ask her the questions you need to ask." On our way over to Liji's house, we thought of many questions we wanted to ask her. We did not ask any of them. The silence got to us as soon as we entered the door. Instead, we politely sat in Liji's living room listening to the life story that Liji wanted us to know – with all the trappings and cavities that are so typical of any type of personal narrative.

Leaving Liji's house, we were both frustrated by our politeness but we also realized that we faced similar problems in the interpretation of our respective sources. We thought together about how we could pose meaningful questions while still being careful about the "dangerous intimacy between subjectification and subjection."<sup>378</sup> How could we highlight the absences we had uncovered but still also respect the silences we had encountered? I do not even remember why, but I found myself telling Marianna the story of how standing in the open stacks of Sterling library at Yale University looking at the shelves 'about' Turkey I was completely puzzled by the absence of some of the books I had come looking for but which I had no problem locating in, for example, a library in Damascus or Istanbul. Marianna thought that the missing books did not necessarily indicate a lack, but rather actual gaps in historical narratives. In *Empty Fields* she would later write that "[this] points out how archival classification systems not only grind out information, but function as charts to help to explore the unknown depths of archival materials," only to conclude that:

"[here] the remains of the past are seen through the lens of the associations they evoke. There is no aim to restore past connections [...] the subject of the catastrophe returns as a contemporary discourse which revolves around *what is seen and what is not said* [sic]."<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Johannes Jacob Manissadjian, son of German mother Katharina Klein and Armenian father Barsam Manissadjian, was born in Niksar in 1862. He graduated from Aintab College in 1883, a Christian college run by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in 1874.

<sup>378</sup> Deniz Riley, *Am I that Name?* (New York, 1988), 20. Also quoted in Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, 60.

<sup>379</sup> Marianna Hovhannisyan, *Empty Fields*, 19.

I suggest that we read Liji's memoirs as Marianna proposes, as a visual archive to "what is seen and what is not said."

#### *SEARCHING FOR LOST TIMES IN ISTANBUL*

When Liji wrote her memoirs, she did so on the same old typewriter she had used to write up her doctoral dissertation on Marcel Proust. "I received great pleasure [from writing my memoirs]; it was as if I would live those memories again."<sup>380</sup> In her book, Liji's life story ends the day she graduates from Notre Dame de Sion. The remaining pages of her memoirs are dedicated to what she calls "In Search of Lost Times: Neighbourhoods, Streets and People." In her introduction to the 2014 edition, she explains that she first published parts of her memoirs (written in French) in a book prepared for the 150th anniversary of her school, Notre Dame de Sion, in 2006. It was only a few years later – after some insistence from her editor – that she submitted a manuscript to İş Bankası, a publishing house known for publishing world classics in Turkish language translations and books about and around Atatürk's life. People who have read her memoirs have told me that they were reminded of the "good old times."<sup>381</sup> In fact, this is also the sales pitch of the publishing house. The blurb on the back of the 2014 edition begins with the following sentences:

*"İstanbul'da Kayıp Zamanlar* depicts Istanbul through the eyes of a little girl, almost the same age as the [Turkish] Republic. She watched Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha [Atatürk] give a speech from the balcony of the Kocataş Villa. Later, this *republican child* [emphasis added] studied at the same school as his adopted daughters.

Born into an Armenian Catholic family, she paints the story of her childhood in Sarıyer and the years of her adolescence in Osmanbey [...] in bright colours."

The narrative content immediately suggests itself to the reader: this book tells the story of a little girl whose life intersected with the birth of the Turkish republic. That Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyan is Armenian is an adjacent fact, secondary in relation to her being republican. The notion of an Armenian girl as a "republican child" is a useful one in a political climate in which descriptions of Armenians range from traitor to victim thus shaping the various horizons of expectation of İş Bankası's diverse readership. The prologue to her memoirs corresponds to this predicament. She begins with an anecdote about her mother getting a certificate for completing a literacy course

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<sup>380</sup> Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyan, *İstanbul'da Kayıp Zamanlar* [*Lost Times in Istanbul*] (Istanbul, 2014), ix.

<sup>381</sup> Conversation with Necile Deliceoglu.

learning how to read and write the Latin alphabet. “[Atatürk] attaches such importance to reading and writing that he teaches it himself on a blackboard,” her mother Katrin told everyone.<sup>382</sup> “What would I give to go to the school where [Atatürk] teaches on the blackboard,” Liji writes and tells us about the evening she saw Atatürk talk “from Necmettin Molla’s house” in Sariyer. “He came onto the balcony and I saw him really well. He talked; everything that I understood was that he loved us and that he worked for [our] nation.”<sup>383</sup>

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After a carefree childhood spent in Sariyer, Liji’s life came to an abrupt halt when her father died on 27 May 1930. The following year, her mother enrolled her and her sister Irma in the elementary school, L’Ecole – a school close to their house in Osmanbey and run by the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion.<sup>384</sup> Liji admits that it took her some time to get used to school:

“I was six and in first grade. I knew French but I could not read it. [...] Young Sœur Emmanuelle, who came from Paris that year, entrusted me to a girl in the second grade to help me a bit. Her name was Jozefin. Then I remembered that my birth name is Jozefin, but my father chose the name Liji from the novel *Quo Vadis* [written by the Polish writer Henryk Sienkiewicz in 1895].”<sup>385</sup>

Her school, Liji tells us, was opened to help educate the children of poor Catholic families living in the neighbourhood.

“Many were so poor; they could not afford even the small school fee. Marie, a blond girl with rosy cheeks, came to school with a dirty face [...] Others, Marie and her big sister Elvira, were not very clean [also] and were scratching. [...] ‘They have fleas,’ my mother said. We [my sister and I] never played with them.”<sup>386</sup>

Revealing her own bourgeois upbringing and perspective, she tells us:

“There were also those who wore neat [clothes], with clean and ironed school uniforms, with starched white collars. [...] And there was Concetta. [...] In the mornings, she

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<sup>382</sup> Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyan, *Istanbul’da Kayıp Zamanlar*, 2.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>384</sup> The Congregation of Our Lady of Sion was founded in Paris in 1843. In 1856, the sisters of the Congregation of Our Lady of Sion opened the Lycée Notre Dame de Sion in Istanbul as one of their French-speaking boarding schools. During World War One, the school was closed but it reopened in 1919. The Sisters of Our Lady of Sion’s congregation was one of many religious congregations that remained in Turkey after World War One and ran schools in republican Turkey. In 1924, there were 36 Catholic schools in Istanbul alone serving 12,000 students, of whom 2500 were of Muslim background. See Ayten Sezer, *Atatürk döneminde yabancı okullar, 1923-1938* [Foreign Schools during the Atatürk Era, 1923-1938] (Ankara, 1999), 22/ Footnote 91.

<sup>385</sup> Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyan, *Istanbul’da Kayıp Zamanlar*, 47.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 48.

smelled like soap. A fat white- pinkish blond child. For lunch, she brought a great variety of food and sweets [...]. Sœur Emmanuelle probably did not appreciate [her bringing] such a feast to this school for the poor [...].”<sup>387</sup>

Liji and her sister brought caviar sandwiches to school. The reason for this extravagant and expensive food option was that they were apparently picky eaters:

“When we were small we did not have a lot of appetite, but we loved caviar. [...] My mother would spread caviar between two thin slices of buttered bread, and we would eat [it] at lunch. ‘If a child asks you, tell them that this is olive paste,’ my mother told us.”<sup>388</sup>

L’Ecole accepted students from all kinds of backgrounds. The teacher, Sœur Emmanuelle, born Madeleine Cinquin in 1908, writes in her memoirs *Confessions d'une religieuse* that she was “in charge of 50 first graders, all girls [...]. They came from poor Christian families, either Greek or Armenian, [and were] marginalised by their religion.”<sup>389</sup> Known in her later life for her unorthodox religious views, challenging Vatican policy on topics like contraception, and living among the *ḡabbaleen* – the garbage collectors of the Ezbet El-Nakhl slum on the outskirts of Cairo – Sœur Emmanuelle was perhaps one of the more colourful characters at Liji’s school. She had come to Istanbul after completing her novitiate and was a rather inexperienced teacher, as she explained in her memoirs:

“I love my children, but that is not enough. I am too inexperienced, too giggly. I don’t want my classes to be too rigid. While learning how to teach, I make up my classes with dance and song. There are also living examples. I plunge a doll into a bowl of water and soap it vigorously, and then I comb her hair. ‘Do you see how pretty she is now? Who will come [to school] tomorrow equally neat?’ Small fingers were raised with enthusiasm [and] amidst cries of joy [...].”<sup>390</sup>

During our conversation, Liji told me that it was this spontaneity and fresh approach that made Sœur Emmanuelle so welcoming and likable in the eyes of a child who had been reluctant to start school as she had been: “I [only] started liking school [when] Sœur Emmanuelle brought a doll,” Liji writes in her memoirs.<sup>391</sup> In our conversation, she added that she owed her lifelong curiosity and courage to try out new things to Sœur Emmanuelle’s influence on her early life. Later, she had felt incredibly lucky when she had heard that Sœur Emmanuelle would start teaching at Notre Dame de Sion around the same time she began to study at this prestigious school – just

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>389</sup> Sœur Emmanuelle, *Confessions d'une religieuse* [Confessions of a religious person] (Paris, 2008), 69.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid., 69-70.

<sup>391</sup> Çizmeciyen, *Istanbul'da Kayıp Zamanlar*, 49.

two doors down from her elementary school, L'Ecole, and also run by the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion. But Liji also knew that Sœur Emmanuelle was not a big fan of such elitist establishments.<sup>392</sup> “My heart slumped to the floor [when I heard about my new assignment]. Abandon my beloved small children for the rich daughters of the pashas! [...] I was completely against [this idea],” Sœur Emmanuelle acknowledged later.<sup>393</sup> Apparently, the sole reason for her agreeing to teach at the Notre Dame de Sion lycée had been some convincing, and admittedly flattering, words from Mother Elvira: teaching there, she – Sœur Emmanuelle – would play a determining role in the future of the country by educating Turkey’s elite!<sup>394</sup>

Sœur Emmanuelle was 22 years old when Liji first met her: “she was tall, [always] wearing a narrow pleated skirt, rosy faced, with blue eyes, and most probably blond.”<sup>395</sup> This last bit of Liji’s description of Sœur Emmanuelle at the age of 22 offers us a curious detail: “most probably blond.” From Liji’s memoirs it is not entirely clear why she did not make out her teacher’s hair colour, or why she never questioned seeing it at all. Had not all religious clerics and nuns been banned from wearing any religious attire by official decree? Could it have been that Sœur Emmanuelle continued to cover her head even after wearing religious attire was banned outside places of worship from 13 June 1935 onwards? And indeed, in her own recollections of Turkey at this particular historical moment Sœur Emmanuelle writes about the antagonism she felt towards the new law. It became part of the inner conflict she had been battling with ever since she had first learned about Turkey’s infamous hat law of 1925, which required traditional headgear – like the fez – to be replaced with a western-style brimmed hat.<sup>396</sup> “My God, it is difficult [...] I dream so easily about dying for my faith but when the moment comes would I really do it? Would I have the same courage [as those fanatics still wearing the fez]?”<sup>397</sup>

Little detail is known about how the ban affected individual lives, and especially the Christian communities living in Turkey at the time. If we are to judge from Sœur Emmanuelle’s recollections, the ban was a particularly heavy blow to the clerics and nuns living in Istanbul and

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<sup>392</sup> Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyan, Interview with Suzan Meryem Rosita Kalayci.

<sup>393</sup> Sœur Emmanuelle, *Confessions d'une religieuse*, 76.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

<sup>395</sup> Çizmeciyan, *Istanbul'da Kayıp Zamanlar*, 49.

<sup>396</sup> The Hat Law was passed on 25 November 1925, making it mandatory for everyone to adopt the dress code of the civilized nations of the world, i.e. Western dress. The law was forcefully implemented. During the months following its enactment, 808 people were arrested for violations of it and 57 people were executed for trying to instigate a state rebellion by not adhering to the law. See, Camilla T. Nereid, “Kemalism on the Catwalk: the Turkish Hat Law of 1925,” *Journal of Social History* 44.3 (2011): 707.

<sup>397</sup> Sœur Emmanuelle, *Confessions d'une religieuse*, 81-82.

was met with immediate resistance. Although it was definitely an anticlerical measure, no evidence exists that it expressed any antireligious sentiments. The following excerpt from Sœur Emmanuelle's memoirs is perhaps illustrative of the incredible lengths to which Atatürk was willing to go to ensure that his politically calculated actions against public displays of religion were not misunderstood by – at least – Istanbul's Catholic community, who de facto were educating two of his adopted daughters (as we have seen in the previous chapter): "Atatürk took great care to reassure Mother Elvira: he was obliged to apply the law to everyone, but the sisters were urged not to abandon the country."<sup>398</sup> The situation they found themselves in was difficult, Sœur Emmanuelle recalls:

"Never, really never, did we meet nuns without the cornette [a type of religious head dress with a starched piece of white fabric that is folded upwards]. [...] Paris [the congregation's headquarters] was scandalized at the thought of us wearing civilian clothes. [...] Mother Elvira decided to fight [...] and asked our cardinal protector in Rome for advice. This venerable man could not understand why one would close a prosperous business for this or that type of frock. A victory for Mother Elvira, one that Paris [immediately] matched with a formal order: 'Do not give in to vanity!' Now, the formidable problem [was]: how to re-dress 60 women aged from 25 to 65 without worrying about the fashion of the day and inventing for each a different outfit (obliging to laicity!) and modest (to reassure our congregation [in Paris]!). [...] The result was, let's say, satisfactory. [...] Each of us looked funnier than the next."<sup>399</sup>

The diplomatic representative of the Pope in Istanbul, Monsignor Roncalli, looked the funniest, Sœur Emmanuelle remembered: he cut a comical figure with his too-short waistcoat and his big belly protruding and his hands always crossed over his abdomen in a hopeless attempt to hide it. But he had been a good sport about it all, she also writes, and had encouraged the sisters to follow suit.<sup>400</sup> In his diaries, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the papal nuncio to Istanbul from 1934-1944 who would become Pope John XXIII in 1958, writes:

"I am in Turkey. [...] There is so much work waiting for me here! [...] Even the trial of having to wear civilian attire has been accepted with resignation by all my clergy. I must, however, always set an example, with proper dignity and edifying behaviour."<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid. Note that in this excerpt we also learn how many sisters of the Notre Dame de Sion order were living in Istanbul at the time. To learn more about the missionary impact on modern Turkey as a factor changing education, health and standards of living, see Hans-Lukas Kieser's excellent article "Mission as Factor of Change in Turkey (nineteenth to first half of twentieth century)," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 13.4 (2002): 391-410.

<sup>400</sup> Sœur Emmanuelle, *Confessions d'une religieuse*, 83.

<sup>401</sup> Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, "Spiritual Exercises in Istanbul 15-22 December 1935, with my priests," as published in Pope John XXIII, *Journal of a Soul* (London, 2000), 226.

In her own recollections of the affair, Liji mischievously writes that while Monsignor Roncalli looked like any other badly dressed overweight man in the neighbourhood, the nuns adapted rather quickly to their civilian clothing, sporting knee-length skirts and blouses in the summer.<sup>402</sup> The Mother Superior, on the other hand, dressed much more elegantly and extravagantly, copying fashion trends of the day:

“Our Mother Elvira was just like *une grande dame* [sic]. I once met her on the street: all her hair was tucked into a small hat of the kind that was very fashionable that year. [She was] in a long black coat; with a black fur around her neck and a small black handbag. She was wearing the clothes all [the other] ladies were wearing in Ankara and Istanbul in the republican era.”<sup>403</sup>

That the nuns adapted so quickly to their new clothing was not something to be taken for granted and no one probably deserves more credit than Monsignor Roncalli, who Hannah Arendt once tellingly described as “the only true Christian” to ever sit on St. Peter’s chair: “Everybody you met [in Rome during his final days], from cab driver to writer and editor, from waiter to shopkeeper, believers and unbelievers of all confessions, had a story to tell about what Roncalli had done and said, of how he had behaved on such and such an occasion.”<sup>404</sup> This holds good for Roncalli’s time in Istanbul. Examples abound. Liji, writes about her first and subsequent meeting with Roncalli as follows:

“From the moment Mgr. Roncalli came to our school, he had won our hearts. His hands were full [of presents and sweets]. Weren’t we children after all? He spoke strange French, because he was translating what he was saying [directly] from Italian. [...] We all thought his name Angelo, meaning ‘Angel’, suited him really well.”<sup>405</sup>

Roncalli arrived in Istanbul in a trying time. His predecessor left him with a difficult legacy: many Catholic schools had been closed by the Turkish government in the years prior to his arrival. In 1924, just one year after the foundation of the Turkish republic and the year of Liji’s birth, 40 French schools and two Italian schools were closed in Istanbul alone because they were suspected of representing the national interests of France and Italy, two powers that had –

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<sup>402</sup> Çizmeciyen, *Istanbul’da Kayıp Zamanlar*, 64.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 69 [emphasis in the text].

<sup>404</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli: A Christian on St. Peter’s Chair from 1958 to 1963,” in *Men in Dark Times* (New York, 1968), 57. This essay about Roncalli was first published as a book review of Roncalli’s previously cited autobiography *Journal of a Soul* (1965). Also see Katherin Arens, “Hannah Arendt Translates Culture: Men in Dark Times,” *Monatshefte* 108.4 (2016): 543ff.

<sup>405</sup> Çizmeciyen, *Istanbul’da Kayıp Zamanlar*, 59.



together with Great Britain – occupied Istanbul after the Great War.<sup>406</sup> There were about 20,000 Catholics in Turkey after the war but they were divided by different liturgical rites (Roman, Armenian, Chaldean, Greek, Syriac and Greek-Melkite) and different national interests in the region (especially France and Italy).<sup>407</sup> It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the Catholic presence in Turkey was seen as a threat.

Roncalli was well aware of the political situation he came into as the new papal annuncio and made a decision that endeared him to many people in Turkey: he introduced the use of Turkish in worship and in official Church correspondence.<sup>408</sup> The Catholic community responded with indignation, Liji remembers:

“the old people did not like it at all. Those who did not like it were [mostly] the Levantines, who only spoke a bit of Turkish. Some even left the church during service. [...] The bishop’s Turkish was getting better; he took a lot of lessons. But the old ladies were still against [him giving the sermon in Turkish]. They were born and grew up in Istanbul but never learned to speak Turkish properly. The church would usually empty before the sermon began. How could they have known that the bishop would later become Pope John XXIII [...]?”<sup>409</sup>

In his diaries, the future pope writes frankly about his struggle to learn Turkish at the age of 60:<sup>410</sup> “It is my special intention [...] to learn the Turkish language. To know so little of it, after five

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<sup>406</sup> Even the most cursory look at the headlines of Turkish newspapers of the day will substantiate this claim. For a selection of relevant newspaper articles, see: Ayten Sezer, *Atatürk döneminde yabancı okullar*, 22. For a contemporary newspaper article on this subject in English see, for example, “Schools in Turkey close,” 10 April 1924, *New York Times*.

<sup>407</sup> In a lecture delivered at Bergama University in 1936, Roncalli says that while there were 20,000 Catholics after the war, during his time there were only 6,000 Catholics left. “I am not talking about the Armenians [...] but the Latins: the Italians, the French, [...]” Angelo G. Roncalli, “Chiesa Cattolica e Oriente [The Catholic Church and the Orient], Bergama University, 24 September 1936. As cited in Angelo G. Roncalli, *La Predicazione a Istanbul: Omelie, Discorsi e Note Pastorali (1935–1944)* [Preaching in Istanbul: Sermons, Discourses and Pastoral Notes (1935–1944)], edited by Alberto Melloni, (Florence, 1993), 94. I am indebted to Carlo Milani for discovering this book and our conversation on the topic. Also see Massimo Faggioli, *John XXIII: The Medicine of Mercy* (Collegeville, 2014), 69ff.

<sup>408</sup> Roncalli started holding his sermons (or parts of it) in Turkish from Christmas 1936 onward. He understood this as “a symbolic gesture” toward the Turkish people and regime. See Alberto Melloni, “Introduzione” [Introduction] in *La Predicazione*, 14.

<sup>409</sup> Liji writes that holding sermons in Turkish was a “novelty” introduced by Roncalli (p. 59). To my knowledge, the Friends’ Armenian Mission, which operated in Istanbul from 1885 to 1922 under the guardianship of the Quaker woman A.M. Burgess, was another church in Istanbul that held worship meetings in both Armenian and Turkish. See: Maud A.E. Rowntree (1917), “In the City of the Sultan,” as cited in *Friends’ Armenian Mission Constantinople Report 1917*, Yale University Divinity School, Call No: Bdcl F 93, p. 6.

<sup>410</sup> Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, “Retreat with my secular clergy in Istanbul, at the Apostolic Delegation. 12-18 December, 1937,” as published in Pope John XXIII, *Journal of a Soul*, 233. Roncalli was not only one who found it difficult to learn Turkish – though in his case it was voluntary. The German émigré Leo Spitzer, who was appointed as the first professor of Romance languages and literatures and acted as Head of Department of the School of Foreign Languages between 1933-1936, was officially obliged to learn Turkish within one year to keep his position at the newly founded Istanbul University (1933). His essay “En apprenant le turc: Considérations psychologiques sur cette langue” [On Learning Turkish: Psychological Considerations on this Language], offers a glimpse into not just

years in Istanbul, is a disgrace.”<sup>411</sup> In her memoirs, Liji writes she admired Roncalli because he had always made an effort to speak a language anyone could understand: whether it was reading his sermons in Turkish in Turkey or calling – to everyone’s surprise – for the Second Vatican Council less than three months after his election as pope to translate Christ’s message into a more modern and appropriate language for the twentieth century.<sup>412</sup> Roncalli had lived his life, so Liji – one of the last people still alive to remember Roncalli’s legacy in Turkey personally – told me, in an authentically Christian way, always facing challenges head on and finding practical solutions. In this respect, a personal letter by Roncalli sent from Istanbul to his friend Mgr. Bernareggi, the Bishop of Bergama, is illustrative: “Each of us has his own cross to bear and each cross takes its own particular form. Mine is fashioned in the style of this century.”<sup>413</sup>

At one level, one can therefore certainly argue that Roncalli understood himself to be a man of what Eric Hobsbawm called “the short twentieth century” and what Winston Churchill defined as “the century of the common man because in it the common man has suffered most,” if only for the fact that he felt the closest to the common man and those who suffered the most – something that earned him the admiration of persons from a variety of social and religious backgrounds, like Hannah Arendt.<sup>414</sup> Did he not also save more than 20,000 Jews between 1942 and 1944, together with the Jewish agency in Istanbul? Arendt asks in her tribute to him.<sup>415</sup>

And indeed, shadowed by Nazi officials, who were living in streets near his, Roncalli printed baptism certificates for thousands of Jews in the basement of the papal residence in Istanbul that allowed them to save their lives and escape from Nazi Europe.<sup>416</sup> Had it not been for his

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how hard it is to learn Turkish but also the historical circumstances that led to his and other German émigrés scholars’ exile in Turkey. See Leo Spitzer and Tülay Atak “Learning Turkish [1934],” *PMLA* 126.3 (2011): 763-779. For a broader discussion about the significance of Leo Spitzer’s exile for the field of comparative literature, see: Emily Apter, “Global translation: the “invention” of comparative literature, Istanbul, 1933,” *Critical Inquiry* 29.2 (2003): 256ff and Seyhan, Azade, “German academic exiles in Istanbul: Translation as the Bildung of the other,” in *Nation, language, and the ethics of translation*, edited Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (Princeton, 2005), esp. 276-282.

<sup>411</sup> Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, “Retreat with my secular clergy in Istanbul, at the Apostolic Delegation. 12-18 December 1937,” as published in Pope John XXIII, *Journal of a Soul*, 233.

<sup>412</sup> Cizmeciyan, 60.

<sup>413</sup> Angelo Guiseppe Roncalli to Adriano Bernareggi, Letter of 10 December 1934. Cited in Meriol Trevor, *Pope John Blessed John XXIII* (Leominster, 2000), 161.

<sup>414</sup> Martin Gilbert, *A History of the Twentieth Century, 1900–1933* (New York: 1997), 2. Also cited in Martin Gilbert, “Twentieth Century Genocides” in *America and the Armenian Genocide* (Cambridge, 2004), 9.

<sup>415</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli: A Christian on St. Peter’s Chair from 1958 to 1963,” 62.

<sup>416</sup> Their addresses are indicated in a list of all the NSDAP members living in Turkey at the time. More than 25 NSDAP members were living within walking distance of Roncalli’s house. One name stands out: Hildegard Rothfritz, R.A.D, Camp Coordinator. Her husband, Herbert Rothfritz, was the Director at the German school. See “Nazi Party Membership Records Turkey,” *Headquarters Command of Military Government for Germany (US)*, 26 June 1946, Deutsches Bundesarchiv, NS 3 Box Liste Türkei. In our interview, their son, Hartmut Rothfritz, told me that

association with Franz von Papen, German ambassador to Turkey from 1939 to 1944, he acknowledged later, he could not have saved “the lives of 24,000 Jews.”<sup>417</sup> During our conversations, Liji told me that everyone knew that Roncalli was helping Jews and that there was much commotion in the papal residence, which was just a few streets down from their school – a building she would pass every day going to and from school. If Liji sensed any Nazi presence or surveillance, she left no indication in her memoirs and neither did she tell me about it. Instead, she speaks of the “dark years” and writes that “there were no more English or French newspapers at the newsstands. Something called *Signal*, a German magazine in French, is sold [there now].”<sup>418</sup> Of over 2000 Nazis living in Turkey between 1933 and 1945, 443 registered NSDAP members were living in Istanbul at the time and quite a few of them were living in Liji’s neighbourhood.<sup>419</sup>

And although Nazis consistently occupied positions of influence throughout Turkey, something that Liji was not aware of as I found out in our conversations, assisting the Atatürk government to rebuild and modernize the Turkish economy, quite a few émigré scholars found temporary exile in Turkey also after escaping from Nazi Germany and were helping to reform Turkey’s higher education system.<sup>420</sup> At least 40 of them were working at the newly founded Istanbul University (1933).<sup>421</sup> One – the philologist Erich Auerbach (1892-1957) – was not just the head of faculty at the School of Foreign Languages at Istanbul University, of the same faculty where Liji would begin to study in 1944, but was also most probably involved in Roncalli’s rescue efforts. In

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while his father was a friend of Roncalli and even lent a hand in printing the baptism certificates, his mother was a known Nazi who returned to Germany to work in the labour camps in 1942/43. Her husband’s friendship would no doubt have given Hildegard Rorthfritz the opportunity to spy on Roncalli’s activities during wartime. Hartmut Rothfritz, Interview with Suzan Meryem Rosita Kalayci, 22 December 2017.

<sup>417</sup> Even though Roncalli was well aware of von Papen’s support of the Hitler regime, he wrote an unrequested letter to the judges at the International Military Tribunal for Germany in Nüremberg that probably saved von Papen’s life: “I do not wish to interfere with any political judgement on Franz von Papen; I can only say one thing: he gave me the chance to save the lives of 24,000 Jews.” See Giancarlo Zizola, *Oggi*, April 13, 1983, cited in: Peter Hebblethwaite, Peter. *John XXIII: Pope of the Century* (London, 2010), 95. For an authoritative study on Franz von Papen’s legacy in Turkey, see Reiner Möckelmann, *Franz von Papen: Hitlers ewiger Vasall* [Hitler’s eternal Vasall] (Mainz, 2016). I met Reiner Möckelmann when he was German Consul General in Istanbul (2003-2006). At the time, I was working as an archivist on the estate of the German émigré scholar Traugott Fuchs. I am grateful for the many conversations we had about Germans in Istanbul during the Nazi time in general and Franz von Papen more specifically.

<sup>418</sup> Çizmeciyen, *Istanbul’da Kayıp Zamanlar*, 78-79.

<sup>419</sup> “Nazi Party Membership Records Turkey,” *Headquarters Command of Military Government for Germany (US)*, 26 June 1946, Deutsches Bundesarchiv, NS 3 Box Liste Türkei.

<sup>420</sup> For a broader discussion on the topic, see Suzan Meryem Rosita Kalayci, “Turkey’s Tilted Neutrality and Nazi Relations (1933-1945),” (MPhil Thesis, Cambridge University, 2010).

<sup>421</sup> During this time Istanbul University was thought to be the best German university in the world. For a study on the predicament of German-Jewish academics in their Istanbul exile, focusing mostly on Erich Auerbach, see Kader Konuk’s book *East West Mimesis: Auerbach in Turkey* (Stanford, 2010).

this respect, a personal letter by Erich Auerbach sent to a fellow German émigré, the homosexual painter and poet Traugott Fuchs (1906-1997), is enormously revealing:<sup>422</sup>

“The Nazis say: better to act wrongly than not at all. That is in few circumstances, where a quick decision chances success, certainly right. But we are not in such a situation, at least not fundamentally. We must and will, when the time is ready, act correctly. Until then we must wait, search, and be ready. [...] Unfortunately it is a matter of the lucky moment and contact, which one cannot force.”<sup>423</sup>

Brimming with both aspiration and apprehension, Auerbach most probably wrote this letter to keep the young Fuchs from despairing and possibly ending his life – “a drastic, but certainly not uncommon, response to the predicament of marginality.”<sup>424</sup> Without knowing what exactly passed through Auerbach’s mind, we may also assume that he too must undoubtedly have felt despair and hopelessness. Unlike other émigrés who had found exile in countries like Great Britain or the United States, Auerbach and Fuchs, amongst others, were surrounded by Nazis: on the streets of Istanbul (and Ankara); at work; or in social gatherings.<sup>425</sup> As a country of active neutrality (effectively tilted towards Nazi Germany), Turkey became both a safe haven and place of anguish for these men.<sup>426</sup>

It is thus quite possible that, for Auerbach, the meeting with Roncalli was the “lucky moment” and the “contact” he had been waiting to make. In *Mimesis*, which he wrote during his exile in Istanbul, Auerbach acknowledges Roncalli’s help in providing him with access to the well-stocked library of the Dominican monastery of San Pietro di Galata: “The monastery library was not public, but the apostolic delegate, Monsignor Roncalli (now papal nuncio in Paris and a cardinal), had the kindness to grant me use of it.”<sup>427</sup> It is very likely, of course, that Auerbach and Roncalli met there regularly. Whether this contact extended beyond friendly chit-chat we do not know, but historical evidence certainly points that way.

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<sup>422</sup> Traugott Fuchs (1906–1997) had come to Istanbul in 1934 and was an especially close friend of Auerbach’s wife, Marie, with whom he exchanged hundreds of letters.

<sup>423</sup> Erich Auerbach, Letter to Traugott Fuchs, 22.10.1938, Traugott Fuchs Cultural and Historical Heritage Archive, Dossier I.IV.b.0003.

<sup>424</sup> Leo Spitzer, *Lives in Between*, 174.

<sup>425</sup> Among the many autobiographical and biographies depicting the everyday lives of the Kolonie B (non-Nazi Germans living in Turkey) in Istanbul, Fritz Neumark’s *Zuflucht am Bosphorus. Deutsche Gelehrte, Politiker und Künstler in der Emigration 1933–1953* [Refuge on the Bosphorus. German Academics, Politicians, and Artists in Exile 1933–1953] (Landau, 1980) was among the first to be published in this genre and counts as a classic source for scholars to consult on the topic.

<sup>426</sup> For a fascinating study of Turkey’s role in the Holocaust, see Corry Guttstadt, *Turkey, the Jews, and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 2013); and for Turkey’s foreign relations during this time, see Selim Deringil’s classic study *Turkish foreign policy during the Second World War: an ‘active’ neutrality* (Cambridge, 2004 [1998]).

<sup>427</sup> Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton, 200/1946), 567/ footnote 15.

One need not, of course, go into further detail about the Nazi presence in Istanbul and Roncalli's or Auerbach's individual (and possibly collaborative) responses to it – fascinating as they may well be – to get a feel for the city in the 1930s and 1940s. In short, Istanbul during this time was a city marked by the constant arrival and departure of people of different nationalities, ethnic origins, religious leanings and political views. As the legend goes, during the interwar period one could almost throw a stone out of the window of any leading hotel in Istanbul and hit a secret agent or refugee of some sort.<sup>428</sup> The point here is that the Istanbul Liji grew up in was a particular place, with its crossroads still seemingly open but increasingly inaccessible. It was a city where a little Armenian girl grew up without ever learning how to speak Armenian; where a president would rather send his daughters to foreign missionary schools than to his own; where nuns would take off their cornettes voluntarily; where the future Holy Father of the Catholic Church would run a clandestine operation to save the Jews; where a German-Jewish philologist would suddenly find himself without a German passport but with the sense of holding the torch of a quickly vanishing humanist tradition in German culture.<sup>429</sup>

At the age of twenty and in the year 1944, Liji graduated from high school and stepped into a world beyond the sheltered life she knew and loved at Notre Dame de Sion. Her reminiscences about the school, and thus the first part of her memoirs, end on a melancholy note: “Farewell to our childhood! Farewell to our [childhood] home Notre Dame de Sion!”<sup>430</sup> As readers, we are left with a sense of bitter-sweet finality, only added to by knowing that the same year Roncalli too would bid his final farewell to Notre Dame de Sion and leave Istanbul after ten years – on Christmas morning 1944.<sup>431</sup> Erich Auerbach and his wife Marie left Istanbul in 1947 to join their son Clemens (who was pursuing a PhD in Chemistry at Harvard University) in the United States and to settle there permanently. Sœur Emmanuelle – we learn – enrolled herself in Istanbul University in 1944, the same year that Liji did, and took courses with Erich Auerbach until the latter left. In 1949 she would move to Tunis, where she fell in love with a Tunisian man (but

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<sup>428</sup> Charles King provides a compelling popular history of this era and its people in his recent book *Midnight at the Pera Palace: The Birth of Modern Istanbul* (New York, 2014).

<sup>429</sup> On this last point I am grateful to Martin Jay for taking the time to speak with me about the similarities of the experiences and impact of German intellectual exiles abroad, and more specifically about the legacies of the Istanbul circle and the Frankfurt School in Turkey and America respectively. Conversation with Martin Jay, American Academy, Berlin, autumn 2010. Also see Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Oakland, 1996), esp. 31-40.

<sup>430</sup> Cizmeciyan, 103.

<sup>431</sup> Angelo G. Roncalli, “Istanbul-Ankara, 25 dicembre 1944: Messaggio per il Natale” [Istanbul-Ankara, 25 December: Christmas Message], as cited in Angelo G. Roncalli, *La Predicazione a Istanbul*, 401–403.

never told him and chose God instead). She returned to Istanbul in 1959–1963 and finished her dissertation on Montaigne, after which she moved to Egypt, where she settled permanently.<sup>432</sup> At the end of the 1940s, few of the people Liji knew at Notre Dame de Sion were still in Turkey. Traugott Fuchs, Auerbach's young student was one of them. With no other options available and no wish to return to post-war Germany, Fuchs remained as the last German émigrés left Turkey. The first Americans arrived in the early 1950s, when Turkey officially joined the U.S. led post-World War II global order. An era in Istanbul, Fuchs writes in his letters to Marie Auerbach, was ending.<sup>433</sup>

#### *BETWEEN MARGINALITY AND ASSIMILATION IN ISTANBUL*

Istanbul, once the capital city of a multi-ethnic empire, became a backwater of the newly founded Turkish republic with its progressively narrowing national politics. In Istanbul, as it had in Ankara, secularization contributed to the final shaping of the cityscape. In the process it helped to accommodate different people and religious communities. In this sense, both to its inhabitants like Liji and her family and to temporary visitors like Roncalli, Sœur Emmanuelle and the Auerbachs, what mattered on a day-to-day basis was not the limitations on their religious liberties, nor the tangible prejudice and discrimination the non-Muslim communities were facing in their public lives, but the cultural and intellectual freedom in which they lived at the time. Istanbul was an exceptionally cosmopolitan sophisticated space where many languages and cultures intermingled. Travelling from the Soviet Union to France in the 1930s, the American modernist poet E.E. Cummings (1894-1962) passed through Istanbul and was surprised: "Before I got here I imagined a gosh darn swell place; with, you know, the sultans and harems and the veiled women and everything. But, hek [sic], all that's shot to hell!"<sup>434</sup> Like other Western

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<sup>432</sup> Sœur Emmanuelle, *Confessions d'une religieuse*, 88 and 126.

<sup>433</sup> Traugott Fuchs and Marie Auerbach, letter exchange, Traugott Fuchs Cultural and Historical Heritage Archive, Dossier I.IV.

<sup>434</sup> Edward Estlin Cummins, entry in travel diary on 12 June 1933, as cited in E.E. Cummins, *Eimi* (New York, 2007 [1933]), 410. Also consider these two other excerpts from E.E. Cummins' travel diary: "no? I'd always imagined—" "you're thinking of the Arabian Nights or" (... barber pole? miracle! pineapple? prodigy ...) "something." And: "& hereupon page we Mustapha Kemal ... And that's what became of Constantinople. I now learn that veils are violently forbidden, that there positively is no Arabic anywhere ... Look around all around around all here and you're sitting in progress you're really chattering in achievement you're drinking truly in new O all the people are emancipated why they even serve excellent whisky-and-soda will you have one on me? Well, isn't it excellent? Best always Ford ... Mustafa Kemal." See Edward Estlin Cummins, entry in travel diary on 12 June 1933, as cited in E.E. Cummins, *Eimi*, 419 & 420 [punctuation and emphasis in text].

travelers, Cummins too had “to review [his] vocabulary and imagery inherited from the Orientalist tradition” on seeing Istanbul for the first time.<sup>435</sup>

James Baldwin (1924-1987), who came and lived in Istanbul for over a decade at the height of his career in the 1960s, was also mesmerized by the city and the power it held over him.<sup>436</sup> But, having arrived in 1961, Baldwin experienced another Istanbul and Turkey. In his letters to Engin Cezzar (1935-2017), he worries about his friends. Would they be able to escape? Could they continue to live under the recent crackdowns by the Turkish police?<sup>437</sup> Baldwin’s worries are echoed in many contemporary accounts and life stories that speak of what Erich Auerbach, already in 1936, described to Walter Benjamin as “a fanatically anti-traditional nationalism,” which had “a fantastic relation to a primal Turkish identity.”<sup>438</sup> The Turkish Nobel prize laureate Orhan Pamuk (born in 1952), for example, writes that the cosmopolitan Istanbul he knew as a child

“[had] disappeared by the time I reached adulthood. [...] After the founding of the Republic and the violent rise of Turkification, after the state imposed sanctions on minorities – measures that some might describe as the final stage of the city’s “conquest” and others as ethnic cleaning – most of these languages disappeared. I witnessed this cultural cleansing as a child, for whenever anyone spoke Greek or Armenian too loudly in the street [...] someone would cry out, ‘Citizens speak Turkish!’ – echoing what signs were saying.”<sup>439</sup>

And indeed, as Istanbul became more modern it also became more Turkish. In part this was because starting from the 1940s many peasants fled from their poverty-stricken Anatolian villages (and the Balkans to a lesser extent) to the urban areas of Turkey,<sup>440</sup> but it was the nationalization of Turkey’s economy – an effective Turkification of the country’s economic sphere – and the

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<sup>435</sup> Davide Deriu, “Picturing modern Ankara: New Turkey in Western imagination,” *The Journal of Architecture* 18.4 (2013): 499.

<sup>436</sup> His Istanbul friends called Baldwin ‘Arap Jimmy.’ In an interview for the Turkish daily *Cumhuriyet* on 29 August 1964, Baldwin said that he was planning to write his books and essays in Turkey. And, indeed, he completed his novel *Another Country* and his essays *No Name in the Street* there. Just a few months after his interview with *Cumhuriyet*, Baldwin started writing for that daily. For a detailed account of James Baldwin’s life in Istanbul, see Magdalena J. Zaborowska, *James Baldwin’s Turkish decade: Erotics of Exile* (Durham, 2008).

<sup>437</sup> James Baldwin and Engin Cezzar, *Dost Mektupları* [Letters from Friends] (Istanbul, 2007).

<sup>438</sup> Erich Auerbach, letter to Walter Benjamin, 3 January 1936, Archiv der Akademie der Kunst, Berlin (Germany), Dossier WBA 0013, as cited in: Karlheinz Barck and Anthony Reynolds, “Walter Benjamin and Erich Auerbach: Fragments of a Correspondence,” *Diacritics* 22.3/4 (1992): 82.

<sup>439</sup> Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (New York: 2006), 239.

<sup>440</sup> Haluk Ülman and Frank Tachau mention the following factors contributing to the rapid urbanization of post-WWII Turkey: an increasing share of the national income in non-agricultural sectors; an increasing population pressure on available land; the mechanization of agricultural production; an excessive fragmentation of land holdings. See A. Haluk Ülman and Frank Tachau, “Turkish politics: the attempt to reconcile rapid modernization with democracy,” *The Middle East Journal* 19.2 (1965): 156. Also see Paul J. Magnarella’s classic essay “From villager to townsman in Turkey,” *Middle East Journal* 24.2 (1970): 236ff.

steady disappearance of the native non-Muslim entrepreneurial bourgeoisie that became synonymous with Istanbul's transformation in the postwar era.<sup>441</sup> As Istanbul staggered away from its imperial legacy into a world in which the son of a pious immigrant from the Black Sea region would be elected the city's first Islamist mayor to then become the president of Turkey, the city changed. The city, according to Liji in our conversations, was Islamized – it became more Muslim. It was no longer enough to speak Turkish; one had to be Muslim as well.

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In sharp contrast to the first part of her memoirs, which were written to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Notre Dame de Sion and to portray – what Liji calls – the “golden years,” a detached and melancholic note pervades this second and final part of her recollections. As the previous pages had indicated, her life was profoundly embedded in the social life of the broader Notre Dame community. Her schooling shaped her conception of the world, imparting to her a humanist outlook on life that emerged from the social context of bourgeois ideology. “*Dame de Sion'da şato hayatı yaşıyoruz*,” Liji writes at one point in her memoirs: they were living a “chateau life at Notre Dame de Sion.”<sup>442</sup> Her account convincingly demonstrates that, as an Armenian growing up in early republican Istanbul, one did not necessarily (have to) experience marginality. This would change, however.

By the late 1940s, Liji was clearly conscious of her own marginal position. Despite her educational accomplishments, class consciousness and her family's relative wealth, she realized that the social acceptance of Armenians within the dominant Turkish society was hindered by the persistence of anti-Armenian sentiments, which led to discriminatory and exclusionary practices. Liji's contemporary, the Istanbul Armenian poet Zareh Krakhuni (Artin Cumbusyan, 1926) communicates this feeling of being an outsider in the society one was de facto born into, and its emotional cost, in his poem “Others” (1960):<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> With much of the Armenian community in Istanbul untouched during the genocide, Istanbul was the last place in modern Turkey with a thriving Armenian commercial class. Here *Varlık Vergisi*, a punitive tax levied against the property of non-Muslim Turkish citizens, played a major role in the subsequent homogenization of Istanbul. For a brief overview of this tax and its implications, see Ali Sait Çetinoğlu, “The Mechanisms for Terrorizing Minorities: The Capital Tax and Work Battalions in Turkey during the Second World War,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* 23.2 (2012): 15.

<sup>442</sup> Cizmeciyan, 69.

<sup>443</sup> Zareh Khrakhouni was actively involved in various literary movements in the post-World War II period. These movements sought to revitalize literary production in Istanbul's Armenian community. Also see Rubina Peroomian, *And those continued living in Turkey after 2015: the Metamorphosis of the Post-Genocide Armenian Identity in Artistic Literature*, 6ff and 112ff.



“In the automobile  
 The street car, the bus  
 The train, the ship  
 Or simply at home sitting by the window  
 I smile with my pupils  
 Salute with my eyelashes  
 Kiss with my eyelids  
 All men and children – all women without exception  
 Who pass unaware of my embracing stare [...]

I have got smiles and greetings for everyone [...]

Who either don’t see at all my stare directed at them  
 Or they do see it, think that I am insane ... [sic]  
 While I stand among the people  
 On the street, on the sidewalk – or on the wharf  
 I strive for my smiles, my greetings and my kisses  
 Through the pupils of others  
 I simply find glass  
 Frozen eyes of reflecting glass  
 Fixed on taut faces ... [sic].”<sup>444</sup>

In my conversations with Liji I found out little about the prejudice she encountered. Indeed, one wonders whether she had been subjected to any form of discrimination at all. On only one occasion does she write about having been treated unfairly – by one of the Turkish teachers at Notre Dame de Sion because she was not Turkish and had a strange name. But even then she did not consider it important. In her memoirs, she quickly brushes the incident off and considers it a trifle. The same teacher, she writes, had another (unsuccessful) go at her a few months later.

“That year was the year of the *Varlık Vergisi* [a discriminatory wealth tax]. Nobody had been asked [about it], but he turned to me and said, ‘How much was the tax [for your family].’ I told him, ‘Not for us, [because] my father died.’ At least he could not be happy about this.”<sup>445</sup>

By transforming the potentially negative and gnawing effects of racist gestures such as these into things that did not (at least on the surface) matter to her, Liji was able to continue to believe that this was an example of irregular behaviour on the part of an individual who simply did not like her. Here and elsewhere, Liji’s life story highlights the “key role played by subjectivity,” “the crucial analytical necessity of differentiating between various marginal situations” and the “psychological and social responses of persons finding themselves in such situations.”<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> Zareh Khrakhouni, *Selected Poems of Zareh Khrakhouni* (Lampeter, 1990), 42-43.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

<sup>446</sup> Leo Spitzer, *Lives in Between*, 135.

If we were to turn to Liji's memoirs (as I initially did) to learn about her thoughts and memories of the genocide we would be disappointed, for this history is mostly absent from her pages, as are her personal experiences of racial prejudice or discrimination in post-genocide Turkey. Perhaps the absence of such a narrative is what is most striking about her life story. And yet a close reading of the second part of her memoirs makes it possible to reconstruct her critical voice and commentary on the predicament of marginality that she and other Istanbul Armenians found themselves in. It can be found in her precise description of the drastic transformation of her neighbourhood in the 1940s – the years following her graduation from Notre Dame de Sion. These remaining 90 pages of her memoirs, begun in 2006 and entitled “In Search of Lost Times: Neighbourhoods, Streets and People,” are difficult to read. They contain an account of all that Liji remembers about Istanbul. The sheer magnitude of detail she gives threatens to overwhelm the reader. In this running catalogue she tries not to forget anything, obsessively referencing all the names – of streets, people, shops, and sometimes even consumer goods – that she remembered because of the very fact that the world she portrays no longer exists. The following excerpt is an example:

“When my mother married my father Jan Pulcu in 1922, opposite our house there was Osmanbey Park, extending alongside Şafak Street.<sup>447</sup> At night, they even performed plays there. My mother loved it: “When we have children there will be a place to enjoy fresh air,” she told [my father]. But the park was immediately closed down and neither my big sister Irma nor I remember it. [...] On the other corner of Şafak Street, there was a house, its top part covered in wood. Below was the historic Nargileciyan Pharmacy. I knew Monsieur Nargileciyan myself; you could [always] find him in his pharmacy. A small, chubby old man with tiny frameless glasses [...] Later, he sold his pharmacy to Kemal Atakan. [...] Next to our house at number 235 lived [the Armenian architect] Kazezyan Andon Kalfa. The house was on a very small plot; he had built such a big house that it filled up the whole plot, the façade, on the corner, reached into the street like the nose of a ferry [...] Two doors from our house there was [also] a small bakery, run by a Bulgarian [...] after the bakery there were a couple of similar houses. In one lived Jon and Mari Kasapyan with their little daughters. And next [to them] lived Mari's Uncle Viçen Kasapyan, a rich mohair [wool] wholesaler. He did business with England. He had a well-educated son who knew a lot of languages and a nervous wife. [...] The house next to the Kasapyans was the house of the Hansesyans. They had an angry son, who at nights screamed down from the balcony. Now let's go towards Şişli. On the right-hand side [we have] Rumeli Street, a bit of a cold street, not very busy. Like there are no shops. Just at the beginning, [we find] the magnificent Giritlayan and Tahtaburunyan apartment buildings. They are still there. [...] A little bit further up [on Halaskârgazi

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<sup>447</sup> In a small gesture to Proust, she begins her childhood reminiscences (in the second part of her memoirs) with a park, thus making a clear reference to *In Search of Lost Time*. If it was Tansonville Park for Proust and Tiergarten Zoo for Benjamin in his slender book *Childhood in Berlin around 1900*, for Liji it is Osmanbey Park. On the issue of Proust's influence on Walter Benjamin and park metaphors, see: Peter Szondi, and Harvey Mendelsohn, “Hope in the past: on Walter Benjamin,” *Critical Inquiry* 4.3 (1978): 495ff.

Street] is Atatürk's house. The whole Independence War [note: the Turkish War of Independence was fought between the Turkish National Movement led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the Allies from 19 May 1919 to 24 July 1923] was thought up there.”<sup>448</sup>

She compulsively lists, orders and catalogues what is no more: the names of Armenian shops, short descriptions of their owners; Armenian neighbours who sold their houses and the names of the Turks who bought them in the 1940s and later. She continues to tell us about the Harbiye neighbourhood, which she passed every day going to and from school:

“A long and old wall ran along the street as far as the Divan Hotel: it is the wall of the Armenian Graveyard, which had been left to itself. [...] This cemetery was probably removed in 1948. [...] Then the Hilton Hotel was built behind it [...] the cemetery is probably now the garden [of the hotel]. I think that my husband's grandfather was buried there, because we did not find his name in the Catholic Graveyard in Şişli. Many actors from Hollywood came to the opening of the Hilton Hotel [on June 10, 1955]. In those years, nylon fabric was very rare and expensive, we did not have it. A few actresses wore nylon and some people gossiped that in the light you could [even] see their underwear. Opposite the graveyard was Notre Dame de Sion, a school for rich and famous girls [note: this is the school she went to]. [...] It was such a famous school that Atatürk enrolled his first adopted daughter Rukiye [there] in 1928. After Rukiye, our *Great Father* [note: honorific title for Atatürk] sent another daughter [to the school]: Afet İnan. Those who knew Rukiye at school told [me] that her last name was Kemal. So that she did not have to go to Dolmabahçe to ask for money, her father [Atatürk] opened a bank account at İş Bankası [a bank founded by Atatürk in 1924] for her. A little bit after Notre Dame de Sion was the house of the Çizmeciyan; now there is Olympic Airways. [...] Then there were two wooden houses, owned by the Calyans. A little bit further down, the apartment of the Frenklayan; built by the Benyanlans. This also was lost because of Varlık Vergisi [Wealth Tax]. See, these were the houses opposite the old graveyard. All had a view of the sea, but now only those [houses] opposite the Hilton Hotel have a nice view.”<sup>449</sup>

These two extracts are just five of the remaining 90 pages of her memoirs. Here, Liji manages to tell it all: the dead Armenians who could not find peace even in death; the brutal gentrification of Istanbul; the enforced and one-sided Americanization of Turkey's society and economy following World War Two; and finally the slow but steady disappearance of the non-Muslim petite-bourgeoisie. Each and every observation brings us into a passageway through which we access another, much darker, side of Republican Turkey.

Take, for example, her observations on the Hilton Hotel building project. How flat and detached her words sound: “the cemetery is probably now the garden [...] I think my husband's

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<sup>448</sup> Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyan, 108-111.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid., 121-123.

grandfather is buried there. Many actors from Hollywood came to the opening [...]” If it wasn’t for the reference to her husband’s grandfather (whose grave they had searched for but could not find) one would think that she had no emotional investment in this story. However, instead, we learn that her family history, or at least parts of it, had been absorbed into, indeed buried in, one of the most important modernization projects of post-war Turkey.<sup>450</sup> Or take the following remark: “A little bit after Notre Dame de Sion was the house of the Çizmeciyan; now there is Olympic Airways. [...] A little bit further down, the apartment of the Frenklayan; built by the Benyanlans. This also was lost because of Varlık Vergisi.”<sup>451</sup>

Throughout this final part of her memoirs, Liji concentrates primarily, but not exclusively, on “what is seen and what is not said.”<sup>452</sup> She does so not because of political concerns but because she wants to restore a world that is no more. She is simply stating facts and leaves us with the silences written in between. I am reminded of the conversation between Elie Wiesel and Orson Welles about making a film adaptation of *Night*, which underlines that “silence can be very eloquent” if there are those who listen.<sup>453</sup> As Adrienne Rich once said,

“Silence can be a plan  
Rigorously executed  
the blueprint to a life  
It is a presence  
It has a history a form  
Do not confuse it  
with any kind of absence.  
How calm, how inoffensive these words  
[...]  
though begun in grief and anger  
Can I break through this film of the abstract  
without wounding myself or you

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<sup>450</sup> It is difficult to overstress the significance of the Hilton hotel for Turkish-American relations in the early 1950s. A bargaining chip on both sides, the hotel had state support from the Turks as well as the Americans, with the former providing land, building, and maintenance costs for the hotel and the latter granting over 185 million dollars in ECA (Economic Cooperation Assistance) aid. However, the US administration did not limit its financial assistance to building new roads and buying new tractors for Turkey’s countryside; it also helped with the financing of the Hilton hotel – making the owner of the Hilton chain, Conrad Hilton, an important international player in Cold War politics and a rather unconcerned caretaker of an Armenian graveyard in the middle of Istanbul. Also see Annabel Jane Wharton, *Building the Cold War: Hilton International Hotels and modern Architecture* (Chicago, 2001), 33ff.

<sup>451</sup> The consensus among scholars is that this “Wealth Tax,” a tax levied in 1942 with the goal of raising funds for the country’s possible entry into WWII, was actually aimed at confiscating the wealth of non-Muslim Turkish citizens and Turkifying Turkey’s economy. On this topic, see (amongst others): Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve "Türkleştirme" politikalar* [Wealth Tax and Turkification policies] (Istanbul, 2000); Ali Sait Çetinoğlu, *Varlık vergisi 1942-1944: Ekonomik ve Kültürel Jenosid* [Wealth Tax and Economic and Cultural Genocide] (Istanbul, 2009); Corry Guttstadt, *Turkey, the Jews, and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 2013), 75ff.

<sup>452</sup> Marianna Hovhannisyian, *Empty Fields*, Exhibition Catalogue, 2016, 19.

<sup>453</sup> Gregory O. Nwoye, “Eloquent Silence among the Igbo of Nigeria,” in *Perspectives on Silence* (1985): 186ff.

there is enough pain here”<sup>454</sup>

Clearly, we need to learn to read and to listen to silence – first and foremost for its intersubjective quality. Reading and listening to Liji made me realize this. But it also made me realize that writing and reading – as Alexander Etkind once noted – the “stories of the undead in the land of the unburied” is a work of mourning. In this light, Liji’s “reminiscences of the past shape warnings about the future and compete with concerns about the present.”<sup>455</sup>

### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Liji told me she is content with her life. Anything she dreamt of achieving had always been within her reach. She credits Atatürk for this. He had given a nation of little girls a new lease of life that started with education. Much like Sabiha Gökçen, Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyan made the best of the opportunities offered to her – this part is certain. While reading her memoirs I often wondered whether her life would have been different had she been a boy. I think so. As we have seen in the previous chapter, it was the women and girls adopted into the Atatürk household who became republican role models. In contrast, there were no boys or young men who were equally recognizable, or held symbolic meaning for the making of modern Turkey equal to that of these young women and girls living in the Atatürk household. The concept of a “republican child” – as the blurb on her memoirs describes Liji – would therefore not have worked for an Armenian boy. I posit that this has as much to do with the symbolism behind Atatürk’s adoption of female orphans of various ethnic backgrounds as it has to do with the patriarchal structures that continue to shape familial and social relations in Turkey – regardless of whether we are Armenian or Turkish.

What Kamala Visweswaran argues for Gandhi is also true for Atatürk. Their gendered nationalisms developed “by inscribing the family into politics; the family is written again as metaphor for the nation.” On the way, the term “nation became discursively fixed, leaving relations within the family pointedly undiscussed.”<sup>456</sup> The figure of the orphan (read: republican

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<sup>454</sup> Adrienne Rich, “Cartographies of Silence” in *The Fact of a Doorframe: Selected Poems 1950-2001* (New York, 2002), 139-140.

<sup>455</sup> Alexander Etkind, *Warped Mourning. Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied* (Stanford, 2013), 243.

<sup>456</sup> See Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, 57. This comparison might not be so far off, with both nationalist leaders struggling against foreign occupation at the end of the First World War and supporting each other’s causes. See Aswini K. Mohapatra, “Bridge to Anatolia: An Overview of Indo-Turkish Relations,” *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 39 (2008): 164. For the visual function of family and children in the national imagery

child) thus played not only an essential role in affirming the symbolic meaning of Atatürk as the Father of the Turks, but also as the eternal guardian of women from Turkey. I think Liji would agree. However, although Liji might be criticized for her unquestioning allegiance to Kemalist ideology – finding no fault in it – her life story complements but also contradicts the master narrative of the Turkish nation. It is a life that Rachel Blau du Plessis would call “both/and vision”<sup>457</sup> that, as Gloria Anzaldua and Mae Henderson would say, “speaks in tongues.”<sup>458</sup> Liji’s book thus represents a particular triangulation between Kemalist prose, descriptive memoirs and mournful inventory. And readers (may) detect a hidden sublime critique in her silence.

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of Turkey, see Yasemin Gencer, “We are family: The child and modern nationhood in early Turkish Republican cartoons (1923–28),” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 32.2 (2012): 296ff.

<sup>457</sup> Rachel Blau du Plessis, “For the Etruscans,” in *Debating Texts: Readings in 20th Century Literary Theory and Method* edited by Rich Rylance (Toronto: 1987), 276.

<sup>458</sup> Mae G. Henderson, “Speaking in tongues,” in *Aesthetics in feminist perspective* (1993): 119-138.

## CONCLUSION

*OF HUNDRED AND ONE YEARS*<sup>459</sup>

On the day that I sat down to start work on this conclusion, I was in the library of Woodbrooke Quaker Centre in Birmingham, England. I was wandering around the library thinking about how to start when by sheer accident I found a small brass plaque. It read: “Araxia Jebejian, Woodbrooke Student 1912, and Martyr in the Armenian massacres of 1915.”<sup>460</sup> The librarian had already left, so I had to wait until the next morning to ask her about the plaque and Araxia Jebejian. “Yes, there was a student called Araxia Jebejian at Woodbrooke in 1912 and she was killed by the Turks during the Armenian massacres,” the librarian Betty Hagglund told me. Had I heard about what happened to the Armenians during World War One? I had, indeed.

That morning, amidst power shortages and other unexpected interruptions, Betty Hagglund and I went on a search to find out more about Araxia Jebejian. We found two photographs picturing Araxia among her classmates at Woodbrooke; a few of her essays written between 1912 and 1915; and several letters she wrote to her teachers at Woodbrooke. We also found a letter and a small note documenting what happened to Araxia during the Armenian genocide.<sup>461</sup> It is from these documents that we learn that Araxia did not have to die:

“About Araxia Jebejian, I am sorry to say, no word has come from her. She has been put into prison in Der-Zor for the only reason that she had distributed relief money to the poor people there. There is little hope for her and still we have to wait more. How much? I told her that she should stay here in the American girls’ school here in Aintab, but she refused and went willingly to suffer with her people.”<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> The title is taken from Hagob Oshagan’s trilogy *Հարիւր մէկ տարուան* [*Of Hundred and One Years* (*Hadji Mourad, Hadji Abdullah, Suleyman Efendi*)]. I am indebted to Nigol Bezjian for drawing my attention to this trilogy again and for patiently answering all my questions regarding Oshagan’s literary oeuvre.

<sup>460</sup> Commemorative plaque dedicated to the memory of Araxia Jebejian (1880-1916), Woodbrooke Library, Rare Book Section.

<sup>461</sup> Additionally, we found a 100-year-old tapestry embroidered by Armenian orphans in the estate of Woodbrooke Quaker Center. I would like to thank Betty Hagglund for helping me find out more about Araxia Jebejian at such short notice – especially but not only because it meant going into the storage areas with a flashlight due to an unforeseen power shortage.

<sup>462</sup> Loofty Levonian, letter to Dr. Rendel Harris and Hellen B. Harris, Aintab, 17 December 1918, as transcribed in the Woodbrooke Log, spring 1919, Woodbrooke Library. Loofty Levonian (1881-?) was a close friend of Araxia Jebejian from Aintab. They travelled together from Turkey to England in order to study at Woodbrooke in 1912. Loofty Levonian survived the Armenian genocide. It might be significant to note that Loofty Levonian was among the founders of the *Pacifist Society of Constantinople* (others included Abdullah Cevdet, the publisher of the periodical *İctihad*) – an organization committed to peace work and founded in the immediate aftermath of WWI by Armenian, Kurdish and Turkish intellectuals (Correspondence with Loofty Levonian, Rendel Harris Papers, Cadbury Research

Araxia Jebejian died when she was 36 years old – the same age that I am now.<sup>463</sup> She is from Aintab, like my family.

#### THUS MAKES US ORPHANS ALL

“As an orphan, my biggest chance, really, is to be a child of the Republic,” said Sabiha Gökçen to Atatürk in 1925. Sabiha had survived the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and was adopted by Kemal Mustafa Atatürk just a few days after she said this to him. More than half a century later she would write in her memoirs: “Just think, once an orphan, a destitute girl from Bursa [...] now has a place as Atatürk’s daughter Sabiha Gökçen.”<sup>464</sup> Her fate in the Armenian Genocide was shared by more than 200,000 Armenian children. Each child has a unique and individual story, and yet we can read their biographies as collective testimonies about an era marked by war which witnessed genocide, when orphanhood not only became a political tool but also the identity of a generation.

In the early stages of writing this dissertation, I looked at how the First World War was remembered in Turkey – I wanted to know what was spoken about but not said, and what was said but not spoken about this war. In *Sites of Memories, Sites of Mourning*, Jay Winter argued that in Europe a “complex traditional vocabulary of mourning, derived from classical, romantic, or religious forms” helped people to collectively forget and remember the horrors of war in the post-1918 period.<sup>465</sup> I found that there was nothing of the kind in Turkey. Silence swept its memorial landscape. In *Human Landscapes from my Country*, Nazim Hikmet addresses this loss of language that occurred in Turkey in the years following the Great War:

“In third-class car 510  
Forehead against the glass,

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Library, University of Birmingham). Dr. Rendel Harris, a biblical scholar, was the first Director of Studies at Woodbrooke College and tutor of both Araxia and Lootfy. His wife, Hellen B. Harris, is known for her relief work among Boer women and children in the concentration camps. See Robert Davis, *Woodbrooke 1903-1953: A Brief History of a Quaker Experiment in Religious Education* (London, 1953), 13ff.

<sup>463</sup> A little note inserted in the Woodbrooke Log of spring 1919 informs us that “Araxia Jebejian has been martyred.” This note was most probably written by Dr. Rendell Harris, who went on a mission to Anatolia to find Araxia Jebejian in 1918. For the exact date and circumstances of Araxia Jebejian’s death, I am indebted to the research of my former colleagues at the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute, Yerevan.

<sup>464</sup> Gökçen, *Atatürk’ün İzinde*, 109.

<sup>465</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, 223.



A man sat with a lost world flitting through his heart [...]  
 As Mikhail Trastellis looks out of the window,  
 This earth says nothing to him.  
 But not because it doesn't know his language.  
 On spring afternoons like this,  
 The earth doesn't speak Turkish or Greek  
 but its own tongue.  
 But Mikhail's sorrow was so deep  
 He couldn't hear the earth  
 Or think of other people and the world.  
 Yet in this car on this afternoon, his grief  
 was shared by others and the world today."<sup>466</sup>

In just one image, Hikmet describes the anguish many felt about their inability to find any meaning in the catastrophic losses of the war and their incapacity to mourn the dead. Nazim Hikmet, a poet of empathic imagination, provides a language for what left most people in Turkey speechless. The horrors of World War One and the experience of immeasurable loss was shared by all Ottoman subjects, regardless of their ethnicity or religious identity; and it was impossible for them to express their bereavement collectively. The central argument of my dissertation is that this had as much to do with a complete ideological break with the past, which was solicited by the Republican political regime in the years following the war, as it had to do with the genocidal legacy that modern Turkey carried with it thenceforth. The Armenian genocide is both unique and characteristic of the silence that followed the Great War.<sup>467</sup>

Comforting and supporting those suffering from grief was not on the agenda of Turkey's first government in the years that followed the war as it was, for example, in other combatant countries, like England, Germany and France.<sup>468</sup> Compared to Europe, no common vocabulary of mourning was found in Turkey in the aftermath of the Great War; no war memorials started to dot the countryside, cities, towns and villages of Turkey after the war for the simple reason that "[c]ommemoration was a political act and war memorials carried political messages from the earliest days of the war."<sup>469</sup> By the time the Turkish Republic was founded, there was little left by

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<sup>466</sup> Nazim Hikmet, *Human Landscapes*, 79-80.

<sup>467</sup> On the predicament of silence after the Great War in Walter Benjamin's work, see: Shoshana Felman, "Benjamin's Silence," *Critical Inquiry* 25.2 (1999): 201-234. Was Walter Benjamin aware of the Armenians' plight? A passage in *On Hashish* seems to suggest so. Here an intoxicated Benjamin says on April 18, 1931: "the birth of the Armenian kingdom." See Walter Benjamin, *On Hashish* (Boston, 2006), 80.

<sup>468</sup> On the commemoration and memory of the Great War in Great Britain, for example, see Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day, 1919-1946* (London, 2014).

<sup>469</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, 82.

way of commemoration and the ideological break with the Ottoman past was complete. As one contemporary visitor to Turkey put it:

“In order to achieve the impossible, the conductors of [Atatürk’s] reforms are breaking with the past; they are cutting the long roots that attached people to their traditions [...] Disoriented, they watch everything they hold sacred desecrated. [...]. Aren’t the dead those from whom we learn? Depriving people of their dead means isolating them from their own existence, removing the invisible ties among them.”<sup>470</sup>

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the disaster of the Great War, all the citizens of the new Turkish republic were equally survivors and orphans in the unknown land that became modern-day Turkey. And as they sought ways to find meaning from the catastrophic losses of the Great War, but were urged to look forward rather than backwards, the figure of the orphan played an essential role in affirming the symbolic meaning of Atatürk, as the Father of the Turks.

From the story of the Aintoura orphanage, in Chapter One, we learned how the Young Turk elite planned to assimilate non-Muslim Armenian and Muslim non-Turkish (Kurdish) children into the bosom of the newly emerging Turkish nationalist state. As a social experiment, Aintoura was never completed and it was doomed to fail. The reasons for this, I think, were twofold, the end of the war being the first and most obvious. Second, and maybe less self-evident, the orphans at Aintoura were all male. Tracing its history is nevertheless important in as much as it is a story framing the end of a multi-ethnic empire and the emergence of modern Turkey. What began at Aintoura, however, worked its way into Republican history. Its symbolism was nowhere better explicated than in Atatürk’s adoption of female orphans of various ethnic backgrounds, as I have demonstrated through the life story of Sabiha in Chapter Three. It feels significant that orphan girls, and not orphan boys, became the narrators and symbols of Atatürk’s nation and members of his family. With female orphans now a metaphor for the nation, Atatürk’s fatherhood was both chosen and affirmed, leaving blood relations pointedly undiscussed and patriarchal familial structures intact. Atatürk, as we saw in Chapter Four, gave a nation of little girls a new lease of life that started with education. Much like Sabiha Gökçen, Liji Pulcu Çizmeciyen made the best of the opportunities offered to her as we have seen in Chapter Four. But Liji’s life story is also a testimony to the tangible prejudice and discrimination the non-Muslim communities faced (and continue to face) in their public lives in modern-day Turkey. A running catalogue of what is no more, each and every observation of Liji brings us into a passageway through which we access

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<sup>470</sup> Noelle Roger, *En Asie Mineure, La Turquie du Ghazi* (Grenelle, 1930), 256.

another, much darker, side of Republican Turkey. We see the slow but steady disappearance of the Armenian entrepreneurial bourgeoisie from Istanbul's public and economic life. With much of the Armenian community in Istanbul untouched during the genocide, Istanbul was the last place in modern Turkey with a thriving Armenian commercial class. What had begun during the Armenian genocide – an effective Turkification of Anatolia's economy and the disappearance of Armenian life from Western Armenia – became synonymous with Istanbul's transformation from the 1940s onwards. Was keeping what was unrightfully theirs the provincial Muslim middle class's main incentive for backing the nationalist cause and supporting Atatürk's 'independence war'? was a question I raised in Chapter Two. The historical evidence presented in this chapter seems to suggest so. It offers insights into how the confiscation of Armenian capital and the subsequent enrichment of Muslims were the key elements in the historical continuity of genocidal practices from the Empire to the Republic. Liji's personal account of Istanbul confirms this: the subject of the genocide – despite being absent from her narrative – returns as a contemporary discourse which, following Marianna Hovhannisyan, revolves around what is seen and what is not said.

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Throughout my dissertation I have argued that orphanhood became central both to defining and narrating the Turkish nation and to providing an inclusive rhetoric of national identity. We can see how the historical Atatürk became a powerful reformulation of the father figure in the context of nation-building and identity formation in post-genocide Turkey.<sup>471</sup> Paul Federn's essay of 1919 "On the Psychology of the Revolution: the Fatherless Society" provides a way of understanding these phenomena. Using a vocabulary derived from psychoanalysis and inspired by Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, he prophesied that the crisis of paternal authority after the collapse of empire in the aftermath of the First World War would lead to revolutionary social and political change in which paternity (read 'political legacy') would have to be renegotiated. But what forms of identification and attachment enabled people "of Turkic, Kurdish, Albanian, Bosnian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Circassian, Georgian, Laz, Abkhazian, Arab and Iranian origin" to relate to Atatürk as the Father of the Turks?<sup>472</sup> And what role did forgetting their own histories (as the above quote suggests) play in affirming their allegiance to Atatürk and to the Turkish

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<sup>471</sup> Paul Federn, *Zur Psychologie der Revolution: Die vaterlose Gesellschaft* [On the Psychology of the Revolution: the Fatherless Society] (Leipzig, 1919).

<sup>472</sup> Carol Delaney, "Father State, Motherland, and the Birth of Modern Turkey," 185.

nation? These are central questions in the history of modern Turkey, and I hope that some answers can be found in the stories I have presented here. The metaphor of orphanhood can provide a way to read Turkey's "divergent histories alongside and in connection with each other."<sup>473</sup>

The narrators of my stories often stood on the other side of silence. They were perpetrators, bystanders, victims, orphans, women, second-class citizens. Each told their own story. Neither hopeful nor hopeless, they wrote about life in the twentieth century – a century that, if we are to believe them, made orphans of us all. For them, orphanhood was both a way out from painful memories and a way into a common future. Each of them – like each of us – has been touched, in one painful way or another, by the Armenian genocide of 1915. Reading their stories, I am no longer worried or bothered by the denial by the Turkish government like I was when I started my doctoral research. And rightly so, because the Armenian genocide is no longer a history of denial, much as the history of war is no longer the history of victory and defeat; it is the history of survivors and those who did not survive – and how we seek to be accountable to them.<sup>474</sup> Their stories and silences are there in the historical record, if we only have the eyes to see them.

To Araxia Jebejian

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<sup>473</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *Postmemory*, 21.

<sup>474</sup> See also Kalayci, "Interview with Jay Winter," 32.



Illustration 26: Araxia Jebejian surrounded by her classmates at Woodbrooke College in 1912.



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