OTTOWOMEN: Picturing Women from Empire to Nation 1913-1928

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On a gloomy November morning in 1918, nervous spectators watched as fleets of grey ships entered the Bosporus Strait in Istanbul. Stately British warships led the procession, followed close behind by those of the French and Italians. Worldwide armistice had been officially announced two days prior, but for Turkey the war was not over.

This thesis aims to unearth the historical narrative of Turkish women during the transition from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic using images from the illustrated press and Halide Edip’s life and contributions as a backdrop. It demonstrates the ways in which images of women’s bodies were employed to define cultural values, identify nationalistic fears, and contribute to the changes that have brought us the modern Turkish state. Images from the illustrated press bear witness to the struggles, stigmas and significance of Turkish women from 1913 to 1928. Ultimately, through their heroism on the battlefields of Anatolia, their labor behind the typewriter in Istanbul, and their representations on the page, women changed the trajectory of Turkish history.
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Cover Image: *Biçkı Yurdu Modası* no. 1, 4: 1916.  
Acknowledgements

In a 1926 letter to her American friend, Halide Edip wrote of Turkish revolutionary history, “I do not know anything which is so interesting and of [such] vital value to the world.” After a year of immersing myself in the images, journals, and individual stories from this period, I must agree. This document is the culmination of months of research, countless cups of coffee, and a tenacious desire to memorialize the histories that are mostly forgotten and to validate the voices of the overlooked. However, this thesis owes a great deal to the friends, family, and faculty that have helped me along the way.

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Timeline of Events: Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic

1299: Foundation of Ottoman Empire by Osman I
1453: Sack of Constantinople by Mehmed II the Conqueror; Istanbul becomes the capital of the Ottoman Empire
1529: Siege of Vienna, zenith of Ottoman military power and European expansion
1683: Steady decline of Empire after Battle of Vienna defeat
1821-1832: Greek War of Independence, result is independent Greek sovereignty
1839: First Tanzimat reforms introduced; an attempt to modernize and Europeanize the Empire
1853-1856: Crimean War with Russia, Czar Nicolas I dubs Ottoman Empire “the sick man of Europe,” the Empire continues to decline
1860: First Turkish newspaper, Tercümen’i Ahval
1869: First weekly newspaper for women, Terakki-I Muhadderat (Women’s Progress)
1876-1878: First Constitutional Era
1877-1878: Russo-Turkish War
1878: Treaty of San Stefano and Treaty of Berlin: 40% land loss and 20% population loss
1884: Halide Edip is born in Istanbul
July 3, 1908: Young Turk Revolution; beginning of Second Constitutional period
1912-1913: Balkan Wars; Empire loses almost all European territory
1913: Ulviye Mevlan founds Kadinlar Dunyasi (Women’s World Magazine)
August 2, 1914: Empire enters World War I on side of Central Powers
1915: Committee for Union and Progress nationalizing efforts, beginning of Armenian Genocide
November 1918: Beginning of occupation of Istanbul by British, French, and Italian forces
1919: Greek occupation of Smyrna
May 19, 1919-July 24, 1923: Greco-Turkish War (War of Liberation)
November 1, 1922: Abolition of the Sultanate
October 29, 1923: Declaration of Turkish Republic, Atatürk is first President
1925: “Hat Law” men must wear Western style hats, veiling discouraged
1926: New civil, commercial, and penal codes; polygamy forbidden
1928: Latin alphabet introduced, Republic declared secular
1930: Women achieve voting rights in local elections
1934: Universal voting rights for women
INTRODUCTION

“Unknown persons placed the dynamite at midnight; they lit the several meter long fuse and it exploded. Shattered pieces of the bust of the Independence War’s famous participant—writer Halide Edip—flew into the air.”

Figure 1.0

On March 13, 1970 assailants used dynamite to destroy a statue of Halide Edip in Sultanahmet Square in Istanbul. The Turkish Women’s Association Headquarters had placed the bust in the square just three days prior to the explosion. Located in the heart of the Golden Horn, the Sultanahmet district of Istanbul is home to some of Turkey’s most prominent landmarks including the Hagia Sofia, the Blue Mosque, and the underground Basilica Cisterns. This manicured patch of land survived three empires, earthquakes and fires. It has witnessed centuries of religious, political and cultural change—and resistance to change as well. The Square was a fitting place to commemorate Turkey’s leading feminist.

The statue was the lone monument in Turkey dedicated to Halide Edip, a revolutionary Turkish activist and writer. Before its defacement, the bust of Edip sat upon a stone pedestal of creamy white marble. Black engraved letters scrawled across the stone read, “With respect from Turkish women to Halide Edip, the woman symbol of the War of Independence.”

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2 Bağımsızlık Savaşıının sembol kadını Halide Edip Adıvar'a Türk kadınlarından saygılarla
Association had erected the statue to pay homage to Edip’s poignant 1919 speech to a crowd of thousands in Sultanahmet Square, and to commemorate her role as a prominent reformer during the Turkish independence movement. Newspapers were quick to condemn the destruction, asking, “Who committed this vandalism? How could their hands stretch to commit this evil, to perform this disaster? What treason against the country?” The assailants were never identified and these questions remain officially unanswered.

However, an event from the day prior to the statue’s defacement sheds light on the nature and possible motives of the crime. On March 11, the mayor of Istanbul had sent a flower arrangement to the newly erected monument in order to pay his respect to Edip. Almost immediately, a group of young leftists destroyed the arrangement while shouting, “Independent Turkey!” The group may have been retaliating for the 1968 arrests of individuals who protested the influence of the United States in Turkish affairs. This modern chapter of Turkish history harkens back to the accusations leveled against Halide Edip and likeminded intellectuals in the 1920s in Atatürk’s famous speech, the *Nutuk*. In it he assailed those who had supported the American Mandate of 1919, which would have made Turkey a temporary protectorate of the United States following World War I. As both Edip and the mayor supported American intervention in Turkey, though at different periods, it is not unlikely that the same leftist group who destroyed the mayor’s arrangement was responsible for the vandalism to the bust.

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6 To further speculate on the vandalism of Halide Edip’s bust, it is useful to turn to the article by Hikmet Bil, written one day prior to the explosion. In the article, Bil attempted to understand the motivation for the destruction of the mayor’s flower arrangement. Two years prior to the event, Mayor Atabey had visited the city of Çanakkale to greet the American Navy 6th Fleet during a routine port call. The 6th Fleet arrived during mass leftist student-run protests across Turkey. The students were protesting Western Imperialism and Americanization and they called for Turkey’s complete autonomy from foreign powers. According to a *New York Times* article, 29 young people were arrested while protesting the presence of the American Navy. The arrests sparked further demonstrations by thousands of students. These events reminded Bil of Atatürk’s famous speech, the *Nutuk*, in which Atatürk asserted that he had
Furthermore, the destruction of Halide Edip’s monument serves as a physical example of the ways in which modern memory and historical scholarship neglect the importance of women in the transition from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic. This thesis aims to unearth the female narrative using images from the illustrated press and Edip’s life and contributions as a backdrop. It will demonstrate the ways in which images of women’s bodies were employed to define cultural values, identify nationalistic fears, and contribute to the changes that have brought us the modern Turkish state. Ultimately, through their heroism on the battlefields of Anatolia, their labor behind the typewriter in Istanbul, and their representations on the page, women changed the trajectory of Turkish history.

Masculinized narratives of war and rebellion often omit women. The founding mythology of the Turkish Republic is guilty of failing to include their contributions in official narratives. However, images from the illustrated press bear witness to the struggles, stigmas and significance of Turkish women from 1913 to 1928. Women’s stories challenge the patriarchal narrative of Kemalists who “wrote their history with an eraser in hand.” By disregarding the role of Turkish women from 1913 to 1928, historians miss a large portion of the historical puzzle. Women’s contributions must be recognized in order to understand the foundations upon which the Turkish Republic was built.

Documentation about the lives of Turkish women during this era can be difficult to locate. One of the few sources available to historians is the popular press. Cartoon images from newspapers and magazines document how women participated in cultural and political change. Images of women captured contradictory emotions about the future and thus became the

worked towards establishing an independent Turkey, but that Halide Edip had supported an American Mandate in 1919.

symbolic battleground between modernity and tradition, freedom and subordination, and glory and dishonor. The struggles to define and represent women reflected a deeper ambivalence about modernity itself. In short, female images from the illustrated press enable the historian to understand the reactions to the drastic changes in space, visibility, appearance, education and employment for women in early twentieth-century Turkey.

*An Age of Anxiety*

On a gloomy November morning in 1918, nervous spectators watched as fleets of grey ships entered the Bosporus Strait in Istanbul. Stately British warships led the procession, followed close behind by those of the French and Italians.8 Worldwide armistice had been officially announced two days prior, but for Turkey the war was not over. It was the beginning of a new age of anxiety.

At its height during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Ottoman Empire was one of the most powerful states in the world. Its dominion spanned three continents and dozens of modern day nations. The Empire was vast and multiethnic; non-Muslim minorities were able to live in relative peace and autonomy through the “millet system.”9 Under Ottoman rule, millions of Greeks, Armenians and Jews had legal control over their own religious and judicial authority, in spite of their second-class citizenship. The simplest retelling of the decline of the Empire begins with the very nature of Ottoman rule. The Sultan’s authority was based upon military hegemony and the taxation of conquered lands. This system could not be maintained. As Europe advanced technologically in the seventeenth century, the Empire struggled to keep pace in the arenas of modern science, medicine, and weaponry. Military defeats led to loss of land,

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8 King, *Midnight at the Pera Palace*, 40.
constituents, and capital. With economic troubles, there were fewer monetary resources to finance soldiers and arms, and consequently more military losses.\textsuperscript{10}

This vicious cycle ultimately led to a decisive Ottoman defeat at the gates of Vienna in 1683\textsuperscript{11} and thus began the period of decline. European powers exploited the Empire’s deteriorating condition through the implementation of economic capitulations that allowed foreign merchants to reap massive profits from commerce within the Empire. Capitulations further depleted the struggling Ottoman economy while European merchants profited. In its weakened state it was easy for European Powers to take advantage of the Empire and to treat it like a colony with import taxes.\textsuperscript{12}

By the nineteenth century, the French Revolution had ushered in an era of modernization and reform not only in Western Europe.\textsuperscript{13} Its ramifications were felt worldwide. France went from a kingdom to a nation ruled by its people; these ideas were inspiring to intellectuals around the globe. Revolutionary thought penetrated Ottoman-controlled Eastern Europe and motivated events like the 1805 Serbian uprising. Further unrest throughout the Balkans in the mid-nineteenth century rattled the weakened Empire. Czar Nicholas I, one of the sultan’s most prominent antagonists, famously dubbed the Ottoman government the “sick man of Europe” during the Crimean War in the 1850s.\textsuperscript{14}

Russia was a bitter rival of the Empire, as it often backed states in rebellion against the Ottomans and desired to control the Turkish straits. Therefore the Ottoman Empire’s defeat in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 to 1878 came as a crushing blow to the Turks. The subsequent

\textsuperscript{10}Virginia Aksan, “War and Peace,” from \textit{The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume 3: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839}, 83.

\textsuperscript{11}Aksan, “War and Peace,” 96.

\textsuperscript{12}Edhem Eldem, “Capitulations and Western Trade,” from \textit{The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume 3}, 283.


\textsuperscript{14}King, \textit{Midnight at the Pera Palace}, 31.
Treaties of San Stefano and Berlin outlined the Ottoman loss of roughly 40 percent of its land and 20 percent of their population. By this time, the Empire was deteriorating quickly. Historian Charles King explains, “Its demise was the most over-anticipated event in diplomatic history.”

The Empire was fading; however, the age of women’s involvement in public affairs was just beginning. The women’s movement in Turkey ran parallel to calls for a more democratic regime, as the status of women quickly became the centerpiece for reformists’ agendas. The Tanzimat reform period of 1839 to 1871 had ushered in a wave of modern developments that improved life for many living within the Empire, while at the same time increasing European influence. The reforms left a legacy of secular schools and educational improvements that created a path towards upward mobility and led to the formation of a new class of empowered but dissatisfied young intellectuals. The newly secular educated youths who looked to the West realized that without modernization, the Empire would continue to be picked apart by opportunistic European powers. Ziya Gökalp and Namik Kemal were early Ottoman reformers, and according to Deniz Kandiyoti, for these men “the amelioration of women’s status was a tenet of Ottoman patriotism that required the mobilization of society in an attempt to salvage the state.” In other words, the advancement of women was necessary for national progress, not necessarily for improving the lives of women.

Reformists called for a more democratic regime and for a constitution of their own. The reforms of the Tanzimat period, along with democratic revolutionary ideologies of Ziya Gökalp, paved the way for the first Ottoman Constitution of 1876. The constitution ushered in an age of hope for the intellectual classes. But Abdülhamid II, the new sultan, did not share their desire for

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a democratic government. He dismantled the constitution just two years later, claiming to be warding off foreign intervention. His decision to dissolve the constitution was more likely anchored in an attempt to subdue growing leftist political sympathizers.

Instability, revolution, and rampant anxiety marked the first two decades of the twentieth century. The new class of educated but unenfranchised youths, or Young Turks, demanded that the constitution be reinstated. The Young Turks favored reform though a multi-party system and a constitutional monarchy to replace the absolute rule of the sultan. The Young Turks staged a revolution in that 1908 deposed Sultan Abudlhamid II and restored the Constitution that had been abandoned in 1876. A centrist group, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), won the first elections of 1912. After 1908, the newly instated CUP government quickly began its plan of nationalizing, or “Ottomanizing,” a multi-ethnic empire. They employed the fear of outsiders to foster a “Turkey for the Turks” mentality. The Empire continued to lose land and constituents through the bloody Balkan Wars of 1912 to 1913; by 1913 it had lost almost all of its European possessions. Following these costly wars, the Empire was bankrupt and the threat of a European takeover seemed likely. The future of empire and nation hung in the balance until 1914, when the Ottomans entered World War I on the side of the Central Powers.

The end of World War I did little to ease fears and instead introduced new anxieties in Istanbul and across Anatolia as the fate of the defeated Empire remained unclear. Most of what the general population had feared became true: the Empire lost war and risked dissolution. It seemed likely that the victorious Great Powers would pull apart and colonize the fallen empire.

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18 Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 103. The CUP handily won the election, however according to Zürcher, “The elections that followed in the Spring of 1912 are known in Turkish history as the sopali seçim (election with the stick), because of the violence and intimidation with which the CUP made sure of its majority. As a result, the new chamber was an obedient instrument of the Committee, only a handful of opposition candidates being elected.”
Apprehension spread amongst the masses, as six hundred and nineteen years of empire status ended in a day.

Ironically, the press flourished during this period of political decline. The Young Turk Revolution had freed the press from the rigid censorship laws\(^{19}\) of Sultan Abdülhamid II, and concerns about the future were debated through illustrations in periodicals. For the first time in Turkish history, an abundance of female images dominated the pages of illustrated newspapers and magazines. They represented the patriotic “mothers of the nation,” or they were attacked as wicked consumers of European fashions and morality. Their bodies could be used to represent the honor and integrity of the nation or to suggest the moral corruption brought about by the influences of European culture. For this reason, visual culture is one important way to study the situation of women and to reflect upon Ottoman society at the end of the Empire.

**Turkish Historical Scholarship**

A dusty navy blue copy of *A Speech* sits upon a top shelf of the top floor of Bryn Mawr College’s Canaday Library. The inside cover of the 724 page book contains a label that reads, “This book is a gift of the Republican Party of the People of Turkey.”\(^{20}\) *A Speech* is the transcribed 36-hour oration delivered to the Congress of the Republican People’s Party over the course of a week in October 1927 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In Turkish it is called the *Nutuk*, a history that modern Turkey has propagated for nearly a century. Both a political and a historical document, the *Nutuk* serves as the foundation of Turkish historiography. The speech provided a linear account of events in Turkey beginning with Allied occupation in 1919. It also vindicated the recently instated one-party Turkish government and justified the Independence Tribunals of

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1926 that resulted in the arrest and execution of political dissidents. The *Nutuk* places one man at the center of revolutionary triumph—the orator himself.

Using an unchanging “I” first-person narration, Atatürk hails himself as the hero of the revolution and the savior of modern Turkey throughout his speech. Full of hyperbole and nationalistic jargon, the *Nutuk* is “a cyclical and repetitive account of a self with a prophet-like calling to rescue the nation.” Atatürk establishes his legacy and ends the immense oration by placing the future of the Republic in the hands of its youth. “Turkish Youth! Your primary duty is ever to preserve and defend the National Independence, the Turkish Republic…The strength that you will need for this is mighty in the noble blood which flows in your veins.” Atatürk’s call to the nation was heard. Thanks to the nationalist indoctrination of Turkish youth, the *Nutuk*’s version of history has endured.

*The Atatürk Revolution: A Paradigm of Modernization*, by Bogazici University professor Suna Kili, follows the tradition of an Atatürk-centric history that originated with the *Nutuk*. It should be noted that the book was first published in 1981 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Atatürk’s birth. Kili does an excellent job explaining the revolutionary nature of Atatürk’s reforms, but like countless other histories of the Republic, *The Atatürk Revolution* reads more like a hagiography of Atatürk than an objective account. Kili heralds Atatürk as the father of the secular Turkish State, arguing that the caliphate had to end in order to achieve modernization within the country. Her belief that religion should be separate from politics is evident throughout this work. One could call this a “secular history” of the Republic.

Kili omits many historical details from her book. First, she mentions few other significant political or revolutionary figures and makes few gestures towards the new status of women, only

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writing that, “Atatürkist ideology was particularly emphatic on the question of the rights of peasants and women.”23 Her historical timeline corresponds to the years of persecution of ethnic minorities within the empire, yet she makes no mention of Armenians or the genocide that befall them. Kili justifies Atatürk’s nationalism as a necessary instrument for the unity and survival of the fledging nation state, a point that she argues well. Her belief that Atatürk’s brand of nationalism “was not racist or persecuting nationalism”24 is typical of Turkish authors, and ultimately a historically controversial issue. Kili’s speculation on the necessity of secularism in Turkish society is well justified, but her Atatürk -centric narrative is a historical argument that this thesis will challenge.

A 2004 book by Dutch professor at the University of Leiden, Erik J. Zürcher, called Turkey: A Modern History, covers a history from the eighteenth century Ottoman Empire to the Turkey of the new millennium. Differing from other historians of Turkey, Zürcher recognizes Atatürk for his Revolutionary achievements, but offers criticism of the venerated leader that is uncommon in works by other authors. “Under the influence of the official historiography of the Turkish Republic,” Zürcher writes, “historians have depicted the emergence of modern Turkey as the single-handed achievement of one man.”25 His book successfully transcends this narrative. One might argue that his criticisms of Atatürk are too harsh, as he writes that the state was without a doubt, “authoritarian and totalitarian.”26 He compares the new one-party republic to the government of fascist Italy. Despite this bias, Zürcher’s book restores balance to an often one-sided history.

26 Zürcher, Turkey: A Modern History, 304.
One of *Turkey: A Modern History*'s weaknesses lie also in its failure to mention women in any significant way. In more than 400 dense pages of writing, only two paragraphs discuss the status of women in Turkish history. Zürcher is justified in his criticisms of Atatürk’s leadership style. However, by neglecting the role of women in the foundation of the republic, Zürcher fails to account for an important segment of history. If included, it would strengthen his arguments about Atatürk as an authoritarian leader, highlight the limits of democracy in the new republic, and shed light on the problems of Turkey’s past and present.

The years since Zürcher’s 2004 book have yielded new scholarship that criticizes twentieth century national discourses, debunks Turkish founding mythology, and explores the transformation period from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic. Charles King, a professor of international affairs and government at Georgetown, authors one such work. He is not a Turkish speaker, but his interest and knowledge of Russian history are evident throughout his 2014 social history of Istanbul, *Midnight at the Pera Palace*. King’s book begins in 1918 with the European invasion that followed Armistice Day. It was an anxious and chaotic time in Istanbul. The Greek occupation of Smyrna in 1919 fueled these tensions and the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres increased fears of partition.

King explains that Istanbul was not only full of foreign occupying soldiers, but was also overflowing with Russian refugees. Tens of thousands of White Russians arrived in the city following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, many of whom were poor and unmarried young women. Shifting demographics introduced nightlife to the city and the Europeanized neighborhood of Pera developed as an area buzzing with bars, brasseries and brothels. 27 More women were visible in the public sphere and drinking, lasciviousness, and general immorality became commonplace in certain quarters of the growing city. King includes several chapters

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27 King, *Midnight at the Pera Palace*, 143.
dedicated to the lives of Turkish women in the 1920s, from beauty queens and musicians, to political reformers like Halide Edip. He explores how modernizing technologies affected the status of Istanbul in the 1920s, but he neglects the role of the press. My project aims to fill this gap in scholarship, while contributing to the new trend of debunking national myths.

Deniz Kandiyoti is one of the foremost Turkish revisionist historians with a focus on gender, nationalism, and Islam. A Professor Emeritus at the University of London, Kandiyoti coined the term “Patriarchal Bargain,” referring to a tactic used by women who choose to abide by patriarchal norms in order to maximize their own power and possibilities within a society. She has written chapters in several books including “Some Awkward Questions on Women and Modernity in Turkey,” from *Remaking Women* and “Women and the Turkish State: Political Actors or Symbolic Pawns?” from *Woman-Nation-State*. She analyzes the status of women during the transition from Empire to Nation and argues that the need for modernity, rather than the desire to improve the lives of women, inspired the reforms for women in 1920s Republican Turkey. After the abolition of the harem, the refashioning of gender in Turkey required women to don the metaphorical veil of sexual purity. This thesis expands upon Kandiyoti’s theories and applies them to images found in the feminist and popular press.

Palmira Brummett is perhaps the leading English-language scholar of images of women in the Ottoman press. Her book, *Image & Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press 1908-1911*, surveys a range of subjects satirized in newspapers in the years following the Young Turk Revolution. Brummett argues that satire is useful because it, “is drawn to power” and for this

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reason, it can criticize and question large establishments in an accessible way. The Ottoman press condemned the banished Sultan Abdülhamid II and the obsolescence of his regime; however foreign powers were the most common object of mockery. Brummett says that according to the press, any involvements in Ottoman social or political affairs by Western powers were calculated and fueled only by self-interest and hegemonic motivations. Moreover, the perceived European threat to Ottoman cultural identity, in conjunction with supposed competing internal nationalistic sentiments between Turks and ethnic minorities heightened fears of the time.

Brummett argues that the press ridiculed all things European from 1908 to 1911. While European fashions and fads were often regarded with satiric contempt in newspapers, the press also tells us that Ottoman citizens were conscious consumers of foreign goods and embraced modern fashion trends. Therefore, public opinion directed towards Europe could not have been completely negative. Brummett’s scholarship is also limited to the years directly following the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and prior to the Empire’s entrance into World War I. While this is a crucial period in the history of Turkey, there is a bigger story to tell. The illustrated satiric press persisted as an active part of public discourse throughout World War I and in the decade following the establishment of the Turkish Republic. This thesis expands Brummett’s arguments to encompass the years beyond the 1908 Revolutionary period. It showcases the power of the popular press, specifically how images of women, and images that were curated by women, were forces that mobilized change and public opinion from 1908 throughout the Greco-Turkish War and into the years following the establishment of the Turkish Republic.

It is clear why Turkish historians have tended to write Atatürk-centric versions of history. The Nutuk offers a simple and one-sided solution to historical questions, and places all

31 Brummett, Image & Imperialisms in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 70.
of the responsibility on Atatürk as the one and only leader in uniting a nation. The fact that the Turkish Republic donated a copy of the *A Speech* to the Bryn Mawr College library, and likely to colleges across the country, proves its desire to perpetuate this founding mythology. However, the simplest version of history is rarely the most accurate.

*Overview of Historical Evidence*

Visual evidence serves as the cornerstone of this project. A focus on images is advantageous for several reasons. First, seeking translations from Ottoman to modern Turkish would be frustrating and time consuming. Images offer a more manageable access point into the world of the late-Ottoman and early Turkish Republic press. It is obvious that images speak; however it is not obvious what they say. They must be read critically and historically to deduce their meaning and ultimate purpose without a textual explanation. The implications may differ depending on the viewer, but the ambiguity does not eliminate images as a useful historical source. Illustrations from the popular press represent and capture the struggle that accompanied the transition to modernity. This thesis situates images in the larger framework of twentieth century Turkish nation building and political reform.

Turkish print culture dates back to the late fifteenth century, when Sephardic Jews imported the printing press to the Ottoman Empire. Ibrahim Muferrika, a Hungarian *dövme* founded the first Muslim press in Istanbul in 1727.32 Printing progressed slowly through the centuries, but books printed in Ottoman Turkish became popular with the educated elites by the 1820s. Private Ottoman journalism emerged in the 1860s, but it was deeply limited by strict Hamidian censorship of the following decades. Despite censorship, educated readership

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32 Irvin Cemil Schick, “Print Capitalism and Women’s Sexual Agency in the Late Ottoman Empire,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 31 (2011), 197.
increased during the years of Sultan Abdülhamid II as a result of Tanzimat educational reforms. However, literacy rates remained below ten percent by the end of the empire.\footnote{Alkan, Mehmet, “Modernization from Empire to Republic,” from \textit{Ottoman Past and Today’s Turkey} ed. Kemal H. Karpat, (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 49.}

All levels of Ottoman society could enjoy illustrated periodicals. Cartoons were accessible in a way that printed text was not. The sale of illustrated newspapers benefited from low literacy rates because one did not need to know how to read in order to interpret a cartoon image. Common newspaper mascots like Karagöz with his bad manners and humble dress served as the voice of the everyday Ottoman man. In the Ottoman press, illiterate lower class citizens could be the heroes of revolution. Mascots like Karagöz or Zügürt the peasant united lower class readers, while criticizing the excesses of the elites.\footnote{Brummett, \textit{Image & Imperialisms in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press}, 87.} Another newspaper mascot was Cadaloz, the old Nag found in the periodical \textit{Fakala}. Cadaloz was an androgynous figure, and because she was disassociated from female sexuality, she assumed a traditional male voice in a space dominated by men—politics and the press.\footnote{Brummett, \textit{Image & Imperialisms in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press}, 63.} Cartoon mascots like Karagöz and Cadaloz served as vehicles for forceful yet anonymous criticism of political and social authority by intellectuals, political critics, and every day citizens.

The first periodical for women, \textit{Terakki-i Muhadderat} (Women’s Progress), appeared in 1869.\footnote{Ozgur Turesay,“An Almanac for Women,” in \textit{A Social History of Late Ottoman Women}, ed. Duygu Köksal and Anastasia Falierou (Leiden: Boston Brill Publishing, 2013) 230.} However, there were as many as forty different women’s periodicals available to consumers in the years after 1913. The Kadın Eserleri Library in Istanbul houses an archive of illustrated women’s magazines in a Byzantine building on the shores of the Bosporus. The illustrations and articles found on the pages of \textit{Kadinlar Dunyasi} (Women’s World), \textit{Süs}
(Ornament), İnci (Pearl), Resimli Ay (Illustrated Monthly), and several other women’s periodicals serve as the motor behind this thesis.

Photographs can also be used to support the hypothesis that images of Ottoman women were used to advance Turkish Nationalist agendas, highlight the evils of Western society, and mock the newly visible status of Turkish women following World War I. The Sophia Smith Archive at Smith College contains a substantial collection of photographs of Ottoman women from 1918 to 1928. The images were taken in rural and urban settings in and around Istanbul and Anatolia. Some show women in traditional dress while others depict the evolving fashion trends. Florence Billings, an American woman, took these images. She, and her associate Annie Allen worked as relief workers and traveled around Turkey from 1918 to the late 1920s. They both maintained close personal relationships with the Turkish women that they met during their time in the country. Billings’ friendships with Halide Edip and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk are of particular interest to this study.

The Florence Billings collection also houses rare photographs of Halide Edip. Edip was an essential part of Atatürk’s inner circle during the Turkish nationalist movement. She served as a soldier in the trenches, reaching the ranks of sergeant, and was hailed as “The Mother of Turkey” and “The Woman Behind Atatürk” in newspaper headlines. Her story captures the swiftly changing status of Turkish women during the armistice years. Images of Edip in uniform during the Greco-Turkish War, confidently riding a horse, or marching into Istanbul with her male companions after the exit of the Allies, highlight her important role in the nationalist and early Turkish feminist movements.

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Finally, personal accounts are essential to understanding the lives of women during this transition period. Analysis of Edip’s memoirs serves as the guiding thread of this thesis. Much debate has been generated over the value of the memoir to the historian. As Paula S. Fass writes, “The memoir makes the invisible world of memories visible and the past important. The memoir confirms history. It is a witness to a passing past. It refuses to let it move on unnoticed and unremarked upon.”39 Halide Edip’s unique position as a feminist and a nationalist during some of the most tumultuous years in Turkish history makes her recollections invaluable sources for the historical study of this time period. Her memoirs are a rich source of historical detail that is useful for the study of women’s role in Turkey’s past.

This thesis unearths women’s history from empire to nation using the materials laid out above as evidence. It is divided into four sections. First, I will examine the changing spaces occupied by elite Ottoman women in the early twentieth century with the emergence of a feminist intellectual print culture. Next, I will discuss women’s contributions to the nationalist movement as writers, soldiers, and public figures. Additionally, this section will explore the ways in which images of women were used to promote patriotism and to construct a national familial identity. Section three will survey the feminist and popular press to determine how women’s fashion evolved in the years following the Young Turk Revolution. Images from fashion magazines demonstrate that women’s dress played a central role in Turkish nation building. Finally, I will outline the limits of Turkish feminism in the new Turkish Republic, a state that was erected by women but grounded in patriarchy. Together, I aim to follow the rise, plateau, and suppression of the Turkish feminist movement. Through the shifting images of Turkish women, this thesis traces both the emancipation and suppression of women during the transition from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic.

I. Female Intellectual Space: Women of Letters

Changing Spaces: From the Harem to the Editor’s Room

“All that people ask me about is the life of a harem,” quipped Halide Edip with a flash of humor in her eyes and a subtle sadness in her voice. Edip was an educator and a novelist, a public figure and revolutionary during Turkey’s darkest days. The American journalist Mildred Adams described her as a woman whose life “is like four or five novels rolled into one.” Out of all of her identities, Edip wished to be remembered as a novelist. “It is my work,” she told a visitor during her American lecture circuit in 1928. But in addition to tales of war and revolution, recollections of Edip’s harem upbringing also captured the attention of American audiences.

From seclusion in the harem to revolutionary heroines, this section explores the changing spaces occupied by upper-class Ottoman women following the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. The examination of Halide Edip’s memoirs, and the early lives of two other prominent Turkish intellectuals, Sabiha Sertel and Ulviye Mevlan, illustrates how the harem kept women from the public sphere for centuries. Their stories show us how in the early twentieth century, women broke with tradition and pursued meaningful lives outside of the home. These women proceeded to found women’s advocacy clubs and feminist journals. Articles and images from newly established women’s periodicals attest to the emergence of a new class of intellectually active women. This section argues that the feminist press of 1913 to 1928 exemplifies female intellectual agency and attests to women’s transition from living secluded lives to becoming visible and active members of society.

To Westerners, the harem was the most intriguing and least understood space in Ottoman society. Coming from the Arabic word meaning “forbidden,” or “secluded place,” the harem was

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shrouded in mystery. There are countless historical examples of the West’s obsession with the lives of Middle Eastern women in the art, literature, and music of the nineteenth century. From *The Abduction from the Seraglio* by Mozart, to Delacroix’s *Femmes d’Alger* and Hugo’s *Les Orientales*—it is clear that Europe had a preoccupation with the region and its women. Guarded by eunuchs and reserved for men of high status, no European man could obtain access to a harem, but that did not stop the Western imagination from running wild. Penetrating a harem was the ultimate metaphor for European imperial conquest. Westerners imagined hazy rooms filled with half-naked women lounging on plush cushions and sipping on opium pipes (Figure 1.1). Examining Halide Edip’s experience in the harem counters such impressions.

The traditional Ottoman home was divided into two parts. The *selamlik* encompassed the public and male-dominated section of a home, and was used for entertaining guests. Meanwhile, the *harem* described the private section of the home that was closed off to visitors and occupied by women. Far from the lascivious and opium-filled dreams of Westerners, life in the harem was regulated and monotonous. Western misconceptions of the harem often perturbed Ottoman intellectuals of the period. During World War I, Grace Ellison, author of *An Englishwoman in the Ottoman Harem*, asked Halide Edip how Englishwomen could assist their Turkish sisters. Edip replied, “Delete forever that misunderstood word ‘harem’… and dispel the nasty atmosphere which a wrong meaning of that word has cast over our lives.”

This portion of the thesis aims to debunk the myths of the harem and will argue that in some cases, as with Halide Edip, the harem offered educational advantages to women.

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42 Halide Edip explained the entomology of the word ‘Harem,” in the endnotes of *House With Wisteria*: “The word *haremlik* does not exist in Turkish. It is an evented form, no doubt due to a mistaken idea that “selamlik” literally, the place for salutations or greeting, i.e., the reception- room and therefore, among Moslems, the men’s apartments, could have a corresponding feminine form, which would be “haremlik.” This word is, however, a verbal monstrosity. “Harem” is an Arabic word with the original sense of a shrine, a secluded place. Hence it came to be identified with the seclusion of women, either by means of the veil or by confinement in separate apartments; and hence again it came to be used for those apartments themselves.” 398.

In urban areas, formal institutions like the Ottoman Imperial Palace and religious law governed the rules of acceptable behavior for women and kept them confined to the domestic sphere. Additionally, informal institutions like family life influenced and regulated the moral behavior of women. Under the watchful eye of these institutions, women were expected to be good wives and mothers. The idealized Ottoman woman was obedient, modest, and sexually innocent and their primary role in society was to produce and rear children. However, in elite households, life in the harem could lead to an intellectual awakening that would ultimately shape the Turkish feminist movement as it moved from private to public in the early twentieth century.

Edip recorded childhood and young adult recollections in her first memoir, *House with Wisteria* (*Mor Salkımlı Evi*). Born to an elite household in the Istanbul neighborhood of Besiktas in 1884, Edip was raised in the traditional Ottoman manner. Her mother, Fatma Bedirfem Hanim, was dönme: a Turkish Jew converted to Islam. Fatma died of tuberculosis when Edip was a child, so her paternal grandmother and her father’s two other wives raised her. Her father, Edip Bey, was a secretary in the Department of the Treasury for Sultan Abüdlhamid II and he worked in the Imperial Palace. Edip Bey admired English culture and wanted his children to be raised according to European tradition. Their cook prepared English food, they wore European clothes, and Edip would eventually receive a Western education.

The first half of Halide Edip’s memoir is comprised of private thoughts and portraits of female family members and her teachers in the harem. She describes how the polygamous nature of the household led to an “uncongenial atmosphere,” a fact that no doubt influenced Edip’s position on polygamy. At this time, polygamy was still legal in the Ottoman Empire, although it was mostly reserved for elite households. Edip’s father had two wives who were often unhappy.

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44 Gertrude Emerson, “Halide Hanoum,” *Asia*, (February 1920), 86.
with their polygamous marriage. The wives, along with many other women, contributed to Edip’s intellectual maturation. For example, Edip frequently mentions her English governess and her Italian music teacher. She also recalls Peyker Hanum, a woman from the Palace who inspired Edip by daring to defy conventions with a, “heart and tongue of incredible frankness.” Edip recalls how Peyker Hanum would receive her husband’s friends and join the men in their discussions with “intuitive and intelligent understanding.”

While domestic life was highly controlled and prevented women from participating in public affairs, it had some advantages for elite women. Young women in the harem had access to the best tutors and they were educated in literature, science, and the arts. In addition to speaking English fluently, Edip was educated in Arabic and Persian as well as Ottoman Turkish and French. She taught herself Arabic by meticulously translating the Koran. One tutor, Riza Tewfik, taught Edip lessons in French and Turkish literature, as well as philosophy. “He opened me to an unparalleled world of beauty and thought,” she recalls. As a teenager, she spent her time translating Shakespeare, and adored the works of Emile Zola. Edip may have been denied certain freedoms in the harem, but in her seclusion she acquired intellectual autonomy that was not possible for lower-class women.

At the turn of the century, it was still forbidden for Muslim women to attend foreign schools, but Edip’s father was determined. He promised not to seek a promotion at the Palace in exchange for his daughter’s enrollment at the American College for Girls. Of her education, Edip writes, “As a whole, college had a liberating effect upon me, giving me a much greater balance and

46 Edip, House With Wisteria, 143.
47 Edip, House With Wisteria, 130.
48 Women of lower classes were not confined to the harem and were permitted outside to run errands or do work. Additionally, rural Ottoman women were responsible for assisting with farm labor. They tilled the ground, planted crops and collected the harvest alongside men. The lives of such women merit study, but are not the focus of this thesis.
49 Edip, House With Wisteria, 147.
opening up to me the possibility of a personal life with enjoyments of a much more varied kind.\textsuperscript{50} Halide Edip was the first Muslim woman to graduate from the school in 1901. She had an active mind and craved intellectual companionship. After graduating, she married her math tutor, the academic aristocrat Zeki Bey, twenty years her senior. The marriage was not a happy one. In 1902 she had a nervous breakdown, from the lack of mental stimulation and the suppression of her intellectual capacity. “Some light in my head was constantly burning,” she explains.\textsuperscript{51} Constant confinement to the home could easily compromise a woman’s ability to dream, think, and act. During her marriage to Zeki Bey, Edip was secluded in a small house. “My life was confined within the walls of my apartment. I led the life of the old-fashioned Turkish women…I belonged to the new house and its master, and gave the best I had, to create a happy home and to help him in his great work.”\textsuperscript{52}

Though confined to the home, Edip was part of a growing educated elite class of intellectuals in Istanbul that was dissatisfied with the old order and Ottoman dependence on foreign powers. This group called themselves Unionists, in reference to the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) to which many belonged. Edip described her dissatisfactions with the old order in her memoirs as well as her personal correspondence. The women’s movement in Turkey took off during the upheavals of 1908. The sultan’s government officials, suspecting sedition, carefully watched gatherings of men. Therefore wives of revolutionaries were responsible for carrying letters to their Young Turk husbands in the Committee for Union and Progress.\textsuperscript{53} Thus women entered the world of politics.

\textsuperscript{50} Edip, \textit{House With Wisteria}, 153.
\textsuperscript{51} Edip, \textit{House With Wisteria}, 170.
\textsuperscript{52} Edip, \textit{House With Wisteria}, 167.
\textsuperscript{53} Emerson, “Halideh Hanoum,” 86.
After Sultan Abüdulhamid II was overthrown in 1909, Edip began working as a literary columnist for the pro-Unionist newspaper Tanin. Her first published work was a patriotic poem about Osman, the founder of the Ottoman Empire. She wrote from home under a pen name and never met with the editor Tevfik Fikret, as it was considered improper for a married woman of her class to be unaccompanied in public or to meet with men outside of the family. The Young Turk Revolution had been successful in deposing the Sultan and reinstating the constitution. However, a second revolution of a different kind, with women at the helm, was about to begin.

Women’s World: The Foundation of Feminist Periodicals

After Zeki Bey asked to take a second wife, Edip divorced him in 1910, a bold decision for the time. Following the divorce, she worked for a number of women’s educational institutions. The 1908 Revolution led to the foundation of dozens of women’s clubs, where women could meet and discuss politics, literature, and the changing status of women. Edip was the first female member of the revolutionary men’s club The Turkish Hearth (Türk Ocağı) and founded the Association for the Elevation of Women (Teali Nisvan Cemiyeti). During the Balkan War of 1912, the Association for the Elevation of Women raised funds for the war and encouraged members to volunteer as nurses. The Society of the Red Crescent, run by Nimet Hanım, also trained female nurses and sent them to the front lines during the Balkan Wars. For the first time, women played an active and visible role in national affairs.

In the years of war following the Young Turk Revolution, “Print became the recognized medium of the seething intellectual life,” wrote Clair Pierce for the New York Times. “Halide Edip became one of the daring women who took full advantage of the new intellectual freedom,” Pierce continued. She was in good company. Nuriye Ulviye Mevlan Civelek was born in central Turkey in 1893. Like Edip, she grew up in seclusion, having been taken to the

harem in Topkapi Palace when she was six years old. She received her first education in the palace harem, and like Edip, dreamed of a future beyond its walls. Her family was Circassian, a Caucasian ethnic group that had fled Russian Imperialism in the nineteenth century. When Ulviye was thirteen, she was forced into marriage with the elderly foster brother of Sultan Abdülhamid II, Hulisi Bey. He died shortly after their marriage. She eventually married a well-known journalist, Rifat Mevlan, but her own journey into the men’s world of publishing had already begun several years earlier.

The first issue of *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women’s World) appeared on April 4, 1913, when Mevlan was twenty years old. At its height, the magazine had a circulation of over three thousand and Mevlan served as its editor in chief. She founded the magazine with the money she had inherited from her husband’s estate. The first one hundred issues were produced daily; later it became a weekly magazine. In its fifth issue, Mevlan published an article under the signature Kadınlar Dünyası, where she described her motivation for publishing a magazine.

I kept on thinking about how we could make changes in our submissive and useless lives. To move forward I believe both practical and spiritual courage are necessary. We are now in an age of reform and enlightenment. I knew that to advance in society, we had to develop a modern personality, mind and soul. In this age of awakening, and with a new society based on advances in the social sciences, I decided to publish a magazine that would encourage women to take the necessary developmental steps.55

In May 1913, Ulviye founded the Ottoman Women’s Rights Association (Osmanlı Müdâfa-i Hukuk-i Nisvan Cemiyeti).56 It was the first women’s association to be registered according to Ottoman laws. The association sought to reform women’s clothing, and looked for ways to improve education and the status of employment for women. *Kadınlar Dünyası* became the

literary voice of the organization. A photograph of the association leaders was published in several issues of the magazine (Figure 1.2). In the image, women sit and stand poised around a small table. Some wear a traditional çarşaf, but most are dressed in the western fashion, with ornate hats and modern dresses. Two women, one of whom is feminist journalist Sabiha Sertel hold large fur muffs, a clear indicator of European fashion influence. Each woman looks directly at the camera, daring anyone to question their intellectual capabilities. Readers of Kadınlar Dünyası would likely see this image and aspire to be among the ranks of such poised and intelligent women.

Kadınlar Dünyası was entirely produced by women, and they vowed to publish articles written by and for women. “Until our legal equality is acknowledged in general law, until women and men are deemed equal in every respect, Kadınlar Dünyası will not open its pages to men,”57 Mevlan wrote in its ninth issue. She relied on the support from the Ottoman Women’s Rights Association as well as sisterhood with Muslim and foreign women to realize her dreams of gender equality. For the first year of its publication, Kadınlar Dünyası published a French language supplement. Letters to the Editor from French women that were printed in both Ottoman Turkish and French demonstrates international support for the Turkish feminist movement.

Sabiha Sertel (second from right in Figure 1.2) was born in Salonika in 1895 into a large dönme family and received an elementary and high school education at dönme schools.58 Because women in the Ottoman Empire could not attend university, Sertel, along with her friends, founded The Progressive Society (Tefeyyüz Cemiyeti). The organization collected money from its members in order to hire university professors to teach them law, philosophy,

57 Ulviye Mevlan, Kadınlar Dünyası no. 9, 12 April 1913, 3.
sociology and economics. When she was sixteen, Sertel wrote essays for several journals under a pen name. The essays discussed the tenets of women’s rights and criticized sharia law. She met her future husband, Mehmet Zekeriya Sertel, through reading his essays in *New Philosophy* (Yeni Felsefe) and the two began to exchange letters. When he proposed, she told him that she had no desire to be a traditional housewife. In addition to the lives of Edip, Mevlana, and Sertle, images from the feminist press highlight the shift role of women in society.

*Images from the Feminist Press*

Figure 1.3 is from the women’s magazine *Şüs*, and was published in 1920. In the cartoon’s accompanying captions a couple exchanges a dialogue:

-----Man: You’re saying we are splitting up-- this is your final decision, right?
---Woman: Yes, we should also return all of our letters.
---Man: Really?! But why don’t we just send them to other people…

This comic image illustrates the changing relationships between men and women in twentieth century Turkey. The conversation suggests that the couple had a written relationship, as well as a physical one. Like Sabiha Sertel and her future husband, these two wrote love letters to one another as a form of courting. This would only be the case if the woman had received some type of education. The image also suggests that the couple’s relationship was built upon mutual love for each other, at least at some prior point in time. Previously, women of high status did not get to choose their husbands, as they were often required to enter into arranged marriages by their family. This image thus demonstrates a new type of affective romance between men and women.

Another point worth noting in this comic is the modern style of clothing. The man is not wearing a fez; instead he sports a European style suit and bowtie. The woman wears a tight fitting slip; one strap of her garment hangs off her shoulder and she is exposing plenty of

cleavage. It is reminiscent of John Singer Sargent’s 1884 painting *Madame X*, which had scandalized the French public by depicting a respectable lady in a body hugging dress. Like the woman in Figure 1.3, Madame X’s jeweled dress strap hung precariously off her shoulder, before the painting was received so poorly that Singer had to repaint the strap. This illustration, too, would have been a scandalous look for a Turkish woman in 1920, and an unacceptable for public.

Through the articles and illustrations in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, Mevlan aimed to express feminist political demands and to represent women from all social classes, though mostly the educated classes had the literacy skills to benefit from lengthy articles. However, women who lacked formal education could still enjoy the magazine, particularly the cartoons and photographs. *Kadınlar Dünyası* featured prominent Turkish feminists on the cover and was full of photographs of women and comic illustrations.

Following 1908, as many as forty different magazines for women were published. Some were short-lived. Others like *Kadınlar Dünyası* were staples for women with aspirations to play a more meaningful role in their society. *Kadınlar Dünyası* aimed to improve female education and supported the establishment of an Istanbul university for women. In 1914, owing to efforts from Mevlan’s organization, Inas Darülfünunu, the first women’s university, opened its doors. In the previous year, the organization had successfully managed the appointment of seven Muslim women to the telephone office. They were the first women to win the right to hold a post in the civil service.

Mevlan believed that feminism was essential to the lives of both men and women, but that women must achieve feminism for themselves. In her most famous editorial entitled

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Düşünüyorum (I am Thinking), Mevlan argued for the equal treatment of men and women. It was the first time she signed her real name to a piece of writing.

The purpose of feminism is not only to improve women's lives, but to improve men's lives as well. Feminism wants to make it possible for both sexes to live better and happier and more humane lives together. Why shouldn't a woman, a future wife and mother, as talented, well-educated and intellectual as men, not be paid the same income as men? And why should she remain silent and passive instead of protesting for her rights to equal payment? It is this very passivity, my dear friend, which feminism cannot allow.62

Ulviye Mevlan’s brand of feminism can be felt in every issue of Kadınlar Dünyası. Articles discussing women’s role in society were frequently interspersed with poems about womanhood and editorials from prominent feminist thinkers.

In examining figure 1.4 there are several elements worth mentioning. The woman’s clothing catches the eye as she is wearing a revealing camisole. Her hair is short and bobbed, mimicking European fashion. The man appears to be wearing a European style suit and is smoking a cigarette, a symbol of modernity. Situated on overstuffed pillows, they are clearly sharing an intimate moment. A close observation suggests that the man and woman are on equal footing in the conversation. The woman begins,

--From now on we won’t fight anymore right?
--Never!!
--But after that how will we understand that we love each other?
--Ah, true.

The text implies that the couple is in love—an emotion that they express through argument. In traditional Ottoman marriages, it would not be possible for a wife to fight with her husband in this manner, nor would this type of banter be possible. Another element is the visual androgyny of the image. The man appears to be wearing makeup and has feminine and angular features,

highlighting the slippery boundaries of gender. Additionally, the woman grabs the man’s face; she is in control of the conversation and of his body. The two figures could be interchangeable as only their clothing indicates gender.

As more women learned to read, small publishing houses attempted to tap into the new female market. Several issues of Kadınlar Dünyası feature an advertisement for the publishers at Kitâbâne-i Sûdî. In Figure 1.5, a young woman bursts out of the page; torn pieces of paper frame her body. Her hair is delicately curled and partially covered with a tight scarf as she serenely reads a large book. The front cover says, “All sorts of works—scientific, literary, social.” The back cover further advertises the publishing house, “Not only do I buy all my books from Kitâbâne-i Sûdî, I recommend that my friends do so as well for this publisher is a most serious institution.” Not only is this woman educated, but her friends are as well. Perhaps she is the member of a woman’s organization that discusses politics and literature. This advertisement indicates the recognition of female intellectual agency and a desire to tap into women’s buying power.

Figure 1.6 from İnci advertises the satiric newspaper Diken. It depicts a man and a woman reading together. The man wears a fez, symbolizing his Ottoman roots, but also a European jacket with tails, fitted pants, and shiny black shoes. The woman wears a modern European dress and a scarf over her coiffed hair. Her arm is draped over the man’s shoulder. Behind them, an old woman in traditional garments, perhaps Cadaloz the old nag, shakes a parasol towards the young couple. Her anger at their intimate stance while reading together represents a conflict between modernity and tradition. The nag represents the old, the couple-- the new. Moreover, the advertisement transmits the belief that reading is an activity that transcends gender and can be equally enjoyed by both men and women.
These two publishing house notices illustrate the importance of advertisements in documenting the shifting roles of women in Ottoman society. Again from İnci, a 1916 advertisement depicts a young woman reclining in a decorative armchair, legs crossed nonchalantly (Figure 1.7). Her relaxed pose indicates that she has been sitting there for some time, completely undisturbed. She is a woman with means and leisure time to fill as she likes—in this case, with intellectual pursuits. Immediately, one notices the book perched in her delicate hands. With no visible title, we are left to guess the genre, but the size and shape of the book suggests a novel. Perhaps it is one of Halide Edip’s novels featuring a strong female heroine. We have interrupted her, but she doesn’t seem to mind. With a slight smile, the woman glances up from the book and confronts the viewer, as if inviting them to take a seat next to her and discuss the reading.

Her attractive face is decorated with makeup and her short bobbed hair is tied up with a fashionable scarf. She wears a stylish black dress that she has accessorized with a string of pearls. Black nylons and a pair of shiny pumps complete the brazen look. Out of her plump lips is perched a fine cigarette. A sinewy line of smoke spills from the end and snakes above her head. By the look of it, she is cosmopolitan, educated and confident. Most importantly, she is advertising a masculine product: cigarette rolling papers. “Cigarette papers that are produced in our country are the most perfect and good ones ever smoked. You only have to take one little step and try it for yourself to prove this assertion,” she informs the readers. This statement reveals a pride in the Turkish homeland while encouraging others to try a product of Turkey. The advertisement appeals to educated female readers of İnci who may have wanted to emulate the flawless chic look of the woman in the armchair and try rolling a cigarette for herself.
Cartoons from the feminist press depicted women as active participants in the public sphere and as economic agents, producers, and consumers after World War I and during the subsequent Greco-Turkish War, as seen in Figure 1.8. Two women in modern dress, wearing pants, scarves, high heeled shoes and short, visibly bobbed hair are in a conversation in front of a university of place of learning. Their dialogue:

--You too to the movies?
--Yes, but to enjoy the show, not to emulate the actresses like all the others.

These women are out in public, visible to passersby of either sex. They enjoy various forms of entertainment, in this case film. This conversation suggests that they are serious filmgoers. They do not care about emulating the actresses on screen. Rather, they have an intellectual interest in movies. Film is more than entertainment for them. An advertisement from Süs suggests that the women in Figure 1.8 represented a segment of real Turkish women who frequented the cinema. The image (Figure 1.9) advertises the 1923 film adaptation of Halide Edip’s novel, The Shirt of Flame. “By the demand of the public, Halide Edip’s masterpiece The Shirt of Flame… every night of this month.” The advertisement indicates that women were not only active moviegoers, but they were involved in writing and starring in films as well.

The illustrated press bears witness to the drastic changes of visibility, space, and representation of Turkish women in the early twentieth century. For the first time, women entered the intellectual sphere alongside men. The next section explains that some of these “women of letters,” 63 would enter yet another masculine space: the battlefield.

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Women and Turkish Nationalism: Mother of the Nation, Father of the Turks

“In Turkey we have a saying, ‘Women are all one nation’...though men may belong to differentiated groups called races and nations, the females of the human species remains the same.” –Halide Edip

On a breezy day in May 1919, masses gathered in Sultanahmet Square in Istanbul to protest the Greek invasion of Smyrna. Halide Edip was selected to address the crowd of more than 50,000 onlookers. Before beginning her speech, Edip gazed from the municipality-building balcony at the sea of fezzes, turbans, and waving red flags with white crescents. She began, “Brothers, sisters, countrymen, Moslems: When the night is darkest and seems eternal, the light of dawn is nearest.” Her fervent speech brought the crowd to tears and marked an important moment in Turkish national awakening. Moreover, Edip’s speech is a testament to the active role of women in the Turkish independence movement.

This section examines the ways in which individual women and feminist print culture contributed to Turkish state building. By evoking Turkish patriotism, the feminist press both redefined and reinforced societal norms for twentieth century women. Memoirs, novels, and women’s magazines from the interwar period attest to the role of women in the Turkish nationalist movement. This section draws on the later memoirs of Halide Edip, whose testimony highlights the connections between Turkish feminism and revolutionary Turkish nationalism. It explores how Edip and other feminist intellectuals participated in the Turkish nationalist movement in the interwar period from 1918 to 1922. Additionally, it examines nationalist iconography and the use of feminine images and fictional female characters to advance a

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64 Edip, Conflict of East and West in Turkey. (Delhi: Maktaba Jamia Millia Islamia, 1935), 193.
65 Present-day Izmir, on the Aegean coast of Turkey
nationalist agenda. Finally, this section reveals that women were not only depicted as allegorical “Mothers of the Nation,” but also expected to be good wives and mothers to their children.

*Women in the Turkish Nationalist Movement*

Her posture is rigid and her stern black eyes stare unapologetically at the camera. She places one hand behind her back, while the other holds a rifle that is almost as tall as her slight frame. Halide Edip posed for this photograph by Florence Billings (Figure 2.1) in 1921 or 1922. Standing on a stoop with her face unveiled, two large dogs frame Edip. With the dogs by her side, she exudes power, confidence, and fierce patriotism. She appears willing to do anything necessary for independence, even leaving her children and picking up a rifle. In 1920 Edip did just that. With a price on her head, she and her husband fled to Ankara to join the underground nationalist movement. She left her two sons in the care of friends. Halide Edip made personal sacrifices and broke boundaries in order to become the “Mother of a Nation.”

Edip’s second memoir, *The Turkish Ordeal*, illuminates the sentiments and aspirations expressed by many Turks leading up to and during the “War of Liberation.” Edip’s position as a woman and a feminist provides the historian with a unique vantage point into a typically male-dominated nationalist narrative. Her second memoir, *The Turkish Ordeal*, takes place during the period of Allied occupation in Istanbul following World War I. Before analyzing Edip’s writing, it is important to review her place in the historical episodes that led to 1918 and the Turkish military campaign for liberation.

Edip came to the forefront of the nationalist movement after years of interacting with prominent reformers prior to 1908. On the effect of the revolution for women she wrote, “Women got their real chance in 1908…The very atmosphere became freer for women and it

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was fully realized that a new Turkey could never be created without them. Following the Young Turk Revolution and the reinstatement of the constitution, Turkey entered an era of promise and hope for national regeneration. Along with hope, however, feelings of anxiety and insecurity about the future emerged. It seemed a daunting task to transform a multi-ethnic empire into a nation with a single identity.

After 1908, the newly inaugurated Committee of Union and Progress government quickly began to nationalize the multi-ethnic empire. The government exploited the fear of outsiders to foster a “Turkey for the Turks” mentality. One law administered by Talat Bey in 1916 mandated that all signs in Pera be written in Ottoman Turkish. Fear of partition increased after the foreign occupation of Istanbul in 1918 and the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, which promised to divide the defeated Empire among European powers. Against so much resistance and foreign intervention, the construction of a new Turkish nation state necessitated drastic social engineering and the propagation of patriotism. However, *The Turkish Ordeal* offers a feminist coloring to the ultranationalist narrative of Turkey’s past.

*The Turkish Ordeal* begins in October 1918 when “the feeling of hatred between the different races was almost phenomenal.” In the memoir’s opening pages, Edip describes the heightened racial tensions that followed the foreign invasion of Istanbul as well as her work with various nationalist organizations, “I was myself occupied with other things at the time. Apart from my work at the Ojak [Turkish Hearth Organization], where in the new executive committee I was striving with the other members to change the statutes of the old Ojak laws.”

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69 It is worth noting that the CUP’s dictatorial triumvirate of Mehmed Talat, Ismail Enver, and Ahmed Cemal Pashas would later be remembered in history also as the architects of the Armenian Genocide.
70 Edip, *The Turkish Ordeal*, 53.
71 Edip, *The Turkish Ordeal*, 4.
British put a price on her head, along with other prominent nationalists, Edip fled to Anatolia with her husband.

Throughout the memoir, Edip reflects on her time spent at the National Headquarters in Ankara during the “War of Liberation.” Her memoir includes descriptions of her female friends, family, and women she met during her time in Anatolia. Few books of this era contain such a diverse range of three-dimensional depictions of women. For example, Edip discusses female sexuality, which was a taboo subject at the time. In one passage, she describes the Street of Red Lanterns--an area in the outskirts of Ankara that was home to prostitutes. Upon arriving in Ankara, Edip used to pass the street and look at the women without judgment. Instead she observed them with interest, admiring their black painted eyebrows and faces covered in artificial beauty spots. She was deeply affected by the, “knowledge of sordidness and cruelty”72 in the faces of the women.

As a soldier fighting for Turkish independence, Edip worked with Mustafa Kemal and other nationalist leaders and fought alongside men in the trenches. In an image by Billings (Figure 2.2) we see Edip in action. She sits self-assuredly on the back of a horse, peering slightly towards the camera. Edip was known to be an excellent rider and according to a 1921 article, it was, “her usual custom to go from one front to another on horseback to hearten the army that is growing shorter and shorter by constant desertion.”73 We know from Edip’s observations and newspaper articles of the period that Turkish women were active soldiers during the Greco-Turkish War. She remarked upon the other contributions made by women in her memoir. For example, Edip described the village women who tilled the ground, planted crops and collected

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72 Edip, *The Turkish Ordeal*, 146.
the harvest that went to sustain the troops. Atatürk, too, commented on the strength and importance of women in the nationalist movement in a speech from 1932.

“It is always they, the noble, self-sacrificing, godly Anatolian women who plough, cultivate the land, fell firewood in the forest, barter in the market place and run the family; above all it is they who carry ammunition to the fort on their shoulders, with their ox-carts, with their children, regardless of rain, winter and hot days.”

Women fighters were not frequently mentioned in Edip’s memoirs, but she did come across a few. Most notable was an impressive peasant woman named Rahime, who told her male comrades, “I am only a woman, but I fight standing while you who are men are not ashamed to crawl on the ground and hide.” It is rare to read a historical account that contains so many varied depictions of women. In this way, The Turkish Ordeal differs from other narratives of the Greco-Turkish War.

The papers of Florence Billings and fellow relief worker, Annie Allen, also attest to the role women played in the nationalist movement. They describe seeing women on the battlefield and as participants in nationalist meetings. Billings and Allen were close friends with Halide Edip and were able to meet Mustafa Kemal through their relationship with Edip. In one of Allen’s diary entries from August 11, 1920, she writes that Edip introduced Billings to Mustafa Kemal. In another entry she writes, “Invited to dinner by Mustafa Kemal Pasha. Had a very pleasant time. Everything democratic, all ate together under officers as well. Many war stories told.” These diary entries indicate that women were a welcome and necessary part of the nationalist movement. They reinforce information offered in Edip’s memoir. For example, in an entry from August 19 1920, Allen wrote that Edip left to fight on the front lines.

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74 Atatürk’un Soylev ve Demcleri (The Speeches of Atatürk), Konya Kadınları ile Konuşma, 21 March 1923, 147.
75 Edip, The Turkish Ordeal, 245.
Billings’ photographs capture daily life on the front lines. One 1921 image (Figure 2.3) depicts a middle-aged woman soldier with her son. The woman stands up straight and she is well decorated. She wears the same tall black boots as her son. She wears a military-style hat and badges adorn her waist. A braided ornament hangs off of her right shoulder. There is little published about the lives of Turkish women soldiers, but images like this one attest to their existence.

Additionally, feminist periodicals included images of Turkish women in uniform. A drawing from a 1922 issue of *Kadınlar Dünyası* depicts two women soldiers in conversation (Figure 2.4). They wear long skirts and high-heeled boots under military-style jackets. It could be an advertisement for the latest fashion. But instead of purses, the women carry rifles across their shoulders. One woman wears a crescent badge on her hat, a symbol of Turkey past and present. Perhaps the readers of this magazine would want to emulate the fashion of these revolutionary women. The caption reads, “Women who want a homeland have also become soldiers.” The image reminds readers of the magazines that they, too, have the agency to be a part of national change. A similar image appears in another issue of *Kadınlar Dünyası*, this one with the caption “Women have also actively been soldiers.”

These sources tell us that women actively participated in the revolutionary movement as aid workers, revolutionary thinkers, nurses and fighters. Their impact was significant and long lasting. As Edip writes, “Without the activity and the enormous service of women, Turkey would have collapsed internally during the Great War.” The same is true for their contributions during the ensuing “War of Liberation.” These flesh and blood women helped advance Turkish independence. However, carrying a rifle or treating the wounded were not the only ways in

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which women contributed to the movement. Fictional representations of women as cartoons and literary characters also served an important purpose in propagating Turkish nationalism.

**Women in Nationalist Iconography**

Women exhibited agency both in the consumption and production of nationalist literature. Edip penned her seventh novel, *The Shirt of Flame*, before the “Liberation War” was over in 1921. Written in just four months, she called it her “tale of blood and fire.”[^77] A *shirt of flame* is an idiomatic Turkish expression. It describes a great suffering that one does not eliminate, even if one has the power to do so. The novel is nationalist propaganda—packed with patriotism and suffering, and tells the tragic but hopeful tale of the rebirth of a nation. The novel is framed as a memoir written by Peyami, a man who has lost his legs on the battlefields of Anatolia. It chronicles the final years of the Ottoman Empire from the signing of the Bulgarian Armistice in September 1918 to Peyami’s death in December 1921. At the end of World War I, Peyami and his friend Ihsan live in the elite Europeanized Istanbul neighborhood of Şişli. Edip describes the men as Turkish dandies, “the new type of the old Ottoman.”[^78] They may have been European in style, but the two men were fierce Turkish patriots.

Much like in her memoir, Edip uses Peyami’s voice to describe the tense days after the Armistice and the growing distrust towards the Greeks and Armenians who were under British protection. Peyami explains the predicament; “all mankind put a black mark on our faces, and spat at it. They, the victor’s world, considered us not only as the assassins of the Armenians but also as enemies of civilization because we went into the war with the Germans.”[^79] It is worth noting that at the time *The Shirt of Flame* was written, the CUP had already carried out an organized extermination of as many as 1.5 million Armenians six years earlier during World War

[^78]: Edip, *The Shirt of Flame*, 16.
I. It is a fact often glossed over in Turkish national histories but it must be said: created ethnic hatreds, genocides, and population exchanges fueled the fires of Turkish nationalism.

The novel’s heroine, Ayesha, is loosely based on Edip herself. Ayesha embodies a common trope employed in nationalist propaganda—the woman as the nation. Foreign soldiers killed her husband and son after the 1919 Greek invasion of Smyrna. Edip portrays Ayesha as a tragic widow and victim of war waged on the Turks by foreign powers. Peyami becomes obsessed with Ayesha and mourns for her as well as for his battered homeland, observing, “the bloody humiliation and bitter calamity imposed on the Turkish nation found their personified emblem in this maimed Ayesha.”80 Ayesha is beautiful and smart, but also provincial. She is meant to be the city of Smyrna personified. Edip repeatedly describes Ayesha’s dark green flaming eyes that remind Peyami of, “the mourning olive orchards of Smyrna.”81 Like Edip, Ayesha is intimately invested in the independence movement. She volunteers as a nurse in makeshift war hospitals and eventually makes it to the front lines. In the end, Ayesha is martyred on the battlefield.

*The Shirt of Flame* was published at a time when the future of Turkey was uncertain. The novel’s nationalist storyline and strong female heroine appealed to readers of feminist magazines. Women’s magazines like *İnci* sought to redefine images of the Turkish woman. These journals often featured revolutionary authors like Edip on the cover of their periodicals. One cover from 1921 (Figure 2.5) shows Edip sitting demurely on a chair. The chair seems to float against a white background and an oval string of pearls frames Edip’s figure. By featuring women like Edip on the cover of their magazine, *İnci* was supporting the role of women in the national movement.

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Images of women were frequently used to promote nationalist sentiment in periodicals, advertisements, and war posters during World War I and the subsequent “War of Liberation.” In nationalist discourse, the concept of the nation is closely linked to a familial identity. Through this logic, women were frequently drawn to represent the symbolic mother, sister, or daughter “of the nation” in nationalist iconography. The new Turkish woman featured prominently in the emergence of Turkish nationalism.

Furthermore, the rise of nationalism in the Middle East gave way to new visual representations of the land. As Beth Baron explains, “images of the nation were meant to reaffirm the unity of the collective and give the concept of nationhood greater immediacy.”

Nations were often visually imagined in human form. In the Middle East, that human form was typically female. Gendered iconographic roles often upheld imperialistic ideals. Women were considered weak and passive, like the colonized land. Women also represented purity and were responsible for upholding the honor of the country. Through visual representation, women became the pawns rather than the players, the Nation rather than the national actor.

The image “The Mother Nation,” (Figure 2.6) is an example of this common trope. Turkey is represented in the form of a dignified lady. She is demure, poised, and dressed conservatively. Flanked by other nations, Mother Turkey sits in the center of a triumphant procession, holding an olive branch and a sign that reads, “Liberté, La Paix, Pogrè’s.” Figure 2.6 is from 1909, several years before the Balkan Wars of 1912 to 1913. In the image Mother Turkey is the perfect patriot, sketched to inspire national devotion, “designed to provoke feelings of humiliation, and to invoke a patriotic response.”

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82 Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 57.
83 “Liberty, Peace, and Progress”
represents every other country present in the image. The female Turkey is defenseless against these aggressive, militant, and greedy masculine nations. In the illustration, Russia wears peasant clothing and England, in typical John Bull style, is dressed in a military uniform. In the background Serbia and Montenegro hold rifles and look on with menacing glares.

Drawing the nation as a woman had another important advantage to the national cause. Images of women could evoke sympathy and call upon men to defend their honor. A 1919 cover of İnci (Figure 2.7) depicts a suffering female embodiment of the nation. The image is a stark contrast to the triumphant 1921 cover photo of Halide Edip. The drawing features a desperate looking woman, completely draped in a Turkish flag. She looks somberly off into the distance as a young child holds her and looks pleadingly to the viewer. The pair is clearly destitute, and in need of assistance. They represent the suffering Turkish homeland, much like Ayesha in The Shirt of Flame. In 1919 the Greek Army invaded Smyrna on the Aegean Coast, prompting a nationalist dilemma from Turkey. In this image, establishing a female national persona that is vulnerable and susceptible to the ill will of masculine nations serves an important purpose. By designating Turkey’s national identity as female, cartoonists could draw attention to the European imperial threat to the land. This image serves a national purpose by calling upon the Turkish citizens to pledge protection of their nation’s honor.

Mothers of the Nation

The colorful 1916 cover (Figure 2.8) of Bıckı Yurdu Modası (Country Fashion) magazine is useful in understanding the interplay between early Turkish feminism and nationalism. A woman is situated in the bottom left hand corner of the image. The landscape is complex. She occupies well-defined space, confined by the borders of the page. At the same time, she sits outside in front of a view of the Golden Horn as the sun sets over the Bosporus Strait. Drawn in
profile, she looks down at her hands as she gracefully sews the bottom of a white crescent on to a Turkish flag in her lap. She wears a modest white headscarf and there is nothing European or flashy about her clothing. Surrounded by delicate flowers, her face and positioning evoke demure and submissive femininity. The lower-right half of the image shows cloth patterns arranged on a table. Women could write to the magazine to receive patterns of the latest fashions to make clothing at home. Thus, the image indicates the conflation of the modernity associated with style and the traditional domestic activity of sewing. By sewing, she is occupied in a traditional female domestic activity and exemplifies patriotic femininity that respects traditional spheres and roles. However, it is 1916 and her country is at war and she must play her part too.

This section explores the problems and paradoxes that occur when feminism meets chauvinistic nationalism. As we have seen from the previous sections, the feminist movement in Turkey gained much traction following the Young Turk Revolution. For the first time, women were able to leave the domestic sphere and volunteer as nurses, aid workers, and soldiers in the Wars following 1908. With the publication of women’s periodicals, the feminist movement continued to grow well into the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Nationalism propelled women to leave the private sphere during World War I and the subsequent period of nation building. However, Turkish nationalism verged on being chauvinistically patriarchal and ultimately emphasized a woman’s role as mother and wife above all else. Drawing on images and articles from the feminist press, as well as from speeches by Turkish ideologues of the period, it becomes clear that women were denied agency in the nation that they created and that Turkish nationalism was patriarchal at its core.

The status of women and the need for modernization became the focus of reformists’ agendas. This concept of supporting women’s rights in the name of progress was not new.
Leading ideologues realized that the improved status of women would benefit men and further the nationalist cause. In Ottoman society, women were responsible for all domestic duties, the most important being child rearing. Reformers believed that educating women would lead to a more educated population because of a mother’s influence on her children. In the late 1840s, diplomat and ideologist Sadık Rıfat Paşa reasoned that,

The state should provide a good upbringing for female children, since personal maturity is among the honorable attributes for girls [...] the motherly embrace is indeed the earliest school for human beings. Therefore it would be a great service for the nation and humanity to train mothers who will provide their children religious and moral education while nursing them.85

Similarly, Egyptian reformer Qasim Amin published two highly controversial books in 1899 and 1901 in which he argued that the emancipation of women was necessary for a civilized society.86 To these men, the ultimate patriotic woman was educated and visible; but she must be devoted to her children, husband, and nation above all else.

Women’s periodicals, while promoting women’s liberation on one hand, also contained articles on how to be a better housewife, often with accompanying images that showed them engaged in housework or reading bedtime stories to their children. Advertisements for household items were marketed specifically as labor saving devices for the home, like the devices seen in figure 2.8. Magazines for women also often illustrated their front covers with images of mothers and children, for example this Inci cover (Figure 2.9) depicting a young girl. Images like Figure 2.9 furthered the view of motherhood as a cornerstone of the new nation.

The nationalist dream finally came to fruition following the Armistice of Mudanya and the abolition of the sultanate in 1922. The Turkish Republic was officially established on

86 Qasim Amin, The Liberation of Women And, the New Woman: Two Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000), 6.
October 29, 1923. Mustafa Kemal was unanimously elected the first President and credited as the founder of the new nation. He achieved legend status with a name change to Atatürk, Father of the Turks. Life after 1923 was not as satisfying for the women who had worked hard to further the nationalist dream. The new Turkish government had promised to improve the lives of women, but the Republic ultimately denied women full agency. Nationalists had succeeded in using images of women for propaganda purposes. Such caricatures helped advance their agenda and would eventually promote Atatürk’s rule; a regime that was little more than a patriarchal autocracy. The more women appeared as allegories, the less they did in society and their representations worked to contain political aspirations and activity. Much like their cartoon counterparts in the Ottoman press, individual women became simply, “cardboard heroines,” and were left voiceless in the new Turkish Republic, left out of the official history of the new state.

Figure 2.5
III: Fashioning a Nation: Dressing the New Turkish Woman

“Her manner is cosmopolitan, of the type one associates with cultured French or Russian women. Her black clothes, the cut of the dark hair on her beautifully molded head, are quietly Parisian.” When foreign reporters described Halide Edip’s achievements, they typically began with passages like this one, recounting elements of her physical appearance. Mildred Adams interviewed the thirty-year-old Edip for the *Woman’s Journal* in 1924. Like Adams, other American journalists called attention to Edip’s “soft bobbed hair,” and to her personal magnetism and femininity. Thanks to imagery of the veiled woman of the Turkish harem, Edip’s personal style was as interesting to foreign readers as her accomplishments as a revolutionary and novelist.

In an interview from 1920, Gertrude Emerson remarked upon Edip’s “well drawn eyebrows,” which framed her “big brown eyes that seemed a little too large for the delicate contour of the face.” Indeed, Edip possessed striking features that she highlighted with subtle touches of makeup. Many who met her noticed the slight sadness behind her large dark eyes. “Above all,” wrote Emerson, “She is essentially feminine…the most talked about woman in Turkey.” Emerson continued to explain that Edip invariably chose to wear soft dark colors in grey hues, in the style of “expensive simplicity, which the woman of taste and position usually favors.” Edip’s refined style enchanted foreign reporters and photos of Turkey’s most famous cosmopolitan heroine frequently appeared in Western journals.

The cover photo from Adams’ article depicts Edip in profile, chin tilted upward (Figure 3.1). Her glowing eyes look forward and upwards, steadfastly looking towards the future. Her

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89 Gertrude Wolff, “Halide Edib Hanum: At the Institute of Politics in Williamstown, as in Turkey, this charming feminist has played a stellar role,” *Independent Woman*, September 1928, 401.
90 Emerson, “Halideh Hanoum,” 86.
hair is cut short, right below the ears, with each strand perfectly in place. Perhaps what is most remarkable about the photograph for the Western twentieth century viewer is how unremarkable Edip looks. She would have fit in at any American beauty shop or Parisian café of this time. Edip’s subtle sophistication was a far cry from Western depictions of women in the harem, with silk pants and veiled faces.

Perhaps the image that Westerners had of the Turkish woman was that of Edip in her teenage years, depicted in Figure 3.2. This undated photo was most likely taken shortly before her first marriage to Zeki Bey in 1901. Besides the glint of sadness in the eyes and sense of poised femininity, the two women are almost unrecognizable as the same person. The young Edip’s shoulders and body are covered with a heavy ferace, a garment that concealed the body for every day life. On her face she wears a traditional veil of thin white muslin called a yaşmak. This was the respectable attire for a young woman of Edip’s class at the turn of the century.

With the formation of the Turkish Republic, Edip, along with the majority of elite Muslim women left the harem for good. Throwing off their veils and adopting Western style dress, Edip and women of her class embodied notions of the modern Turkish woman through their clothing. This section sets out to determine how and why women’s fashion changed so drastically in the transition from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic.
This section explores the social and political implications of women’s dress through images from the satiric and feminist press. Images of women in Ottoman periodicals suggest that clothing played a central political and symbolic role in Turkish revolutionary movements. Fashion, especially women’s fashion, offers a unique lens through which to view the history of this complex period. Women’s fashion evolved to become more European following the Tanzimat reforms of the nineteenth century, and then mimicked it beginning in 1908 during the Second Constitutional Period and subsequent wars with Europe as they forged a modern Turkish identity. During these years of anxiety and political insecurity, specifically from 1908 to 1922, many Turks rejected European influence. Despite its popularity among the elite classes, public disdain for European fashion was at an all-time high. However, once the immediate threat of partition ended with the foundation of the Modern Turkish Republic, so did the fear associated with the westernized Muslim woman. The early Republican years offered hope for the future as women occupied a more visible and fashionable place in the new nation.

*From Sheathed to Chic: The Evolution of Women’s Fashion*

The evolution of Turkish women’s fashion is parodied in Figure 3.3 from a 1922 issue of *Aydede*. In the picture, an artist graphs the female foot 1904 to 1922. The woman on the left wears a traditional çarşaf while the woman on the right dons a modern costume that reveals her legs and chest. As time progresses, heels become taller and hemlines shorter. It is up to the reader to imagine where this trend will lead in the future. Much like the graph, this study follows the drastic changes of women’s fashion from the Second Constitutional Period (1908 to 1922) to the years directly following the establishment of the Turkish Republic. To begin, it is useful to have a basic understanding of the history of veiling in the Ottoman Empire.

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91 *Aydede*, no. 80, 5 October 1922.
For centuries, elite Ottoman women wore the veil to reflect their economic status, social class, and religious modesty. According to the memoirs of Halide Edip, young girls usually began to wear the veil when they turned ten years old, “and then they join the grown-ups forever after.”92 Styles of the veil changed with time to reflect fashion trends and external influences. Tanzimat reforms, the presence of a large multiethnic population, and increased European influence in the Empire brought demands for European fashions in the nineteenth century. With outside fashion influence came resistance. In the Hamidian Era, (1876 to 1908) most elite women donned the çarşaf, translating to “bed sheet,” as a way of rejecting European hegemony and maintaining Ottoman traditional culture. Peasant or lower-class women did not typically wear the full çarşaf or the peçe, an Ottoman face covering, as it hindered their work. However, they were encouraged to cover their hair and face around strangers to protect their modesty.

Elite women living in the Islamic Ottoman Empire were required to follow the rule of tesettür, or veiling. The guidelines of tesettür were open to Islamic interpretations. The interest in and growing demand for European clothing alarmed conservatives who believed Parisian fashions lacked modesty. By the turn of the century, the ferace and yaşmak, as seen in the portrait of young Halide Edip, were becoming less popular. They were replaced with more modern variations of the çarşaf.93 Because the çarşaf required less fabric to produce, local manufactures feared a loss in their profits. As the twentieth century progressed, the çarşaf evolved into a two-piece garment consisting of a skirt and a cape. As commercial and cultural contact with Europe continued, the çarşaf skirt became slightly shorter and the body narrower and more form fitting. This transformation did not go unnoticed. In 1900, the gendarmerie of Istanbul issued a decree attempting to prevent Muslim women from, “wandering around

92 Edip, The House with Wisteria, 15.
immodestly dressed and not taking into account the rules of tesettür.” However, official policies failed to slow the popularity of the ever-shrinking çarşaf.

Debates about women’s fashion continued into the Young Turk Second Constitutional Era. Following 1908, many members of the revolutionary Committee of Union and Progress government disliked the new style of women’s dress; Deniz Kandiyoti writes that it was a time “fraught with confusion and contradictions.” The CUP’s stance on women’s dress was paradoxical because they presented themselves as a party of social progress and modernity. Indeed, as a revolutionary group, the CUP supported more rights for women and set out the model of a new Turkish family. The most renowned CUP reformer, Ziya Gökalp, provided the ideological framework for a nationalist concept of women and the new Turkish family. “Gökalp promoted the ideal of the new family as a revitalization of ancient Turkish values and customs, rather than as a borrowing of Western values and practices.” This meant that CUP nationalists often favored a Turkish traditional female costume and disapproved of uncovered and Europeanized Muslim women in the streets.

The Second Constitutional Period, while preaching progress, also condemned Muslim women who elected to dress in a European fashion. Palmira Brummett writes that during this period, “Women, in particular their bodies and their dress, became a cartoon foil for debates over cultural hegemony and the honor of the nation.” Readers of the Istanbul magazine Kadın (Woman) who wore European fashions protested that they were victims of violent street harassment. Their shortened çarşafs angered traditionalists and women complained that men would harass them in the street. Some recalled that angry conservatives intimidated them with

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94 Hale Yilmaz, Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey, 1932-1945 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 82.
95 Metinsoy, “The Limits of Feminism in Muslim-Turkish Women Writers,” 83.
96 Brummett, Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 67.
knifes, spit on them, threatened and attacked them. Nonetheless, patriarchal opposition to modern fashion did little to hinder the rapidly evolving female dress.

**Fashion and Morality: The Alafranga Woman**

Fashion and morality are inherently connected to female dress during the Second Constitutional Period. Conservatives thought that women who followed a European style of dress represented the moral decay of the Empire. They believed that Ottoman women who chose to wear Parisian fashions in place of traditional garments epitomized the free sexuality of Europeans. The mainstream male-dominated illustrated press contained images of the westernized woman as a temptress or demon, similar to those found in the tales of *One Thousand and One Nights*; preying on men with untamed sexuality. Women who dressed in the European fashion were believed to endanger the sexual honor of the nation. As Palmira Brummett explains, the debate over fashion was “ultimately about morals, social order, and the place of women.”

The sketches and cartoon images of Europeanized women evoked feelings of ridicule and contempt from viewers. Some images depicted women wearing decorative hats and fancy coats, which suggested that they were the pawns of European social and economic power. This Europeanized Turkish woman, or *alafranga*, was a threat to the public morality. With her hat and fancy coat, she was a high-heeled menace in the street.

The 1911 *alafranga* woman in Figure 3.5 exemplifies this notion. She wears a modern suit and is accessorized with a hat, stole, parasol, and muff. Her male companion asks “What a chic outfit, my dear. How much did it cost you?” She cheerfully replies, “My husband gave me five lira, but it cost twenty.” This cartoon is meant to satirize the extravagance, frivolity and profligacy of women who wore European fashions. The woman in this cartoon has not only

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97 Yilmaz, *Becoming Turkish*, 84.
99 *Kalem*, no. 115, 2 March 1911.
jeopardized her household budget by purchasing items beyond her means, she has also bypassed her husband’s authority. She has made her husband look weak as a result of her extravagant clothing.

According to the satiric press, European fashions threatened the Turkish morals and the traditional family hierarchy. A visual representation of the connection between fashion and morality appears in a cartoon entitled “The Balance of Chastity” from the periodical *Falaka* (Figure 3.6)\(^\text{100}\). Here we see a direct comparison of Ottoman virtue and European vice through the metaphor of a scale. On the side labeled “East,” two conservatively dressed women stand while a child happily plays with a doll at their feet. On the “West,” the women are dressed in decadent European fashions and the child at their feet is neglected. The young girl cries while holding a broken doll. This image serves as visual representation of the connection between fashion and morality. Two bystanders comment, “The women of a nation should not simply be a measure of the degree of its progress, but a proof of the degree of its moral purity.” The second man smiles and points at the scale “Look! Ours again, ours are still heavier! Life and love to you!” The message here is that men should prefer chastity to stylishness. Furthermore, a woman’s moral purity is directly aligned with her choice of clothing. Here the woman’s body her style of dress illustrates an arena of warring dichotomies of modernity and tradition. Despite the technological advancements and military victories of Europe, Turkey was the winner in terms of the honor and sexual purity of its women.

Traditionalists feared that inappropriate dress led to inappropriate behavior. This is evident in discussions of the topic of ice and roller-skating in the empire. By the twentieth century, skating for women became a flashpoint for all things immodest and inappropriate. According to an article in the widely read newspaper, *Kalem* (Pen), ice-skating and roller-skating

\(^{100}\text{Fakala no. 3, 14 August 1911.}\)
had become popular pastimes in Istanbul by 1908. Advertisements for “The Skating Place”\textsuperscript{101} in Beyoğlu can be found in periodicals of the time. In 1910, a roller rink opened in downtown Smyrna. Soon there were four. Skating was already a popular leisure activity in the West. Its spread in the Ottoman Empire indicated a cultural openness towards American and European entertainment. To many, however, the imported activity presented a moral challenge and became a common subject of satiric cartoons. Skating was associated with the consumption of foreign goods, and its growing popularity in Ottoman cities did indeed create new markets for American and European products.\textsuperscript{102}

Cartoonists seized upon the ice rink as a focal point for illustrating Europe’s influence in Turkey. Figure 3.7 depicts a mother having a conversation with her \textit{alafranga} daughter.\textsuperscript{103} In addition to satirizing the fad of skating, the contrast between a conservative mother and her modern daughter highlights a generational difference and the battle between modernity and tradition. The mother asks, “Where are you going,” and her daughter responds, “Skating Mama, the chicest men of Beyoğlu\textsuperscript{104} gather there every evening.”\textsuperscript{105} Skating allowed the opportunity for a mingling of the sexes, which was not respectable in Turkish culture. Hence, the female skater represented moral corruption, the dissolution of gender boundaries, a challenge to patriarchal authority, and European influence in the Ottoman Empire.

\textsuperscript{101} Brummett, \textit{Image and Imperialism}, 214.
\textsuperscript{102} American Consul-General, Ernest L. Harris makes this point regarding the expansion of rinks in Smyrna and potential big money for American businesses. He reported to the American Consulate in 1910: “Harris reports that in September a roller skating rink was experimentally established in Smyrna, as it was doubtful if it would appeal to the various nationalities in that Asia Minor metropolis. Since that time no less than four have been opened, and the attendance is such that others will be built. The skates used have been chiefly of German and French manufacture, although some English and American makes have lately been imported. […] What the rinks in this city need are hard maple floors, and skates with steel or aluminum wheels. American manufacturers interested in this trade should send catalogues to this office for distribution to rink owners.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Kalem}, no. 109, 19 January 1911.
\textsuperscript{104} A Europeanized neighborhood of Istanbul.
\textsuperscript{105} Brummett, “New Woman and Old Nag,” 41.
During the Balkan Wars of 1912 to 1913, women’s clothing evolved to become more practical. This trend continued into World War I and the occupation years. One 1915 Imperial decree permitted urban workingwomen to remove the veil during work hours. Additionally, women who took the place of men in the workforce adopted clothing that facilitated movement.\(^{106}\) Change was not unilateral, and fashion trends varied even between neighborhoods in Istanbul. This contrast is evidenced by Halide Edip’s recollection of a winter day walking the streets of Istanbul with her female friend in 1914.

I had the fashionable black çarşaf and veil of my class. On tours in the farthest corners of poor Istanbul I used to wear a loose old-fashioned çarşaf, and I never pinned the cape so tight as to make the form of my head and hair apparent; and I took care to have my face open, although I carefully hid my hair and neck.\(^{107}\)

She continues to explain that her class camouflage, in the form of an old-fashioned loose çarşaf, was unsuccessful when the women came across a group of poor young girls playing in the street.

They had print dresses of the poorest sort and bare feet shod with wooden clogs…All lifted their dresses in mock imitation of the chic women of the city; all strutted in a make-believe promenade of great ladies. I must admit that they made me ashamedly conscious of how ridiculous our class could be.

When the children spotted Edip in her fine black çarşaf, they pointed and ridiculed her appearance, laughing at the frivolity of her class. Edip approached the young girls and removed her veil in an attempt to appease them but they continued to berate and mock her, saying “shut up you faceless [shameless] one. Your sister [Edip’s friend] has also a tight çarşaf, a red one. She goes to the mosque in it. She puts powder on her face and paints her cheeks.”\(^{108}\) The girls threatened to throw stones at the women and an angry crowd began to form. At that moment, a butcher intervened and the crowd dispersed. He warned Edip and her friend that street

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\(^{106}\) Yilmaz, *Becoming Turkish*, 85.

\(^{107}\) Edip, *The House with Wisteria*, 299.

harassment, attacks, and even stonings of fashionably dressed women were common in the neighborhood.

General disorder after the Empire’s loss in World War I catapulted women’s dress towards Western trends as, “the occupation years further loosened earlier patriarchal mechanisms that had restricted Muslim women’s fashion.”\textsuperscript{109} In spite of its growing popularity, resistance to modern fashions continued. Criticisms transcended the arena of back alleys and the male-dominated press. Some educated women, too, wished to preserve \textit{tesettür} and uphold the Ottoman moral code through fashion. In 1919, Halide Nusret expressed her dismay about the changing fashions in an article for \textit{Genç Kadın} (Young Woman) Magazine. Writing her editorial during a time of foreign occupation in Istanbul, Nusret feared that westernized clothing would erase traditional Ottoman culture and open the door for an European invasion. Worried by the number of young women abandoning the veil, she appealed to Islam and modestly in her strongly worded report.

For today, throwing away the çarşaf is like running towards a bottomless cliff with bound eyes. I know this as clearly as two times two equals four. Yes, for a womanhood, which has matured in relation to science and thought, being covered can be meaningless, I admit. Nevertheless, does not our deplorable moral condition of recent years—seen by some as bright and progressive!- demonstrate that we have not yet attained this happy maturity.\textsuperscript{110}

The cartoons from the masculine satiric press as well as the memoirs of Halide Edip confirm the resistance to the Europeanized Muslim woman in the years leading up to 1919. Despite the resistance on the streets and in the press, women’s magazines tell us a different history. Instead of rejecting modern trends, the feminist press promoted modern European fashions that flourished from 1913 to the occupation years and beyond.

\textsuperscript{109}Metinsoy, “The Limits of Feminism in Muslim-Turkish Women Writers,” 97.
\textsuperscript{110}Halide Nusret, “Ahlaki: Tesettür Mes’eleleri,” \textit{Genç Kadın} no. 8 (10 April 1919) 117-118.
Yeni Moda: The Latest Fashion as Presented in the Feminist Press

Four women wearing lavish gowns pose glamorously (Figure 3.8). Their dresses include sequins, shiny fabric, beading and bows. They could be mistaken for models on a Paris runway. A woman in the center looks to the reader, her hands stretched out confidently to each side to show off her ensemble. All of the women have short hair, with locks neatly styled into a smart bob. Each look comes complete with a description of the outfit, offering an explanation for how the reader can recreate the ensemble. At the top of the page, a headline reads “Yeni Moda” (The Latest Fashion).

The image comes from the magazine Süs (Ornament), but feature stories like this one were the consistent staple of women’s periodicals like İnci (Pearl), Kadınlar Dünyası (Women’s World), Kadın Yolu (Women’s Way), Resimli Ay (Illustrated Monthly), and several others from 1913 until their reconfiguration during the language reforms of 1928. Women’s periodicals no doubt encouraged and perpetuated Europeanized women’s fashion to their readership. A far cry from the satiric press of the Second Constitutional period, their pages disseminated positive images of women wearing the latest western fashions. It is safe to assume that the readers followed advice about attire and sought to emulate the European look.

Fatma Türe describes the paradox of women’s fashion magazines in an era when European clothing was often met with contempt, “In a perplexing manner, the woman’s ‘new life’ was both promulgated and condemned.”¹¹¹ At a time when women like Halide Edip were being harassed in the street for wearing çarşaf’s that were too tight, women’s magazines promoted the newest fashion, makeup, and hairstyle trends. They advertised health and beauty products, as well as modern etiquette for parties and events. Headlines like “Hair Ornaments,”

“To Cut [hair] or Not to Cut,” “Your Silk Hair,” and “Min-Ornaments for Women” filled the pages of women’s magazines.

Articles devoted to health advice explained how to achieve glowing skin, soft hair, and how to stay in shape. One article titled “Overweight Women’s Weight Loss” explains specifically how to lose weight. Figure 3.9 shows a split page where two women, wear the exact same clothing. One woman is obviously heavier than the other. According to the article, the slim figured woman had the ideal figure and hence could wear the latest fashions. New definitions of feminine beauty stressed health and fitness, primarily for the purpose of raising the next generation of healthy Turks. Articles like this one show us that despite criticisms from traditionalists, women’s magazines responded to the demand by female consumers for information about health and fashion trends. In a sense, these periodicals gave women permission to discard traditions and embrace all that was new and modern.

With dozens of options, each feminist magazine cultivated a specific focus. Some, like Kadinlar Dünyasi and Kadın Yolu, specialized in women’s rights. Resimli Ay was known for its intellectual content and illustrated short stories. Süs and İnci were primarily fashion magazines. Whatever the primary subject matter, each periodical contained several pages of advertisements in every issue. These advertisements are especially useful to the historian as they show us the type of products that educated women of means were interested in buying.

Kadinlar Dünyasi frequently ran advertisements for luxury jewelry items. A 1914 image (Figure 3.10) for a shop run by Nasib Cezveciyan and Mahdumu advertises items like diamond...
and platinum broaches, cufflinks, beads, bracelets and rings. The shop also carried Longines watches, minted in Paris. Western timepieces had a long history in the Ottoman Empire as they first won the favor of Sultans during the sixteenth century. Visiting Western diplomats would bring ornate watches to court to win the favor of Ottoman sovereigns. By the seventeenth and eighteenth century, European watchmakers set up shops in the posh Galata neighborhood in Istanbul. One watchmaker, Isaac Rousseau, was the father to French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.\textsuperscript{114}

Watches were associated with European modernity and elegance. The Swiss company Longines entered the watch market in the early twentieth century and gained popularity with the elite classes, including the women who read \textit{Kadınlar Dünyası}. The advertisements explain that watches could be decorated with precious stones like diamonds, emeralds, and pearls. Advertisements for luxury items like the ones found in this shop indicates that by 1914, Ottoman women possessed a distinct power through consumption. However, women did not have to come from elite classes to exert buying power. An article for \textit{Süs} called “How to be Chic without the Expense,” (Figure 3.11) explains how women can achieve a fashionable look without going bankrupt. The article includes pictures of decorative clutches, a finger-held purse, and a fashionable wrist scarf. This indicates that even women from more modest means could be consumers of Western fashion.

Advertisements from the feminist press suggest ways in which women could support nationalist causes through consumption. A 1919 advertisement in \textit{İnci} for the Wounded Warriors’ Assistance Bazar in the Golden Horn is of particular interest. The advertisement reads, “Istanbul’s best and most select store.” It sold a variety of luxury items including lavender and

other essential oils, as well as shoes for women, men and children. The ad continues, “Every type of purchase is appreciated and will assist wounded veterans; furthermore your purchase will be of material and spiritual benefit.” The charitable element of this particular Bazar adds a nationalist spin to feminine consumption. By shopping at this store, women could support wounded veterans of the First World War through fashion consumption. The advertisement (Figure 3.12) illustrates a woman wearing a stylish blue dress and matching headscarf, sitting on a cushion as she tries on a pair of polished black heels. A male shop assistant kneels at her feet, looking up at the woman attentively. In this image, the woman holds the buying power, and the male attendant is her subordinate. Advertisements like this show us how elite women found new economic agency through shopping.

The Bazar also stocked elastic, silk, and wool cloth for making dresses and fabric for men’s suits. This suggests that women were encouraged to buy fabric to sew their own custom clothes according to modern fashions rather than purchase a pre-made çarşaf. Periodicals often included advertisements for tailors like Osman Zeki Bey. In a flyer (Figure 3.13) for the Ramadan holiday, Zeki stands demurely in a European cut suit with the caption “The Prince of Tailors and the Tailor of Princes.” A vase of roses, scissors and cloth and four demurely dressed figures fill the background.

With tailors so readily available, upper-class women could simply buy their desired materials for a custom-made outfit. In addition to working in shops, it was commonplace for tailors to make house calls to the elite clients. An editorial by Sabiha Sertel in Resimli Ay furthers the nationalist implications of the Wounded Warrior Bazar advertisement. Because tailors in Istanbul were often Greek, Sertel encouraged Turkish women to sew clothing themselves, rather than invite a Greek tailor into their home. The article offered to mail women the patterns for
designs seen in the magazine, in exchange for a small fee. In boycotting Greek tailors, women could once again assert national agency through their fashion choices.

**Presence of Russian Women**

Greeks were far from the only non-Muslims living in Istanbul in the interwar period. As many as 185,000 White Russians who opposed the Russian Revolution fled to the Ottoman Empire following 1917. Georgians, Azerbaijanis, and Ukrainians arrived in addition to the Russian refugees. Their presence changed the code of conduct in the city as more bars, restaurants and venues for nightlife emerged. During the interwar years, Istanbul grew to become a city of about 700,000 inhabitants where “just about any kind of debauchery could be had at a price.” The presence of Russian émigrés influenced more than just Istanbul nightlife; Turkish women took notice of their different style of clothing.

The pages of the feminist press indicate how Russian refugees introduced new styles of garments and hairdos to Istanbul women. Russian women did not wear the çarşaf and often donned special type of headscarf, which came to be known to Turks as a “rusbaşi” (Russian head). During the interwar period, Turkish women imitated this style of headdress, as seen in Figure 3.14. “Well aware of the latest European fashions, aristocratic Russian women influenced middle and upper-class Muslim women, opening shops and boutiques in Pera.” In addition to the Russian headscarf, Turkish women began to don dresses similar to those worn by Russian women, with openings in the shoulders that reflected a “motif of poverty.” Figure 3.14, from *Resimli Ay* called “Çarşaf Başı, Saç Modelleri,” (Çarşaf Bonnets, Hair Models), depicts three women wearing the Russian style headgear. Women wore these scarves in various colors and

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115 “Carsaf ve Elbise Modelleri,” Resimli Ay 2 (March 1924), 33.
116 King, *Midnight at the Pera Palace*, 143.
117 Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish*, 86.
119 Metinsoy, “The Limits of Feminism in Muslim-Turkish Women Writers,” 102.
designs. Perhaps the Russian style of scarf became popular amongst Turkish women because it allowed them to be fashionable while still upholding certain aspects of testtür. The figures in the drawing wear heavy makeup and jewelry. They exude elegance and glamour. Whether they are Turkish or Russian remains ambiguous.

Memoirs tell stories of Turkish men throwing themselves at the Russian beauties. The word haraşo, meaning beautiful in Russian, entered Turkish vocabulary. With few options for employment, many Russian women were forced to enter the growing Istanbul sex trade. Allied soldiers occupying the city sought sexual encounters from legal or underground brothels. One memoirist recalls the Russian-filled, Europeanized district of Pera where, “soliciting by both male and female pleasure-seekers is now so aggressively indulged in that not even a self-respecting man dares any more to venture in the place.”120 A survey of the city put the number of brothels at 175; with 4,500 female employees.121 The interwar period was a dawning of licentiousness for Istanbul, which certainly influenced the fashion of the period. Supporters of modernity and reform did not mind the effects of the Russian refugees, as Charles King writes, “modernity actually demanded a tolerance for raunchiness.”122

The presence of new avenues for social impropriety is reflected throughout the pages of the feminist press. One image (Figure 3.15) from the weekly caricature section of Süs depicts a woman seductively leaning on a heavily cushioned bed. She wears a red silk slip, her bosom half exposed. The picture is brightly colored and eye-catching, but the woman’s hair serves as its main focal point. Her fiery mane of untamed red hair suggests that this woman is not Muslim, but perhaps Russian or Jewish, though the style of bed is distinctly Ottoman. In addition to her dress and high-heeled shoes, the cigarette in her mouth with its sinuous stream of smoke

120 King, Midnight at the Pera Palace, 137.
121 King, Midnight at the Pera Palace, 148.
122 King, Midnight at the Pera Palace, 152.
indicates that she is a “modern woman.” The caption under the image reads, “Ah, this bed, I would sleep so comfortably all by myself in this bed.” One reading of this image shows a sexually emancipated woman with no need for a man. She wears her provocative slip and makeup for no one but herself. Even though she has a large and comfortable bed, this woman would prefer to sleep alone. Another interpretation suggests that this woman does not sleep alone. She may be by herself in the image, but her body language, attire, and come-hither attitude suggest that she is expecting company. Most likely she is a prostitute. Both explanations of the image describe a sexually independent and confident woman who is admired, rather than disdained.

Women’s fashion magazines include images of women in various stages of undress. A cheeky caricature (Figure 3.16) from Resimli Ay shows a woman pulling up her stocking in front of a mirror. Caught off guard, she looks at the viewer in surprise. The caption reads “A stylish lady of Beyoğlu.” Beyoğlu was the Europeanized district of Istanbul overlooking the Bosporus that included bars, cafes, and the city’s nightlife. It was the most multi-ethnic and booming neighborhood of the city in the 1920s. Images like Figures 3.15 and 3.16 likely influenced the growing market for erotic literature. The first erotic short stories appeared in 1908 following the end of Hamidian censorship laws. These didactic and humorous stories often included themes of love, passion and betrayal, but they also covered social issues such as women in the workforce and the cosmopolitan life in Istanbul following World War I. The magazines were published weekly and periodicals like Bin Bir Buse (A Thousand and One Kisses) were in high demand.123 Bin Bir Buse was written entirely by men and featured a cover illustration. Stories took place in the new desegregated spaces of the twentieth century like tea parties, dance halls, and hotel

123 Türe, The New Woman in Erotic Popular Literature of 1920s Istanbul,” 179.
lobbies. Fatma Ture has written extensively about early erotic Turkish literature but it is a topic that merits further study, especially in relation to women’s fashion and morality.

As demonstrated by the previous images, the feminist press shows a surprising degree of nudity, especially in columns about swimming. Figure 3.17, from a 1923 issue of Sûs, shows a woman in a revealing swimsuit. The floral brassiere is low cut and resembles a modern bikini. She holds a floral parasol in one hand while the other rests boldly on her hip. A translucent cover-up flows behind her and her delicate curls are topped with a rusbaşî style headscarf. She looks provocatively out at the viewer, as if inviting them to join her for a swim. The caption under the picture reads “July Fairy,” an appropriate name for this playful image. The “July Fairy,” describes the very real phenomenon of women swimmers.

For years Muslim men and women would bathe in curtained off sections of the Bosporus. The sections were strictly separate “so that women could splash in the sea without offending anyone’s sensibilities.” However this did not stop the male imagination from running wild. In an image for İnci in 1919, we see two beautiful young women in the foreground carrying bags and a parasol walking towards the seaside. Behind them, two men watch the women, “Ah look they are going swimming,” remarks one man, “Should we join them.” The other responds, “Forget it, they’ll skin us alive after.” (Skinning being a homonym for swimming in Turkish.) This image comically represents the still forbidden element of seeing a partially dressed female body in regards to modesty.

Segregated swimming practices began to change with the influx of Russian émigrés. In 1921, Prince Gigusha Eristavi, Count Petya Zarnekow and Colonel Ladyzen came from Russian and settled down in Istanbul. They rented a strip of beach on the Sea of Marmara in the Istanbul neighborhood of Florya. Using old tents rented from the British, they fashioned a beachfront

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resort that was open to men and women. During the summer months Florya was “booming.”\textsuperscript{125}

Seaside fashion can be seen in the pages the feminist press. A spread displaying swimwear in the “Yeni Moda” (Latest Fashion) section of a July issue of \textit{Süs} attests to the popularity of swimming as an activity for women. In the image, four figures model different styles of swimwear. While less revealing than the “July Fairy,” image, the suits show off the women’s shoulders and legs. The leg-baring swimsuits worn by the women in this illustration are a far cry from the çarşaf donned by their class just decades earlier.

\textit{National Dress and Kemalism}

Fashion played a distinct role in the creation of Turkish national identity. In a 1919 article for \textit{İnci} entitled “National Fashion,” Zehrâ Hakki denounced the çarşaf and peçe, and explained that the modernization of women’s fashion was necessary for national progress. According to her, the veil was outdated, “If you look around a little, you would understand that we have already abolished it.” She reasoned that the çarşaf, and veiling in general, was not Turkish, but a custom appropriated from Byzantine and Persian cultures that had nothing to do with Islam. She continued to explain that no form of the ferace, çarşaf, or peçe existed in rural Turkish villages or amongst groups of Turkic nomads. In place of the çarşaf, she suggested the adoption of a manto (coat) and scarf as an alternative that would still fulfill the regulations of tesettür. However, Hakki did not fully endorse French fashion, as she did not believe that it was suitable for Turkish women. She instead argued for the creation of a “Turkish national fashion movement.”\textsuperscript{126}

A belief in a national Turkish costume can be seen especially in periodicals after 1919. These magazines were typically longer lived than their predecessors, publishing for several

\textsuperscript{125} King, \textit{Midnight at the Pera Palace}, 100
\textsuperscript{126} Zehrâ Hakki, “Milli Moda,” \textit{İnci} 1 (February 1919) 4-5.
years. They were of a superior quality and employed excellent caricaturists and draftsmen. Contributors were often young, and almost exclusively women. Journals of satire also acquired a different position towards women during these years. Pro- Atatürk newspapers like Güeryüz and Diken celebrated rather than condemned the new woman. Whether the reader was male or female, after 1919 “women were omnipresent in practically all journals of satire. One could say that, excepting one or two publications, they became the preeminent theme for this genre as well as the favorite subject of drawings and cartoons.” For the first time, the emancipated woman was not an object of contempt, but celebration.

1922 was unquestionably still a turbulent time for the Turks, but according to a 1922 sketch from the Kemalist newspaper, Diken, the sun shone brightly and a soft wind blew in Istanbul. The nucleus of the image is an attractive young woman, who confidently occupies the foreground. Everything about this drawing implies freedom, from the woman’s pose, to her clothing, to the patriotic choice of setting. The modern woman is celebrated, as opposed to being mocked for her frivolity and European fashion sense. In essence, this image proclaims that the Turkish symbol of liberty is the new woman.

The heroine in this cartoon possesses all the indicators of modernity. She wears her hair in a short and trendy bob, tied up with a fashionable scarf. The hairstyle recalls a 1920s flapper girl, on stage in New York or Chicago. Makeup highlights her soft features. It is hinted that she spent time sitting at her vanity, carefully applying layers of blush, lipstick, and eyeliner. The bold look continues. Her bodice is low-cut, offering ample décolletage that leads to visible outlines of her perfect breasts. Her waist is cinched, and her knee-bearing skirt blows up in the

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wind. Her legs are long, bare, and perfectly sculpted; on her dainty feet she wears a pair of shiny black high heels. She poses confidently, hand on supple hip. In the other hand, she casually holds a black switch, a typical masculine accessory. Her expression is happy, free, and unapologetic. She is the newly liberated Turkish woman, she independent and visible. She is an allegorical “monument to freedom.”

This cartoon is fittingly titled “Hürriyet Abidesi,” *A Monument to Freedom*. In the background we see a large structure. Located on one of the highest hills in Istanbul (Hürriyet Tepesi), the marble statue in the background is The Monument to Freedom (Âbide-I Hürriyet). Şişli, it is useful to note, is a centrally located region on the European side of Istanbul. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it became a middle and upper class residential neighborhood, populated with a mix of Jews, Greeks, Armenians, and Turks. Additionally, there was a strong European presence and the French influence can still be felt today. Many of Şişli’s streets have a European look, with stone buildings, art nouveau features, and wrought iron balconies. It makes sense that this woman would have lived close to this monument. One can imagine her attending a neighborhood French school, shopping for a new dress with friends, or taking a stroll to the base of the statue and reflecting upon Turkey’s newfound modernity and the progress of the last 15 years. The cartoonist sent a clear message by placing this modern female caricature in Sisli next to this symbolic monument. The artist is encouraging the viewer to draw a direct comparison between the two figures. Ultimately, this image depicts two parallel “Monuments to Freedom” one is in the form of a marble statue, the other is a modern Turkish woman.

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129 The statue was erected to commemorate the Young Turk victory over the 1909 countercoup, which was a rebellion of conservative reactionaries who attempted to reinstate Sultan Abdulhamid II as absolute monarch following the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. In particular, the monument honors the 74 soldiers who died in the March 31 Incident (Ouuzbir Mart Vak‘ası) and it was inaugurated on July 23, 1911, the fourth anniversary of the Young Turk Revolution and Second Constitutional Era. Sultan Abdulhamid II was forced into permanent exile following the reactionary defeat and the monument is regarded as a beacon of modernity, democracy, and secularism in Turkey.
Why would a Kemalist newspaper want to depict a modern woman in this way? The simple answer is propaganda. This image is a precursor to the Kemalist reforms of the 1920s and a perfect example of how Atatürk and other nationalists used images of women to further a nationalist agenda and appear more modern, secular, and democratic. At a time when literacy rates were low, the illustrated press was influential in forming public opinion. Therefore, it is no surprise to find an image like “Monument of Freedom” on the pages of a well-circulated newspaper. It signifies a new acceptance, or at least visibility, of the emancipated, educated, and confident Turkish woman. Juxtaposed with a symbol of national pride and democracy, this patriotic Turkish woman has become a symbol of the Turkish homeland in her own right.

The creation of a Turkish national dress came to the forefront with the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Atatürk stressed the importance of Türklük (Turkishness) for the success of the new nation. According to Charles King, Türklük became “not just an identity but an entire way of being, a disembodied essence of the nation that both infused individuals and floated above them, an aspiration to self-improvement and a totem of the mythical collective will.”130 The Kemalist reforms of the 1920s are important in understanding the impact of fashion on national identity. With the establishment of a secular Republic, the fashion debate no longer centered on different interpretation of tesettür and following the requirements of Islam. Instead, fashion, in particular women’s fashion, came to the forefront of discussions about modernity and national progress. With Türklük as the aim, Atatürk attempted to reshape an entire population through Kemalist social and political reforms.

Kemalism was the belief that the Empire needed to enter a new age of modernity. In the Republic the veil officially became viewed as retrograde. It was a reminder of the weakness of Empire and a failed past. A woman in a modern dress represented the new freedoms won by

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130 King, Midnight at the Pera Palace, 191.
women in the previous decade. More women than ever were employed outside of the house. One estimate lists that by 1920, a third of the salespeople in Pera were women and 20 percent in the Golden Horn. For the first time, women were earners, and they needed the proper clothes to leave the house and perform their jobs. According to Zehra Hakki’s article in İnci, “since Turkish women had of necessity entered into public life alongside men, their clothing had to be modernized along with their ideas.” A photograph from 1922 shows an all-women typing class learning to become secretaries, typists, or office assistants. They are dressed almost identically, wearing sweaters and skirts rather than the çarşaf. Each woman sports a short bob. Elite women, as well as educated workingwomen represented the ideals of Kemalism; they would have been the primary audience for feminist magazines.

In 1925, Atatürk instituted the “Hat Law” which officially outlawed the fez, as well as all other traditional or religious forms of headgear for men. Unlike the Shah in Iran, Atatürk never officially banned the veil131. However, headscarves and veils were prohibited from state institutions like schools and municipal buildings. The law was instituted through local decrees and propaganda, coordinated with local press outlets. The modern Turkish dress effectively meant a European style of costume. At minimum for women it meant the removal of the peçe and the replacement of the çarşaf with an overcoat. Any type of clothing that was perceived as ethnic, traditional, or Islamic did not qualify as civilized or national Turkish dress.

With new definitions of dress, came new definitions of the ideal Kemalist woman. An article published in the Kemalist newspaper Idjihad by Abdoullah Djevdet outlines the parameters for the ideal Turkish woman. The article is called “The Future Turkish Woman in the Practical and Mental Life” and is the resume of a speech given by the editor of Idjihad at the

131 Yilmaz, Becoming Turkish, 79.
Woman’s Club of Constantinople in July 1925. The article begins with the general statement “The position and the ability of the women of a nation determines the position and the ability of that nation.” According to the speaker, the four virtues of an ideal Turkish woman were:

- Virtue in her heart
- Humility and kindness in her face
- Gentleness and tenderness on her lips
- Work in her hands

Using North America as his model, the speaker argued that women must be free and independent and equipped with education and political agency to keep that freedom. He concludes that “We will not have any place in the rank of free and independent nations unless our women be free and independent.” This is the core rhetoric of Kemalist notions of women.

The ideal Kemalist woman was politically active and informed, employed, educated, and wore modern clothing. Another example of her can be seen in Figure X from Süs from at 1923 issue. The caricaturist is the young woman Meliha Niyazi, who frequently contributed to the magazine. The picture shows an exchange between a young woman and her uncle. The woman is dressed in the modern Turkish style, complete with switch and head wrap. Her uncle looks up from reading the newspaper as she walks past. “What’s is it my girl? Are you going to a social engagement?” The girl responds, “Oh Uncle, are you joking? The political party is having a debate, I’m going to the session!” This image underscores the ideal Kemalist woman as someone who was both politically active and fashionable. Dress and politics went together as the twin pillars of modern life.

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Section 4: Patriarchy and Paradox: The Limits of Turkish Feminism

*Really my dear Miss Billings, the history of the opposition in Turkey and the state M. Kemal has pulled it to is worth studying. I do not know anything which is so interesting and of [such] vital value to the world.* —Halide Edip, November 5 1926

A photo from the Florence Billings Archive titled “Officials’ Entrance to Constantinople 1922,” depicts a triumphant Halide Edip. It is unclear whether Billings herself captured the moment of Edip’s return to Istanbul following Turkish military victories against Greek troops in Western Anatolia or if she merely collected the photo for her memories. Edip appears in the center of the photo, to her left is her husband Dr. Adnan Bey, to her right is Refet Pasha, an officer of the Turkish National Army. Each figure played a significant role in the Turkish Independence movement.

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Upon return to Istanbul, Atatürk rewarded those who aided in the Independence movement. Adnan Bey was bestowed with the title of high commissioner and emissary. Refet Pasha served as the pseudo-mayor of Istanbul during the important transition from Allied to Turkish power.\textsuperscript{134} Despite being hailed as “the woman behind Atatürk,” Edip did not receive an official role in the new Republic; however she continued to write novels and make public appearances. The early Republic years (1923 to 1930) remained a time of promise and hope for the future, especially for women. That hope, however, would be short lived for Halide Edip.

In the years following the founding of the Turkish Republic, Edip discovered that Atatürk was not living up to the nationalist dream of spearheading a democratic state. Her second memoir, \textit{The Turkish Ordeal}, chronicles her disillusionment. We see how she changed from being a nationalist who was full of optimism about a more egalitarian future to a dissatisfied former disciple of Atatürk’s single-party rule. She writes frankly about her disillusionment throughout the memoir:

> I have seen, I have gone through, a land full of aching hearts and torturing remembrances, and I have lived in an age when the politicians played with these human hearts as ordinary gamblers play with their cards, I who dreamed of a nationalism which will create a happy land of beauty, understanding, and love, I have seen nothing but mutual massacre and mutual hatred; I have seen nothing but ideals used as instruments for creating human carnage and misery.\textsuperscript{135}

Edip was disappointed that the republican cause that had inspired her life’s work had descended into a patriarchal autocracy. In \textit{Midnight at the Pera Palace}, Charles King details Atatürk’s willingness to work with local warlords as well as his increasing suspicion of close companions who voiced any notion of disagreement. Following 1923, Atatürk swiftly established Independence Tribunals to imprison or execute those who openly rebelled against him as well as


to quiet dissidents. “All seemed,” King writes, “the opposite of the world Halide had been trying
to create. Mustafa Kemal looked more and more like a dictator and his Republican People’s
Party like the only approved instrument of governance.”136 It seemed as though little had
changed to make a more democratic government since the collapse of the sultanate.

Edip felt betrayed that the new Kemalist national culture excluded her and other women
from government by centralizing all power into one party and one man. She openly criticized
Atatürk and condemned his violations of the founding national ideals in 1926, when she and Dr.
Adnan, along with several of their close associates, were accused of conspiring to assassinate the
leader. Fearing for their safety, she and Dr. Adnan left Turkey and lived in self-imposed exile in
France, Britain, India, and the United States in the following years. Edip called the treason
accusations “ridiculous,”137 although Dr. Adnan was ultimately acquitted. Many of her associates
were not so fortunate.

In a letter to Florence Billings and her acquaintance Professor Edward Meade Earle from
1926, Edip solemnly explained the death of her close friend, Mehmet Cavit Bey, who was
executed as a result of the tribunals. Cavit was a newspaper editor and politician for the
Committee of Union and Progress Government. He, too, was accused of involvement in the
failed scheme to assassinate Atatürk in Izmir. Along with thirteen others, Cavit Bey was found
guilty by the court and sentenced to execution by hanging. Edip expressed her dismay in her
correspondence:

Javid [Cavit Bey] has been martyred with a series of bravest cleanest and some of the
great types of human beings which the world has ever produced in history…And he had
always stood up for a decent, human, and representative government in Turkey. His last
speech in the court was the greatest spoken in Turkey and there was a chorus of sobbing

136 King, Midnight at the Pera Palace, 214.
Smith Collection, Northampton, MA.
there. It was not a demand for mercy, it was a brilliant evidence of his innocence and his personality. He walked to the gallows dressed in a white shirt and his hands tied behind him.\textsuperscript{138}

Edip mourned for her martyred comrades saying, “Those who have been tortured to death were as innocent as Adnan.”\textsuperscript{139} Edip’s friends warned her that Dr. Adnan’s acquittal was possibly little more than a maneuver to entice the pair back to the country before officially executing them for treason, so the couple remained in exile. Edip continued her letter to Billings by explaining that her husband was heartbroken by the unjust loss of so many close friends. Refet Pasha (from Figure 4.1) was also charged, but acquitted because “the army brutally and openly demanded it.” Edip still did not believe that Refet and the other acquitted men were safe and wrote that, “Kemal will find some pretext to kill them in some other way.”\textsuperscript{140}

Edip was determined to find justice. “Whatever happens,” she wrote to Billings, “I want to see the show to the end and play the game hard and fair.”\textsuperscript{141} She played the game with the only weapon she had left—her pen. While in England in 1926, Edip published her memoirs in English. The following year, Atatürk gave his famous 36-hour speech, the Nutuk, in which he denounced his political enemies and placed himself at the center of the National movement. The Nutuk presents Edip as a “mandaci-traitor,”\textsuperscript{142} who advocated for the American mandate, which would have made the former Empire a protectorate of foreign powers. She was thus written out of the Turkish founding mythology. Edip and Dr. Adnan remained in exile abroad until 1939, the year after Atatürk’s death.

\textsuperscript{138} Edip, Halide. Halide Edip to Florence Billings and Professor Earle, November 5, 1926. Letter. From Florence Billings Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Northampton, MA.
\textsuperscript{139} Edip, Halide. Halide Edip to Florence Billings, November 5, 1926.
\textsuperscript{140} Edip, Halide. Halide Edip to Florence Billings, November 5, 1926. Letter. From Florence Billings Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Northampton, MA.
\textsuperscript{141} Edip, Halide. Halide Edip to Florence Billings, November 5, 1926.
\textsuperscript{142} Hülya Adak, “National Myths and Self-Na(r)rat ions: Mustafa Kemal’s Nutuk and Halide Edib’s Memoirs and The Turkish Ordeal,” The South Atlantic Quarterly 102: 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2003): 511.
Halide Edip’s memoirs and personal correspondence offer a rich alternative to the historical account laid out by Atatürk in the *Nutuk*, a narrative that is reinforced in the majority of Turkish historical scholarship. In addition to Edip’s recollections, articles and illustrations from the popular press attest to the broken promises of Kemalist reforms. The final section of this thesis highlights the limits of democracy and state-sponsored feminism in the early years of the Turkish Republic though an analysis of Kemalist reforms and the reactions to the feminist movement as evidenced in the popular press. While women were freed from the harem, inadequate laws and the continued adherence to social convention meant that they were denied full civil liberties during the early Republic period. The harem and the çarşaf were replaced with a figurative veil of respectability that monitored and restricted women’s behavior. Women had gained agency as writers, thinkers, and revolutionaries in the years leading up to 1923, but ultimately they were expected to continue their activities as good wives and mothers to their children above all else in the new Republic.143

*Atatürk through the Memoirs of Halide Edip*

While living in exile in England, Edip recorded contemporary Turkish history as she saw it in order to commemorate her involvement in the Independence Movement. She wrote that the motivation for chronicling her experiences through memoir was “to tell the story of Turkey as simply and honestly as a child, that the world might someday read it—not as a historical record nor as a political treatise, but as a human document about men and women alive during my own lifetime.”144 She wanted to produce a ‘human document’ that could reach an audience beyond that of her own world. She decided to write her memoirs first in English. Writing in Turkish

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144 Halide Edip, *The Turkish Ordeal*, 190.
would be for naught as Edip’s work was (unofficially) banned in Turkey from 1927 to 1935.  
By contrast, the English language gave Edip freedom to share her experiences without fear of Turkish National censors.

Halide Edip’s role as a member of Atatürk’s inner circle certainly makes her second memoir, *The Turkish Ordeal*, an indispensable text for the study of Turkish Revolutionary history. Throughout the memoir, she commends Mustafa Kemal’s intelligence and unparalleled ambition, likening him to a tiger on several occasions. However, as her time with Mustafa Kemal continued and as the War for Independence became bloodier, Edip’s opinions of the leader shifted. The English version of *The Turkish Ordeal* offers some unsavory passages about the leader. Describing Mustafa Kemal’s character she writes, “Take any man from the street who is shrewd, selfish, and utterly unscrupulous, give him the insistence and histrionics of a hysterical woman who is willing to employ any wile to satisfy her inexhaustible desires, then view him through the largest magnifying glass you can find—and you’ll see Mustafa Kemal Pasha.”

Such negative narratives of Atatürk like this one would not have been well received in the ultra-nationalist early years of the Turkish Republic, therefore writing for an English-speaking audience served to her advantage. By describing Turkey’s leader as a hysterical woman using subterfuge to fulfill any whim or desire, it is clear that Edip’s opinion of Atatürk did not accord with the revered and strong hero image that history has perpetuated.

*The Turkish Ordeal* was not published in the Turkish language (*Türkün Ateşle İmtihanı*) until 1962, thirty-four years after its English counterpart was issued. The Turkish version is

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145 Adak, “National Myths and Self-Na(rra)tions: Mustafa Kemal’s *Nutuk* and Halide Edib’s *Memoirs* and *The Turkish Ordeal*,” 511.
146 Halide Edip, *The Turkish Ordeal*, 185.
abridged and several “hard and unfavorable” passages about Atatürk have been removed from the Turkish language edition. Edip’s criticisms are thoughtful and should be considered in historical scholarship of the period. During his time working with the resistance movement in Ankara following 1918, Mustafa Kemal imposed his patriarchal authority over women. Edip frequently defied him. In her memoir, she compares him to a spoiled boy. Throughout the memoir, Edip informs the reader that Atatürk’s interests did not always coincide with those of a democratic nation and that he was willing to steam roll past anyone who disagreed with him.

As an individual who had spent years working personally with the leader, Edip understood the nuances of Atatürk’s personality very well. She explained his disposition in a particularly damning passage:

He was by turns cynical, suspicious, unscrupulous, and satanically shrewd. He bullied, he indulged in cheap street-corner heroics. Possessing considerable though quite undistinguished histrionic ability, one moment he could pass as the perfect demagogue—an second George Washington—and the next moment fall into some Napoleonic attitude.

In these lines we see Edip’s conflicted feelings about Atatürk’s leadership capabilities. She admired his immediate sincerity and leadership potential, but worried that he could easily become more of a Napoleonic dictator than the “George Washington” the nation so desperately needed. Edip’s concern that Mustafa Kemal was walking a fine line between good leader and authoritarian dictator is ever present throughout the second half of her memoir.

Edip’s ill opinion of Atatürk transcends the pages of her memoir. Personal correspondence with Florence Billings, who was also a close associate of Atatürk during the independence movement, indicates hostile feelings towards Modern Turkey’s leadership. Edip condemns

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149 Edip, *The Turkish Ordeal*, 185.
Atatürk in several letters to Billings, using harsh language to describe his governance. In one letter dated Nov. 6, 1926 she writes, “At the present I am writing the second volume [of my memoir] and will be strictly and dispassionately fair and true to the past services of M. Kemal, but history also must know what he has done to Turkey and the Turks with a pack of ordinary murderers and brigands as his henchmen.” Language like this provides primary evidence that Atatürk may not have lived up to his own image in everyone’s eyes, particularly of those viewing the state of affairs with a feminist lens. Edip’s criticism signals that rights for women were not fully realized following the foundation of the Republic nor were they core to Atatürk’s plan of reform. Her negative new criticism of Atatürk, who is to this day venerated as the heroic founder of modern Turkey, has no doubt negatively affected the way in which she is regarded in Turkey today.

Republican Reforms

Atatürk and his advisors saw a need to modernize as quickly as possible in order to be considered ‘civilized’ in the eyes of the West. They propelled the country into the twentieth century through a systematic plan of reform. Inspired by the French Revolution, the reform mission has been compared to that of the Jacobins, who refashioned French society between 1793 and 1794. The Turkish Civil Code of 1926, adapted from the Swiss Civil Code, abolished polygamous marriages and granted men and women relative equality in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Historians tend to exaggerate the impact of the 1926 Civil Code, especially in relation to women. The new civil code was significant, but Kemalist reforms aimed more to inflate the national image than to actually improve the lives of women.

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150 Edip, Halide. *Halide Edip to Florence Billings, November 5, 1926.*
Turkey was still “a male-dominated state” that simply “made women’s equality in the public sphere a national policy.” The private sphere was dominated by traditional patriarchal familial structures, because the state concerned itself with the welfare of women exclusively in terms of surface-level national ideals.

Atatürk’s government invented new holidays to encourage national sentiment and outwardly showcase Turkey’s newfound modernity. Cities all around Turkey began to celebrate official national holidays. A western-style evening ball typically followed public daytime events. Unlike the segregated institutions from the past such as coffeehouses and mosques, Republican Balls were an opportunity for men and women to socialize together in a “modern” way. Guests at the balls ate, drank, danced, and mingled with one another. It was the first time that middle-class men and women could socialize as a couple. However, new forms of mixed gender social occasions meant that women had to learn how to behave themselves in a “civilized manner” around male counterparts. Women often carried themselves with a degree of distance from other men and took caution not to make their husbands jealous. The responsibility of proper social conduct fell primarily on the women, as it was believed that “A woman should know how to control herself.” Therefore, despite the strides made by mixed gender socialization at events, the basic tenets of feminine virtue and social decorum remained firmly in place.

The Republic Balls would typically begin around 8:00 pm and continue late into the night, always beginning with the national anthem. Foreigners as well as notables from the city would attend. British essayist E.W.F Tomlin described the scene at the balls,

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153 White, “State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman,” 145.
154 Yilmaz, Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey, 207.
155 Yilmaz, Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey, 207.
This is always a very gay affair, and will often last until very late. The modern Turk is keen and usually a very good dancer; and he has taken to jazz and sing music with great enthusiasm. The women wear tasteful evening dresses and the men dinner jackets or ‘tails.’ The atmosphere is completely European. Food is provided in abundance; and a great deal of raki, vodka, beer, and local cognac is drunk, especially by the men.157

Women’s formal attire mirrored the pages of İnci, Süs, and other fashion magazines examined in section 3. According to one newspaper article from 1930, women at a Republic Ball in Izmir wore dresses made of “national fabric.” As in the years of the struggle for independence, women supported national mobilization of resources though their fashion choices.158 However, like clothing, changes in socialization were largely surface level.

The outward appearance of Turkish cities also underwent a transformation during the early Republican years and this had an impact upon women. Broad boulevards designed for walking and shopping replaced the winding, narrow back streets of small neighborhoods in Istanbul and Ankara. Architectural alterations resulted in the creation of new public spaces for women, for example department stores and European style cafes. New laws ordered desegregation by gender on public transportation. European style tramways, ferries across the Bosporus, and trains to the suburbs had existed in Turkish cities since the mid-nineteenth century and each form of transportation had been equipped with separate compartments for men and women. In 1923, the state officially abolished the separation of sexes on public transportation.159 Figure 4.2160 shows a dangerously overcrowded tramway after the implementation of mixed gender transport. An old woman complains that a man is crushing her. The man is too distracted to notice because he is looking at a beautiful young woman on his other side: thus the cartoon voices the threat posed by gender co-existence on public transportation in the new Republic.

158 Durakbasa, “Kemalism as Identity Politics in Turkey,”147.  
160 Zümrud-ü Anka, no. 124, March 1924.
In the new Turkish state, educated women were encouraged to work outside the home and adopt the new persona of “citizen woman.” The citizen woman was urban and refined, but her primary duty was still to be an obedient wife and mother. Ayse Durakbasa and Aynur Ilyasoglu consulted oral histories of women during this period: “Women enjoyed a special area of influence and control in their professional life which did not always accord with the ongoing dependent wife role they played in their marriage.” Thus, the Kemalist approach to women culminated in an official policy of “state feminism.” However, this brand of feminism encouraged women’s participation in the public sphere, but did little to change the patriarchal systems of morality and social conservatism in domestic relationships between men and women. In short, it was national consolidation and reform, rather than a modern vision of women’s equality, that improved the public lives of women in 1920s Republican Turkey.

A good example of the limits of female emancipation in the early Republic years is the case of notable feminist writer Sahiba Sertel. Sertel, along with two of her friends, hoped to establish a publishing company with money Sertel had inherited from her late first husband. The Secretary of Commerce approved of the company, but the Turkish Department of Justice demanded that the women’s husbands agree to the proposal before the company would be allowed to function. In a 1927 article for Resimli Ay entitled “Does a Woman Possess the Right to Work?” Sertel expressed her dismay at being treated as a child in the eyes of the law. In the following passage she questioned the very nature of women’s emancipation in modern Turkey:

If our husbands possess the right of stopping our business activities, it means that our entrance into life is an illusion. Today feminism has changed its field of battle. Women

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161 White, “State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman,” 146.
162 Durakbasa and Ilyasolu, “Formation of Gender Identities in Republican Turkey and Women’s Narratives as Transmitters of ‘Herstory’ of Modernization,” 197.
163 The term ‘state feminism’ was first used by Sirin Tekeli (1986) now commonly used by feminist researchers in reference to Kemalist approach to women
are unable to exercise any of the rights which the law gives them unless they leave their actual state of mere consumers and become producers also…. women will never be able to use the freedom which society gives to them until the chains of economic slavery are broken.”

Sertel was unhappy with her husband’s right to veto her economic decisions and explained that many women still faced economic dependence on their husbands. She condemned the social climate in the Republic, as she did not believe that it was open to the emancipation of women. She continued by writing, “The Turkish woman is just entering into life. The family and social environment about us are not yet prepared to see us enter into it. They do not favor such a movement and our efforts still lack their sympathies.” The example of Sertel’s predicament exemplifies the limits of Turkish reforms for women.

Motherhood was accentuated as a patriotic duty in the early days of the Turkish Republic. While women had gained the right to work outside the home, their primary contributions to the nation were still valued most in the domestic sphere by raising the next generation of devoted Turks. Atatürk upheld this viewpoint and would often explain the importance of the national duty of motherhood in speeches to the public. In an address to men and women in Izmir in 1923, he proclaimed:

The most important duty of woman is motherhood. The importance of this duty is better understood if one considers that the earliest education takes place on one’s mother’s lap. Our nation has decided to be a strong nation…Therefore, our women, too, will be enlightened and learned and, like men, will go through all educational stages.

He emphasized that women had an obligation to be educated and cultured for the future wellbeing of their children. Moreover, despite receiving an education like men, women were still expected to fulfill all of the primary caretaking duties and excel in the domestic sphere. In an address to the women of Konya in 1923, Atatürk spoke to this conviction,

166 From the 1923 Izmir speech. Atatürk, 1989, Vol. 2:89-90 translation by Arat
“Today’s mothers have to attain several high qualities in order to bring up children with the necessary qualities and develop them into active members for life today. Therefore, our women are obliged to be more enlightened, more prosperous, and more knowledgeable than our men. If they really want to be mothers of this nation this is the way.”

Articles and images from the popular press perpetuated the belief that it was a woman’s national and natural duty to bear children. Figure 4.3 is titled “Ottoman Empire vs. Turkish Republic.” It depicts side-by-side images of women breastfeeding. The image on the right shows an old and emaciated woman leaning back in agony as two Ottoman officials greedily drink from her breasts, taking all of her milk. It is meant to highlight the backward and exploitative nature of the Ottoman Empire. In contrast, the left-hand image shows a serene and beautiful young mother cradling her child in her arms. With a wreath in her hair and the sun rising in a peaceful background, she is the idealized mother of the nation. This woman is serving her nation the way she can best, through motherhood.

The Veil of Chastity

With the new Republic came the elimination of the harem and the veil. Yet women’s modesty had to be protected in some other way. In examining the moral and social codes of the 1920s, we see that the institution of the harem was replaced with repressive standards of virtue for women. The “citizen woman” was required to dress in a way that downplayed her sexuality. A new, figurative veil required women to act in a moral, virtuous manner at all times. Women who worked in offices or masculine work places were expected to present a modest image. Female teachers and secretaries often wore uniform-like costumes to mask their femininity and to blend into the masculine workplace. For example, a typical Kemalist woman teacher or secretary wore suit-like clothing. Employed women, especially teachers, were considered

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167 From Atatürk’s address to the women of Konya on March 21, 1923, Atatürk, 1989, Vol. 2: 156- Translation Arat
“honorary women,” as the teaching profession was well suited to women in modernizing countries.168

The new clothing style had its origins in the independence movement. Halide Edip had embodied this female comrade look, her attire lacking any semblance of feminine sexuality. “She is depicted as an asexual sister-in-arms whose public activities never cast any doubt on her virtue and chastity.”169 Figure 4.5 shows Halide Edip in 1921 with a stern expression and donning the Turkish military uniform. Her head is covered by an adapted headscarf and she wears a military style jacket with a long skirt. Her expression, clothing, and pose have erased any semblance of sexuality.

In the new Republic, Atatürk toured the country with his wife, who also wore a ‘modernized’ version of the headscarf and an almost military looking uniform.170 Atatürk gave several speeches about veiling, where he explained that tesettür could be interpreted within a national secular framework. Even with newly gained rights, women still had to present themselves as sexually modest in a way that would not challenge patriarchal morality. While their heads were visible, women still had to be veiled in their behavior.

Sexual virtue in women was defined first and foremost by chastity. The notion of namus, or honor, remained of upmost importance.171 In December 1924, Sabiha Sertel began to pen an advice column that she anonymously signed Cici Anne (Good Mother). The “Dear Abby” style column answered the letters of young men and women who had questions about love, marriage,

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168 Durakbasa and Ilyasolu, “Formation of Gender Identities in Republican Turkey and Women’s Narratives as Transmitters of ‘Herstory’ of Modernization,” 197.
171 Durakbasa, “Kemalism as Identity Politics in Turkey,” 151.
and heartbreak. One response examining the question of unfaithfulness offered a harsh criticism of the double standards of sexual morality between men and women.

“His [a man’s] living with a woman is not a question of namus, while in the case of a woman it is...Nature does not distinguish between men and women in the matter of loving more than one person; it is sexual morality that does so [by] conferring a right [on one sex].”

Sertel found it unfair that a man who engaged in sexual indiscretions before and after marriage were tolerated, while such a transgression was unthinkable for a woman.

A series of articles, editorials, and surveys issued by Sertel’s magazine Resimli Ay offer information about public attitudes towards namus. In one survey, the magazine asked readers to explain their definition of namus. Unsurprisingly, women mostly defined honor in terms of chastity and modesty, while men tended to focus on their professional life and family reputation.

For the most part, the new order offered only a paternalistic protection to women. Many historians have presented Atatürk as the emancipator of Turkish women; the examples of his adopted daughters, including Sahiba Gokcen, the first female pilot, were often brought up to underscore his progressiveness. However, this, too, was more window-dressing than anything to truly advance women’s place in Turkish society. Kemalist reformers preserved this “old morality,” as they worried they might lose control over Turkish women should they realize their full potential of emancipation. Women could enter the public sphere in exchange for repressing their sexuality and carefully monitoring their interactions with men. The sexually liberated female provoked anxiety as she symbolized a loss of control.

172 “Cici Anne’ye Kilmler ve Nicin Müracaat Ederler?” Sevimli Ay, Kânun-I evvel (December) 1926, 32-36.
173 Holly Sissler, “If you Ask Me: Sabiha Sertel’s Advice Column, Gender Equity, and Social Engineering in the Early Turkish Republic,” Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies, Vol. 3 No. 2 (Spring 2007), 9.
174 Durakbas, “Kemalism as Identity Politics in Turkey,” 151.
“Beauty is not a Disgraceful Thing”

By the late 1920s, the modernized Republican woman had become a fixed symbol in Kemalist Turkey. She was contemporary in dress and etiquette: it was a source of Turkish national pride to be up to date with styles from the West. At this time “civilized” countries had beauty contests, and Turkey wanted to keep up with the rest of the world. An article in a 1930 issue of Cumhuriyet entitled “Beauty is not a Disgraceful Thing” encouraged the implementation of a national beauty pageant:

Finally, we needed to show to the world with actual deeds that the ideas and beliefs, shared by the world for centuries, about Turkish women, are merely youths that are out of place at present. Turkish women have been exalted to the status of equality with their sisters in the liberated countries of the world. Being beautiful is not disgraceful; beauty is something that all the world bends before with respect and admiration…In the civilized world, we know that great attempts are being made to shape the bodies of children, especially girls, according to certain physical diets. Gradually beauty is becoming twins with health.175

Cumhuriyet, a widely read newspaper, soon released advertisements inviting women to participate in the first national beauty pageant. The ad specifically asked that no prostitutes apply. Pageant officials wanted a modern woman who could compete with the women of Europe, especially their biggest rival Greece, but most importantly, she must exhibit the Republican qualities of virtue and chastity. Keriman Halis fit the bill. She came from dignified roots and was well educated. Similarly to Halide Edip, intellectuals, artists, and writers surrounded her throughout her life. But unlike Edip, she had never known life in the harem.

In 1932 Halis won the national pageant and was sent to compete for the title of Miss Universe Belgium. She received much media attention as a crowd of 20,000 in Taksim Square in Istanbul sent her off.176 Halis can be considered the ideal Kemalist woman as she symbolized feminine respectability and grace. She even had the support of Atatürk. Halis won the Miss

175 “Güzellik Ayip Birsey Degildir” (Beauty is not a Disgraceful thing) Cumhuriyet, 13 Kanun-I sani, 1930.
176 King, Midnight at the Pera Palace, 262.
Universe competition and became an instant celebrity in Turkey and abroad. In a signed pageant photograph we see her wearing a glamorous but modest dress, with a bright smile and a demure pose. Halis believed the competition was about showcasing the new Turkish woman’s emancipation, but in reality she represented little more than a promotion of Kemalist virtue. After the competition, Halis fulfilled the Kemalist ideal of the new woman as she married, had children, and became a full time mother.

*Men Becoming Women*

Anxiety about unsexing or role reversal pervaded the illustrated press. Numerous cartoons represent the social disruption during the Republican era when women assumed employment outside of the home. Women were depicted doing jobs that were considered masculine as a way to underscore their changing roles. As in America and European nations during World War I, when men were called to fight, many women left the domestic sphere to enter the work force. They took over the positions abandoned when men went to fight. Following the war there were also as many as one million widows in Turkey, making it necessary for some women to continue to do “man’s work” to feed their families. Representations of working women were well documented in the post-war illustrated press.

A series of sketches called “If women were…” (Hanımlar…olursa) in *Ayde*de actively makes fun of working women. In the series, women are imagined taking on stereotypically masculine roles. In Figure 4.7\(^{177}\) for example, the woman is depicted as a mason. A crowd of jeering men is gathered below the scaffolding and attempt to look up her skirt. This image attests to the newly visible working woman and highlights the resistance to her in that role as well.

\(^{177}\) *Ayde*, no. 45, 5 June 1922
Image 8 from the newspaper Karagöz178 shows women occupying table in a coffee house, a traditionally masculine space. There is a complete role reversal in this scenario as the men wait on the female clients. The newspaper’s mascots Hacivat and Karagöz are bent over the stove in the background and up front taking orders. Karagöz yells to his friend, “Two medium-sweet coffees for our customers over here, and a nargile179 with a good mouth-piece for this little lady!”180 This cartoon suggests that as women entered the public sphere, gender roles might not just change, but become reversed.

The altering of gender was no easy task as it meant redefining what it meant to be a man or woman. Images like figures 4.7 and 4.8 showcase the comedy, as well as the anxiety behind these new roles. The modernizing of gender resulted in new images expressing male and female roles. New masculine and feminine images were often paradoxical as they represented both standards to aspire to and characteristics that were considered improper and denounced. Deniz Kandiyoti writes that, “the image of modernity was dependent upon its repudiated double.”181 The process of perpetuating these new images was complex as they manifested themselves thorough a variety of institutions including the feminist magazine, the classroom, on the street, and in official legislation.

Figure 4.9 from Süs is another example that both pokes fun but contains a serious undercurrent of discomfort. It suggests that when women assume masculine roles, men become more feminine and thus social order is undermined. The image shows a man, balding and with a moustache, wearing women’s clothing. Shown in profile looking into a mirror, the image is supposed to look humorous, or even ridiculous to the viewer. The man wears a floral top, pointy

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178 Karagöz, no. 1650, December 1923
179 Turkish water pipe
high-heeled shoes, and is accessorized with bracelets and scarves on his wrists. The message is clear: when women become men, it is inevitable that the reverse will happen as well.

*Women, Politics, and the Press*

The resistance against women who attempted to enter the political sphere underscores the limits of Turkish feminism in the early Republican era. Politically conscious women were belittled, ignored, and shut out of politics almost completely. After the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923, a group of women requested permission from the government to establish a Women’s Party (Kadınlar Halk Firkası) in the new parliament. Their request was promptly rejected because Atatürk and his officials believed that a Women’s Party would distract from the Republican People’s Party.\(^{182}\) Thus, from Turkey’s beginning as a nation, women were shut out of the political domain.

Halide Edip fought on the battlefields of Anatolia and was a founding member of the Republican People’s Party, but her contributions did little to earn her political leverage. In 1925, women’s organizations around the country advocated for her candidacy to be a member of the Republican Parliament. The appeals were denied, as Turkish women did not possess the right to vote in 1923.\(^{183}\) No doubt these limitations frustrated Edip, who believed that government should be for everyone, and that power should be shared by the many, not concentrated into the hands of the few. She maintained that diverse opinions should be cherished, not suppressed. Her democratic hope for the future had gone up in flame during the Independence Tribunals of the early 1920s. “I cannot tell you what a ‘costly mask’ I had to wear during those hard days,”\(^{184}\) she writes in a letter to Florence Billings.

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\(^{182}\) White, “State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman,” 155.

\(^{183}\) Adak, “National Myths and Self-Na(rr)ations: Mustafa Kemal’s *Nüfuk* and Halide Edib’s *Memoirs* and *The Turkish Ordeal*,” 511.

\(^{184}\) Edip, Halide. *Halide Edip to Florence Billings, November 5, 1926.*
“MY nation has earned her independence by an ordeal, which will stand out as one of the
hardest and the noblest in the world’s history,”\textsuperscript{185} she writes in the epilogue of her memoir. She
concluded \textit{The Turkish Ordeal} by reinforcing her conviction that the Turkish State must be a
democracy, ruled by the people, because, “In the unending struggle for freedom there can be no
real individual symbol, no dictator. There will be only the sum total of a people’s sacrifice to
bear witness to the guarding of their liberties.” Women sacrificed their husbands and their sons,
their food and their blood for the revolution. When men left for war, women filled their positions
in factories and provided for their families. Women had been the motor, symbolic and otherwise,
of the revolution, and their voices deserved to be heard.

With the failed attempt at forming a political party, Turkish women sought other means to
enter the world of politics. In 1924 Nezihe Muhiddin, the editor of \textit{Kadınlar Dünyası}, founded
the Turkish Women’s Union. The TWU advocated for civil, political, and social rights for
women, with their fundamental goal being universal suffrage.\textsuperscript{186} It quickly became the most
prominent women’s organization in Turkey. Through the TWU, women gained political agency
in a country that had excluded them from politics almost entirely.

A 1923 image from the magazine \textit{Süs} playfully illustrates the lack of support for women in
politics. A man wearing Europeanized clothing but a traditional beard and hat stands in profile in
the foreground. In the distance, two modern looking women walk together. One of the women
holds a switch; the other carries a parasol and a bundle of paper. Judging by their dress and
accessories, they are educated and cosmopolitan, the type of woman who would want to be
involved in politics. Stroking his beard the man watches the women walk by. The man questions,
“If I said that I agreed with all of their principles, I wonder if they would incorporate me into

\textsuperscript{185} Edip, \textit{The Turkish Ordeal}, 317.
\textsuperscript{186} Kathryn Libal, “Staging Turkish Women’s Emancipation: Istanbul 1935,” \textit{Journal of Middle East Women’s
their party?” The caption suggests that the man does not actually agree with the platform of the Women’s Party, but he would be willing to lie and say that he supports them in order to enter the circle of elite women. The cartoon highlights resistance to towards women in politics, as well as the difficulty they faced in being taken seriously.

The Turkish Women’s Union encountered harsh criticism from politicians and in the print media. Nezihe Muhiddin herself was at the center of the ridicule. In 1927 the Istanbul Municipal Government attacked her for mismanaging funds, and she was brought up on charges several times. The cases were always dismissed once they reached court due to lack of evidence. But the charges were condemning nonetheless, and she was ruthlessly attacked in the press.187 The resistance against the TWU from the government and the popular press underscore the strategies used to silence women in the early Republican era. Muhiddin resigned from her position as the head of the TWU in 1927.

In the years after its establishment, the Turkish Women’s Union “was subjected to an outpouring of criticism and ridicule.”188 The popular press depicted feminists as tyrants and ignorant bullies, forcing their rhetoric on to those around them. Women were also depicted as children, incapable of involving themselves in the matters of politics. Disparagement of the TWU from the press and angry politicians indicates the anxieties of the early Republican era about the changing status of women. By 1930, women had gained the right to vote at municipal elections. They were granted full suffrage for all elections in 1934, although according to Deniz Kandiyoti, “These rights were not obtained through the sustained activities of women’s movements, as in the case of Western suffragist movements, but were granted by an enlightened

governing elite committed to the goals of modernization and ‘Westernization’. Indeed, rumors circulated that Atatürk granted women the right to vote in 1934 to influence outside public opinion about Turkey, rather than for the sake of Turkish women. With suffrage achieved, the TWU disbanded in 1935. No woman’s union formed in its place.

Sabiha Sertel also faced legal difficulties and severe criticism as a result of her outspoken commentaries on women’s rights. The state prosecutor’s office summoned her for questioning a number of times. She went to trial three times, once for a 1924 Cumhuriyet article that voiced disapproval of those who denounced a woman who had abandoned her child. She argued that the lack of adequate social conditions for struggling women had forced the mother to leave her baby. Sertel was charged with “undermining the Republican regime and fomenting class struggle,” but she was eventually exonerated.

The political climate became more repressive after 1925 and police carried out raids on dissidents and brought Atatürk’s political opponents to trial. The government targeted publishing companies and individual journalists who voiced criticism of the regime. Sertel’s journalist husband was arrested and sentenced to three years of internal exile. With her husband detained and mounting legal woes, Sertel published fewer articles but continued to write about issues that mattered to her. In 1930, Sertel received a three-month prison sentence for an article in Resimli Ay about leadership. The article was originally published in an American journal, and it described what happens when a leader is out of touch with the population, indirectly referring to Atatürk. With the strains of the trial and mounting internal pressure, she was forced to close Resimli Ay. Her last article as “Cici Anne” for Cumhuriyet was titled “If you ask me: How can one forget?” History has all but forgotten the independent and staunchly feminist voices of

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189 Kandiyoti, “Women and the Turkish State: Political Actors or Symbolic Pawns?” 126.
190 Sissler, “If You Ask Me: Sabiha Sertel’s Advice Column, Gender Equity, and Social Engineering in the Early Turkish Republic,” 16.
Sabiha Sertel and Nezihe Muhiddin, but their struggles serve as a testament to the strong force of will of women who dared to fight for true equality in the Republican age of patriarchy and paradox.

The examples in this section suggest a state-sponsored support for women’s expansion into the public sphere, yet also underscore the limits of such policies and attitudes had in affecting real change for women. They were still valued primarily as wives and mothers. Women were told how to dress and behave and scorned when they did not. They were held up as paragons of virtue. If they strayed too far into the male spheres—the coffeehouse, the construction site, or the office—they were told how to cover up in uniform, repress all hints of sexuality, and not go too far in exerting true equality. The right to vote came by declaration of the state, less in the support of women’s suffrage and more as a means for the Turkish state to appear modern among their Western counterparts. Many writers have described the condition of women in the early Republican period as “emancipated but unliberated.”191 The images in the illustrated press bear witness to their continued struggle.

Halide Edip is not remembered like Atatürk; her portrait does not hang in every Turkish school classroom. Her face is not printed on banknotes, and people certainly do not tattoo her face or signature on their bodies. But that is not what she wanted. Edip fought for an independent Turkey where everyone was represented and treated with respect and as equals. She believed in collaboration and compromise, not in one man’s will superseding the will of his people. As her writings show, she never lost sight of the personal ingredients necessary for the construction of a nation.

Figure 4.6

Figure 4.7
CONCLUSION

If women’s history is hidden it is incumbent on present day historians to find sources that help tell their stories. This is where women’s periodicals from this time period help fill in the gaps. They showed women as mother Turkey, as the upholders of virtue, and as vehicles for nationalism. They pictured women working and socializing in formerly male dominated spaces where they were both emboldened, and ridiculed for threatening the established order. Women were shown embracing a Western fashion, which by 1923 was deemed a positive sign of Turkey being modern. On the other hand, the same fashionably dressed woman could be a vehicle for communicating a shallow and superficial trend, in tension with Turkish virtues. One needs only to recall the images of the women in European garb who neglects her child set beside the traditionally clothed Turkish woman with a happy child playing at her feet to understand that messages for and about women were often two sided and products of the anxieties of the time.

Edip’s memoirs, letters, and novels are just one piece of the hidden history of women in Turkey in the early years of the Republic. So too are the writings by Sabiha Sertel and Uliviye Mevalan from the feminist press that flourished during this time. Suppression and authoritarian rule in this case may have caused women to fight harder for their rights. It is important to note that women did earn the universal right to vote in 1934, years before some European countries, though it was more a result of wanting to appear modern to the West.

But what tells us the most is that this was a time of great change and great fear of change. Some men and women wanted to see women push forward into previously restricted arenas. Some wanted women as equal partners as several of the drawings suggest. In other cases, women’s attainment in the public sphere was cause for fear and consternation. What do all these sometimes diametrically opposite examples tell us? They highlight the fact that this is a
complicated story. They show that women were using the only vehicles they had, the press, to tell their stories.

The fact that there is so much pictorial information to sift through is particularly important. Female literacy was not universal. By writing novels, producing women’s magazines, and conveying ideas in pictures, feminist messages were accessible to more of the population. A woman may not have been able to read Mevlan’s editorial, “I am thinking,” but they could look at the cartoon of women soldiers in Kadınlar Dünyasi and understand that women were fighting for a new place in Turkish society and culture. Changing attitudes could be communicated in pictures. These messages could resonate with women who did not have the same privileged education as Edip, Mevlan, and Sertel.

Published in Süs shortly after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Figure 5.0 is a fitting capstone to this thesis. Arms akimbo, she looks defiantly at the man to her right. Like other drawings of women from the feminist press, the woman in this image wears a short black dress that reveals her uncovered leg. She is accessorized with earrings, makeup, and pointy black shoes. But in this case, her words are of more interest than her clothing. “Woman, what kind of outfit is that?” asks the man smoking a cigarette. “From now on, I am finished with your despotism,” she replies. “I declare a Republic in my life…you will not interfere in the way that I dress.” This woman is making more than just a fashion statement through her choice of clothing. She is asserting herself as autonomous, politically aware, and determined to live in a world where men and women are granted the same opportunities.

Turkish history at the end of the Ottoman Empire and the launch of the Turkish Republic is not as simple and smooth as accounts like the Nutuk tend to perpetuate. It was a time of imprisonment, torture, political manipulation, exile, and at times it almost seemed the undoing of
the revolution that had at one time offered so much hope. For nearly a century this history has been one sided. There was rarely a female voice in the mix, even though women figured prominently in the revolution itself and the aftermath of building a new, modern state. This thesis has been an attempt to uncover those voices. In looking at the women’s magazines, we see a struggle and at the same time a blossoming of the female spirit. The movement was small, it was relegated mainly to educated women, but it used the vehicle of the popular press to spread a strong message. There is no doubt that women like Edip, through writing and revolutionary actions, made an impact on the modern Turkish state. So, too, did the strong representations of women in the popular press.
Halide Edip’s bust was quickly restored after the dynamite attack in 1970. The defacement is a somber allegory of the plight of Turkish women during Edip’s time, which is brought forward to present day Turkey. Today, Sultanahmet Square is a visitor’s dream and a local’s nightmare. Constantly congested, it is bursting with tourist sites and trinket shops, displaying neon lights that advertise overpriced hookahs and Turkish delight. Young boys zealously attempt to sell colored tops to families waiting in line for attractions and tourists pose for pictures while wearing exaggerated bejeweled turbans and Ottoman costumes. Saturated with charade, the square seems to be more like the Disneyland version of Turkey than the real thing.

In Sultanahmet, one cannot walk more than a couple of feet before being assailed with literature about guided tours or Bosporus boat rides. However, should a curious tourist ask one of the many travel industry workers stationed around the square where to find Halide Edip’s monument today, chances are high that they will be unable to provide directions. Most are surprised to learn that the statue exists. However, it is a monument worth finding. Halide Edip is nestled next to a quiet fountain, just yards away from where she gave her impassioned 1919 speech that moved an audience of thousands to tears. When reminiscing about her most famous speech, Edip remarked, “I do not know what I said, but it was like holding the hand of a frightened child in the middle of a dreadful storm and telling it stories to keep its mind off the possible danger and disaster.” Indeed, Edip’s contributions helped transport her country out of the chaos of the early twentieth and into a new, more stable and democratic era. Her bespectacled bronze eyes will forever gaze towards the Hagia Sofia, a defining architectural symbol of change and perseverance in Turkey.

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