

“CANLI TARİHLER”:
A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE MEMOIRS OF YOUNG TURKS
(1908-1923)

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Thesis Abstract

Duygu Coşkuntuna, ““*Canlı Tarihler*”: A Discourse Analysis of the Memoirs of Young Turks (1908-1923)”

This thesis is an attempt at understanding the frame of mind that the members of the Committee of Union and Progress carried with them throughout the Revolution of 1908 and the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. It is largely based on their memoirs, although the memoirs of their contemporaries have also been used to arrive at a more comprehensive conclusion. The main argument of this thesis is that along with the rise of the “individual,” and nationalism throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; various related concepts such as the place of women in society or the meaning of the word “homeland” were re-evaluated and re-defined. The thesis pays special attention to the ideas that were articulated vigorously in these memoirs, such as *komitacılık* (brigandage), hope or the place of individual in history along with others that were crucial in defining an individual, such as occupation, political involvement or local network. After dwelling on the place of women as perceived by the memoirists, the thesis establishes that among other roles, women were seen as stand-ins for the homeland. An inquiry about the boundaries of this homeland comes next, followed by the emotional investment it reportedly caused. The last point is regarding the communities of the Ottoman Empire and the new lens of nationalism that the memoirists employed in order to view them. By looking at two different groups within the Ottoman society, the Arabs and the Armenians, the conclusion reached is that nationalism then was not a fixed point of identity, but a variety of contextual roles that were performed day to day.

Tez Özeti

Duygu Coşkuntuna, ““*Canlı Tarihler*”: A Discourse Analysis of the Memoirs of Young Turks (1908-1923)”

Bu tez, İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti üyelerinin 1908 Devrimi ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun dağılması sırasında beraberlerinde taşıdıkları düşünce yapısını anlamak üzerine bir teşebbüstür. Tez, büyük oranda üyelerin anılarına dayanmaktadır, bunun yanında daha kapsamlı bir sonuca varmak üzere çağdaşlarının anıları da kullanılmıştır. Bu tezin ana savı, “birey”in ve milliyetçiliğin geç on dokuzuncu- erken yirminci yüzyıl esnasındaki yükselişiyle beraber; kadının toplumdaki yeri ya da “vatan” sözcüğünün anlamı gibi bu yükselişe bağlı çeşitli kavramların yeniden değerlendirilmiş ve tanımlanmış olduğudur. Anılarda çokça bahsi geçen komitacılık, umut ya da bireyin tarihteki yeri gibi fikirler yanında, bireyin tanımlanmasında kritik yeri olan meslek, siyasi katılım ya da hemşehrilik bağları gibi fikirlere de önem verilmiştir. Anı yazarlarının algısına göre kadınlar üzerinde durulduktan sonra, başka roller yanında vatanın alameti rolünü de oynadıkları anlaşılmıştır. Daha sonra, bu vatan fikrinin sınırları ve sebep verdiği söylenen duygusal yatırım üzerine bir araştırma yapılmıştır. Son konu, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun toplumları ve anı yazarlarının bu toplumları görmek için kullandığı yeni milliyetçilik merceğidir. Osmanlı toplumu içindeki iki ayrı gruba, Araplara ve Ermenilere bakmak suretiyle; milliyetçiliğin o zaman için sabit bir kimlik noktası olmaktan ziyade, gün be gün işlenen bağlamsal rollerden mürekkep olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Sources.....	6
A Map to “A Foreign Country”	9
CHAPTER II: UNIONISM.....	14
Self-Assigned Characteristics	19
The Tradition of Nicknaming.....	22
Family Connections.....	28
Belonging to the School of Medicine (<i>Tıbbiye</i>)	32
Being a Soldier.....	37
Civilians <i>versus</i> Soldiers.....	41
The Role of the “Savior”.....	44
The Hope in <i>Komitacılık</i>	53
“ <i>Yok Kanun, Yap Kanun</i> ”	61
The “Silence” in the Committee of Union and Progress.....	65
Foundations of the Committee of Union and Progress.....	68
Liberties.....	81
<i>Devletin Bekası</i> (Continuation of the State).....	85
Perception of History.....	88
Marriage Politics.....	95
Conclusion.....	99

CHAPTER III: MOTHERS, SPIES, SIGNS: UNIONIST PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN.....	104
Mothers.....	107
Spies from “Our Side”.....	113
Gendering the “Other”.....	120
Spies from the “Other Side”.....	123
Gender(ed) Indicators of Westernization.....	126
Women as Signifiers of <i>Mefkûre</i>	133
Conclusion.....	140
CHAPTER IV: HOMELAND AND NATION.....	144
Boundaries of Homeland.....	152
Damsel in Distress.....	161
A New Ranking of Priorities.....	173
Making of a Nation.....	177
Religion as an Axis of Differentiation.....	185
Being an Ottoman.....	191
Being a Turk.....	198
A Case Study: Young Turks Meet the Arabs.....	211
Another Case Study: Young Turks <i>versus</i> Armenians.....	218
Conclusion.....	226
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION.....	229
APPENDIX A.....	240
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	244

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

*History is always the history of a society,
but, to be sure, of a society of individuals.*

-Norbert Elias, The Society of Individuals

I would love to start this introduction with an engaging and witty anecdote about how I came to be interested in the memoirs of the members of the Committee of Union and Progress. Unfortunately, such a story does not exist. All I can say is that amongst the variety of the historical texts I was exposed to, the personal ones always struck me as rare and beautiful, and my feelings have not changed even after having dabbling in a great number of them. I believe Edward Said's construction of himself in *Out of Place* beats his construction of the Orient in *Orientalism*; and Walter Benjamin had a stroke of genius when he decided to write about his own childhood in Berlin through a historical lens in *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*. I was delighted to discover that many of the people who had a stake in the political scene around the turn of the century Ottoman Empire decided to leave behind a mark in the form of a memoir. The genre, which is hard to come across for the earlier period of the Ottoman history, surfaced slowly and in synchronization with the modernity originating in the Ottoman Empire. I think it is still a stretch of imagination to think that the mighty Sultan Abdülhamid II, as well as the almost-nobody Abdülmecid Fehmi Bey would try their hand at the same sort of record keeping, but they all did. Now, let us take a look at how the genre was understood in the Western context, how

our corpus relates to that and what some points of caution might be.

Autobiography, as a word, is composed of three Greek words: *autos* to denote the “self,” *bio* as a prefix deriving from *bios*, “life,” and *graphia* as a suffix deriving from *graphein*, “to draw.”¹ Put very bluntly, autobiography is “self life drawing,” but there has been an ongoing debate about the particulars: what does and therefore does not fall within the lines of autobiography proper? When does an autobiographical account count as fiction? James Olney, for example, is quoted as stating that “(d)efinition of autobiography as a literary genre seems to me virtually impossible.”² Some other critics insist that in order to distinguish itself from fictitious accounts and to pass as a form of “truth-telling,” autobiography has to adhere to certain rules and limitations.³ One should also keep in mind that “truth-telling” is a subjective process and differs from scholarly fact-establishing. Smith and Watson understand it as “[...] so written that it cannot be read solely as either factual truth or simple facts. As an intersubjective mode, it lies outside a logical or juridical model of truth and falsehood [...]”⁴ I believe their conceptualization is useful for historical studies as well. While a strictly factual approach to this sort of corpus would yield meager results, the non-judgmental attitude could reveal a lot of information about the mindset of these individuals, which happens to be one of the pillars of this thesis.

Returning to the issue of definitions, it seems to be a tradition of the critics of

¹ MyEtymology.com. <http://www.myetymology.com/english/autobiography.html>

² James Olney. *Metaphors of Self: the Meaning of Autobiography*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 38, quoted in: Linda Anderson. *Autobiography*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 5.

³ Anderson, p. 5.

⁴ Sidonie Smith, Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: a Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 13.

autobiography to cite Philippe Lejeune's classic but non-exhaustive delineation of the genre: “We call autobiography the retrospective narrative in prose that someone makes of his own existence when he puts the principal account upon his life, especially upon the story of his own personality.”⁵ This definition poses problems for my discussion since it puts the emphasis on the *bildung* of a personality, whereas my sources put the emphasis on the events of their time that they have witnessed or taken an active role in while giving us only clues about their private affairs. Drawing on the research of İlhan Tekeli,⁶ I should state that my sources can be generally classified as “memoirs,” while only very few fall under the rubric of autobiography. His point of view is that the autobiography resembles a text of literature more than a text of history and shall be analyzed as such.⁷

I must beg to differ, as the degree of factuality and the conventions of historiographic narration have always been questioned and there is no consensus on what sets apart “good” history from “bad.” As stated before, the aim should not be the gathering of facts there, but rather a more open-ended string of questions about the contexts of the individuals. What I find compelling in his article is his classification of autobiographies as “lineage strategy” (*sülale stratejisi*), “making-the-self strategy” (*kendi-kendini yapma stratejisi*) and “defensive strategy” (*savunucu strateji*).⁸ The majority of my corpus falls within the third category for

⁵ Phillip Lejeune. *L'Autobiographie en France*, (Paris: Colin, 1971), p. 14 n. 42, p. 241, quoted in: Smith & Watson, p. 1.

⁶ İlhan Tekeli. “Bireyin Hayatı Nasıl Tarih Oluyor?” *Toplumsal Tarih*, No. 95, (November 2001), pp. 13-20.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 19.

obvious reasons, although there are very few cases of the second sort, most notably one belonging to Rıza Nur. Tekeli states succinctly that the last string of narrative is a narrative of a failure, mainly written to prove the “good intentions” (*iyi niyetler*) behind the failed scheme.⁹

The narratives of the members of the Committee of Union and Progress are illustrative of this case. Talat and Cemal Paşa’s narrative almost exclusively revolves around the possible accusations which would be thrown his way if he were to be caught and brought before justice. Mithat Şükrü Bleda, the former Secretary General of the Committee, named his memoirs “*İmparatorluğun Çöküşü*,” although he lived long enough to see the Republican times. His main emphasis is on the failure of the Ottoman Empire to survive and his own role in this process of ruin.

Here, I should also note Karl Weintraub's argument about the proper reading of an autobiography which supposes a reader who is informed about the motives and intentions of the autobiographer, therefore being able to cast him as a person in a particular context.¹⁰ This insistence on knowing the motivations and intentions may be pursued further to make the context of the author a historical and geographical one, also considering the various traditions of “self life writing” styles that occurred at various points in time. My ambition here is to capture a group of individuals as shaped by their circumstances and their perceptions of the surrounding environment, starting with themselves.

Within this context, I think it would be beneficial to discuss a newly rising

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁰ Anderson, p. 3.

phenomenon of the times, namely, nationalism. There is a corpus of work on this issue which tries to pin down a certain moment where the fate of the new Turkish nation was sealed. Most of these studies assume that there was indeed a nation to be awakened; it just took a certain person to do the job. A case in point would be François Georgeon's important work on Yusuf Akçura, which includes a sub-chapter called "*Akçura Türkiye'deki Milliyetçi Hareketin Başında (1908-1914)*" ("*Akçura Leading the Nationalist Movement in Turkey (1908-1914)*"). As François Georgeon admits freely, the official policy of that time was still Ottomanism and the link between the Committee of Union and Progress and Akçura is highly unlikely to be called significant.¹¹ If he were not part of the official discourse and were not really in connection with the alternative group, what could his impact have been? The chapter provides us with some clues in delineating his cultural activities in the way of Turkish nationalism, but we still cannot see what makes him *lead* a current in the politics of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, the impact of the newspaper he published, *Türk Yurdu*, is also not measurable anymore. I think this is an uncritical uptake of the ideas of the 1900's, where the authors claim to be the men for this task.

Some other studies suggest that the rise of nationalism can be traced through certain periodicals, the most prominent example being Masami Arai's *Jön Türk Dönemi Türk Milliyetçiliği* (Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era).¹² While the mapping of inter-textual relationships is a worthwhile effort on its own, the study falls short on relating the written word to drastic actions. Moreover, the reach and the

¹¹ François Georgeon. *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935)*, (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1986), p. 56.

¹² Masami Arai. *Jön Türk Dönemi Türk Milliyetçiliği*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008).

influence of these publications are indeterminate. Considering the low literacy rates of the Ottoman Empire, it is not very realistic to believe that they held any significance in making a nation. Even if I suppose for a moment that they did really have a big influence on the public, I must account for the missing middlemen who would perform these texts to a bewildered public. The understanding of national identity as a daily reproduced, role-based performance could yield more legible results about the waves of nationalism that have swept the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the century. These objections should be read as an indirect way of saying there was definitely more to this process. The diffusion of political life leading to an increased number of political actors is a subject of study that searches for its scholars.

Sources

Before summarizing briefly the contents of the thesis, I believe some notes on the methodological background as well as a few cautionary remarks are due. I started my research by compiling a list of memoirs which were roughly about the last years of the Ottoman Empire. The special issue of *Türk Dili* on the same subject was of great help, albeit a bit outdated now.¹³ To look at the post-1972 material, I used Murat Hanilçe's bibliography on the memoirs around the Second Constitutional Period.¹⁴ I also searched through the catalogue of Boğaziçi University to find more

¹³ *Türk Dili* (Anı Özel Sayısı), 246, (Mart 1972).

¹⁴ Murat Hanilçe. "II. Meşrutiyet Dönemine Dair Hatırat Bibliyografyası Denemesi," *Bilig*, 47, (Fall 2008), pp. 144-168.

sources. The initial list incorporated too many entries for the time I had, so I had to read selectively. Due to this constraint, I have not been able to peruse the memoirs which have only been published in Ottoman script. I could also not cover the magazines or the newspapers, which sometimes serialized memoirs. I would say my gambit was successful, since the majority of the memoirs had been published in the Latin alphabet and in book format; so that the shortened list amounted to more than hundred volumes by approximately hundred persons. My initial focus was the earlier period of the Committee of Union and Progress, culminating in the 1908 Revolution, so I tried to read those passages more carefully. If the *oeuvre* of a particular author had more than one volume, I read it until the declaration of the Republic; which means I have read four volumes by Celal Bayar and two by Rıza Nur.

I have also tried to use the transcribed editions instead of transliterated ones if these were available to me. If possible, I have tried to use the foreign language version of memoirs, because the presupposition of a foreign audience made the author reflect on the usually commonsensical aspects of daily life. In Halide Edib Hanım's memoirs, the differentiation was more complex since her memoirs in Turkish were already part of a debate about self-censoring.¹⁵ If I was able to note the existence of such a debate, I steered clear of the "suspicious" versions and used the more salient volumes,¹⁶ which was the case with the memoirs of Sultan Abdülhamid II. In one case, that of Halil Halid, the original text was in English, so I had no scruples.

¹⁵ Y. Hakan Erdem. *Tarih-Lenk: Kusursuz Yazarlar, Kağıttan Metinler*, (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2008), pp. 184-200.

¹⁶ As started by Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "Arşivden Bir Belge (32): Sultan II. Abdülhamid'in Hatıraları," in *Toplumsal Tarih*, 95, (November 2001), pp. 29-35.

My reading list included devoted members of the Committee of Union and Progress, such as Kazım Nami Duru, as well as disillusioned members such as Rıza Tevfik or the anti-Committean wing, among which I would count Sultan Abdülhamid II. By doing so, I aimed at gaining the most widespread spectrum of daily experiences about my points of interest. While some of the narratives were rich in details and opinions, others yielded virtually nothing. Still, I found more than I expected, especially when it came to women and gender-related issues, where I had expected total silence. My research questions also evolved in this process of reading. I started out with an intention to trace the “birth of nationalism” and the making of the individuals who gave birth to this new concept among the memoirs of the era. Whereas I had initially no intention to devote a separate chapter to the female portion of the question, I was compelled to do so due to my growing belief that women constituted the spine of the complexities around the new concepts of the *patrie*, the nation and the men. As I will note again in the related part, I lacked the female memoirists to make a full argument, so let it suffice to state that I traced the perceptions of women as recorded by men.

As my last cautionary note, I must state that I have tried to avoid the “sympathy trap,” which is a type of affection caused by too much involvement with the subjects of study. This study neither endorses nor denies the claims of the authors of the memoirs. It shall never be understood as an apologetic on the part of the Committee of Union and Progress. It is up to the reader to decide if I have succeeded or failed in this respect.

A Map to “A Foreign Country”

“The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.” Originally coined by Hartley and popularized by David Lowenthal, the dictum fits the essence of this thesis quite well. As to my approach to this “foreign country,” the line-up of my research questions is guided by a wish to start from the basic, tangible aspects and then to move towards more ambiguous, intangible features of the phenomenon at hand. As such, I start out with the professed characteristics of the individuals and then move on to other aspects of a social being. I try to point out how nicknames were used to indicate a reputation or a local network. Then, I briefly look at the perceptions of family and the “duty” one supposedly owed towards this social unit. My next stop in socialization is the schools and the occupations. The School of Medicine and its alumni stood out in this respect, since they were perceived as the harbingers of freedom in the Ottoman Empire and since they were characterized by specific traits. Then, I turn my attention to the soldiers, who were more of an occupational group than a group of alumni. The rising tenor of the militaristic tune and the association of the profession to the concept of “homeland” were duly noted. Then, I try to put the loyalty to being a soldier on the list of allegiances and moved on to discuss the apparent dichotomy between the soldiers and the civilians.

The rest of the chapter is devoted to explore the ideas that played an apparently important role in the making and maintenance of the Committee of Union and Progress. The ideal *komitacı* (read Committee member), it seems, was an educated person, who would illuminate the public about the newly acquired liberties and its

limits. He needed to be spontaneous enough to use the available tools to his advantage, including emotions such as hope or zeal. Another important feature of his would be his discretion on the Committee business. He would support the continuation of the Ottoman Empire, preferably with the widest amount of land it could hold on to. Most likely, he would advocate a strict break from the old way of governance to bring about the survival and flourishing of the state. He would be acutely aware of his position in history, and hope he would be counted as one of the victors of his era. His belief could also serve as the reason why he chose to pen his memoirs. The chapter also includes the elaborations of the memoirists on the Committee of Union and Progress itself. My last point has to do with the very deliberate matchmaking process within the circle and how it was interpreted, meant to be an introduction to the upcoming discussion of women in the imaginations of members.

My second chapter is devoted to women as they appeared through the often-confusing lens of the memoirists. I try to establish how the narratives around them were constructed to reveal the roles in the imaginations of the members. First, I tackle the issue of how the mothers figured in anecdotes and their relationship to the more abstract concepts of homeland and nation. Then, I move on to the women who were useful to the aims of the Unionists because of their “informative” capacities. The depictions of women from the other side are also of interest to me, whether they be presented as European or Arab women, or simply as spies.

My next point is to ask how women were seen as signs of Westernization and how the conflicting aspects of the modern life were fought over women. Moreover, there was at least one instance where the woman was imagined as standing in direct

contact with the idea of the homeland. The protection of the homeland was also delegated to virile men, who preferably acted as brave soldiers. On the ideal plane, the woman was standing on a pedestal, but on the practical level, cowardice or “turning” from a man into a woman was the ultimate insult. My conclusion was that the average Unionist would always be on his guard when it came to women who were not his own mother. He would advocate an egalitarian marriage, but would refrain from trusting his wife with what he saw as too important Committee business. Also, his perception of the liberties accorded to women would be one of circumspection and caution. Any doubt about his manliness or military prowess would result in big problems.

The third chapter of this thesis is about the perceptions of the homeland and the nation. I start out with a historical background on the concept of *vatan* and its various utilizations. Then, I try to see how the boundaries to this land mass came to be imagined, especially with a certain conditioning from the administrative center in the form of maps. I also briefly touch upon the center-periphery tension in the making of this homeland. Then, I move on to the emotional significance attached to this mass of land by the memoirists. One of these emotions is love, which manifested itself in day-to-day workings of life such as singing or engaging in intellectual activities. This love was important, since it was seen as a possible way to hold the crumbling Ottoman Empire together.

Closely linked to that was a sense of duty which called for immediate action. As with the concept in the first chapter, I attempt to place the ranking of this devotion within other articles of loyalty and concluded the new concept found enough resonance within the group as to be seen as a legitimate reason for a variety of

actions which would not be as easily explained otherwise. Then, I try to look at the population of the Ottoman Empire, which was, in the eyes of the memoirists, in a period of redefinition. The system of nations, which accorded a self-governing structure for different religious groups, was seen as infeasible. The question of how to redefine a nation was left ambiguous by the memoirists; although they seemed to agree that there were a number of nations within the Ottoman Empire which did not necessarily get along very well.

Moreover, the secular notion of defining a nation did not fit the bill perfectly, since religion was still seen as an important boundary between various groups; the situation made the direct translation of Western understandings of nation and sovereignty impractical. Thus, I find it meaningful to take religion as an axis of differentiation, which also gave way to a possible unification with co-religionists. My next point is the brief yet important hope of Ottomanism and the meanings attached to being an Ottoman. Then, I look at the deliberations on being a Turk, often arising as a consequence of juxtaposition to another group of people who claim to belong to another nation than the Turkish one. The shift from a more embracing idea of Ottoman lands and peoples from an exclusive Turkish nationalism was my specific interest in the subject. Apparently, belonging to the Turkish nation could be “proven” by various means and this process leading to a proof could be executed on people as well as places, objects and intangible entities such as “spirit.” Two rather non-average memoirists recognize this nation-making process as a violent and even disturbing event.

My last two points are an extension of the naming of being a nation through juxtaposition, where I try to delineate the roles the memoirists saw fit for themselves

when they came face to face with distinctly other ethnic or national groups. The first example is a group who happened to be co-religionists with the memoirists, the Arabs. After thinking about ethnography, soldiering and administering, I turn my attention to the Armenians, who, role-wise, put the memoirists in a bind, in that they were perceived to be both possible collaborators and betrayers around 1908. The latter view gained more currency with time and came to be a common discourse. My conclusive remarks are, among other things, an attempt to place this study within the existing literature on the “birth” of the individual as well as nationalism.

CHAPTER II

UNIONISM

First, a word on methodology: throughout this work, I shall start with the tangible and move to the more elusive; if applicable, I will go from individual aspects to the more social ones. This having been said, we shall start the first chapter with the down-to-earth characteristics of the people we are examining. Since self-identification says a great lot in understanding a mindset, I shall start with the odd remarks the members make about themselves. Then I shall turn my attention to the local networks, family relations and schools. Then, the scene will be set for a look at the Unionist mindset. The history of the group has been scrutinized enough by various others, so instead of repeating what has already been said and researched, I shall merely point out various concepts such as “*hamiyet*,” freedom or marriage politics.

The backdrop on which I build my argument is supplied by Şerif Mardin. His argument concerning the mindset of the post-*Tanzimat* era is that there appeared a “new sense of honor” (*yeni bir onur anlayışı*).¹⁷ He explains the pre-*Tanzimat* mechanizations of bureaucracy and other functions as something depending on a tightly knit, legacy-based (*patrimonyal*) social network, where personal recommendations and notions of predecessor-successor played a very important role.¹⁸ According to him, *Tanzimat* brought an understanding where the law stood

¹⁷ Şerif Mardin. *Türkiye’de Toplum ve Siyaset: Makaleler I*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1990), p. 183.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

guard over human rights, which gave way to a feeling of dignity, often articulated as liberty (*hürriyet*) in daily life.¹⁹ His particular example of change would be the “new” military schooling system under Sultan Abdülhamid II, which flourished under Colmar von der Goltz. The students came from lower income families and could rise within the army, which, according to Mardin, moved them away from being a “*uyruk*” (subject) to being a “*yurttaş*” (citizen).²⁰

Although I disagree with the terminology he uses, I think his main point, with which I agree, is understated in that article. He points to a change of mentality, where the *proteges* of a certain minor *kapu* had the opportunity to imagine themselves as individuals whose rights are, at least in principle, protected by the law that theoretically stood above even the sultan himself. This was certainly a novel shift in the mindset and did not happen instantly with the declaration of *Tanzimat*, or with the Revolution of 1908. The entirety of my study is devoted to understanding this process of becoming individualized while still remaining within a certain community. As Mardin also points out,²¹ the most visible manifestation of this individualization is the founding of the Committee of Union and Progress, which is my main focus here. On a grander scale, this process is connected to the coming of modernity, as Norbert Elias points out. For a vastly different context, he wrote:

Advances of individualization, as in the Renaissance, for example, are not the consequence of a sudden mutation within individual people or of the chance conception of a specially high number of gifted people; they are social events,

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 184.

²⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 190.

consequences of a breaking up of old groupings or a change in the social position of the artist-craftsman, for example. In short, the consequences of a specific restructuring of human relationships.²²

As for our context, the change had not sprung from artist-craftsmen but from a number of educated people, the majority of whom belonged to the alumni of military schools. I have tried to highlight the aspects of belonging to one of these schools as well as the more or less militarized mindset which found a certain resonance in the civilian wing of the Committee of Union and Progress as well.

After putting the memoirists in their context of becoming modern, it is also just as important to see them in their political context, which is closely tied to the Committee of Union and Progress. Although their professed allegiance with the group changed over time or was non-existent to start with, the Committee is a frame of reference one cannot avoid in studying the social and political currents of the era. An important input concerning the mindset of the Unionists comes from Tarık Zafer Tunaya; who generally underlines the fragmentary nature of the whole enterprise. For him, the Young Turk movement was never a full-fledged political party; it was an event of heterogeneity and thus had no common program. Its principle aim was to demolish the regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II.²³ The ways leading to this demolition, however, varied from person to person. As Tunaya very aptly puts: “[...] the mischievous children of the Empire, who were differentiated enough to produce

²² Norbert Elias. *The Society of Individuals*, (New York, London: Continuum, 2001), pp. 23-24.

²³ Tarık Tunaya. *Türkiye'nin Siyasi Gelişme Seyri İçinde İkinci "Jön Türk" Hareketinin Fikri Esasları*, (İstanbul: İsmail Akgün Matbaası, 1956), p. 16.

programs equaling their own number, were one when it came to destruction.”²⁴ His third point concerning the Young Turks would be their “hesitancy and conservatism” (*tereddüt ve muhafazakârlık*); old ideas such as Ottomanism or Islamism had to be fitted to new circumstances.²⁵ Deliberating on his points would attest to the fluid quality of the times: while the old structure, as epitomized by the Hamidian regime was perceived as disintegrating drastically, there was no real consensus on what was to replace it. The wish to thrust forward was met equally with the anxiety about the future and the articulation of this conflicted situation was thus as entangled as the process itself.

Şükrü Hanioglu’s article on the Unionist state of mind is one which we have to address. There, he delineates two closely situated breaking points: one is the 1905 re-organization of the Committee of Union and Progress and the second is the Constitutional Revolution of 1908.²⁶ Hanioglu’s take presents us with a group of people who believed in authoritarianism and a strong society that made or broke the individual.²⁷ To paraphrase an old saying,²⁸ the *ocak* existed for the state, and not vice versa. Committee of Union and Progress monopolized the mission of making the demands of the state known to individuals, so that loyalty to the committee

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 17.

“[...] sayılarınca program yapmakta bu derece farklılaşmış olan İmparatorluğun yaramaz çocukları yıkmakta tek idiler.”

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁶ Şükrü Hanioglu. “İttihatçılık,” in: *Dönemler ve Zihniyetler*, edited by Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), p. 249.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 250.

²⁸ *Ocak devlet içindir.* (The [Janissary] organization exists for the state.)

eventually turned into an “institutional cult.”²⁹ The cult included the ideal of a cause and demanded altruism from its members to bring this about. The status quo had to be defended moderately; the “ideology” supporting this cause was to save the Ottoman Empire.³⁰ The necessary actions leading to this end made the group more militarized,³¹ and more xenophobic in the guise of anti-imperialism.³² The constitutional regime was, for one, a mere tool for the survival of the state; it could be done away with. The Committee was supposedly deriving its legitimacy from the people, yet the same people could be understood as “an obstacle in the way of the success of the cause.”³³ Their Machiavellian ways are dubbed by Hanioglu as “pragmatism.”³⁴ He is also of the opinion that their characteristics, as outlined by him, were different than their professed aims in 1908, which included the equality and cooperation of the elements of the Ottoman Empire.³⁵

On the other hand, I think Hanioglu’s article glosses over some very important points too easily. First of all, the “cult of the committee” was not as strict as he makes it out to be; otherwise we have no explanation of the civil versus military, Selanik versus Manastir, *Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa* versus non-*Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa* or, put quite bluntly, Enver versus Cemal fissures within the Committee of Union and

²⁹ Hanioglu, p. 250.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 252.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 255.

³² *ibid.*, p. 256.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 253.

“[...] da’vanın başarısı önünde bir engel olarak görülebiliyordu.”

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 254.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 257.

Progress. If we follow Hanioglu closely, we would assume that the memoirs of the members of the Committee would be somewhat uniform in showing the traces of a subdued and silenced individual, which is not the case. Alone the varieties in literary language, topics or commentary would suggest otherwise. Hanioglu's points about militarization, xenophobia and the two-layered way of handling problems are well-thought, but I think it more fruitful to see the process that brought about these issues. I think Tunaya is more apt in describing the group as having as diverse and individualized agendas as the characters of its members. Both of the authors draw our attentions to an important point, namely the love of the status quo and the faux-revolutionary zeal springing from it.

Here, I shall argue that these very individual differences as well as the other mentioned fissures contributed greatly to their fragmentary and pragmatist policies. At the end of the day, their policies were the results of negotiations which were performed by various actors and involved a vast array of different concerns.

Self-Assigned Characteristics

Contrary to initial hypotheses, most of the memoirs in question are not narrated as a *Bildungsroman*. The childhood, if it figures at all, plays a very minor role in these stories. What tend to be emphasized, however, are usually the political events of the era and the role that the memoirists played therein. Therefore, an elaboration of one's character and the process of making that individual are truly rare. As a result, the glimpses we get about their own perception of their situation as an individual within a certain social context are few in number and not very explanatory. Rıza Tevfik,

renowned as “the *philosophe*,” drops some hints about his perceptions of his own personality. One of the things that make him stand out from the crowd would be, for example, his different sense of fashion.³⁶ He says at various occasions that he has done time in prison and is nevertheless an “optimist”:

And really, I would tell that [...] the experimental knowledge I had gathered about social life sprang from neighborhood cafes, hotels, sidewalks, and above all, from prison corners rather than books of philosophy. [...] Apart from that, I have a great inner quality that ensures my balance of ideas and consciousness against every catastrophe: I consider every event from an angle that pleases me. Thus, I am an “optimist” person.³⁷

According to him, it is one of his characteristics that he’s very personable and he loves to have company,³⁸ and he has a versatile personality so that he could get along with people of different backgrounds (the notorious *tulumbacı*s of İstanbul included).³⁹ Surprisingly, Eşref Kuşçubaşı seems to have a similar opinion of himself. In his memoirs, he defines himself as an “[...] ostrich. I am a bird, but look like a camel too.” According to him, he was a soldier in war and a farmer in peace.⁴⁰ Versatility was in vogue, since it denoted that one was a man of the world, and not somebody in an ivory tower. An educated man such as Rıza Tevfik used it as an ability to belong to different groups, a man of *Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa* used it in a more

³⁶ Rıza Tevfik. *Biraz da Ben Konuşayım*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), p. 288.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 280.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 286.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 293.

⁴⁰ Eşref Kuşçubaşı. *Hayber’de Türk Cengi*, (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1997), p. 186. “*Devekuşu [...] Kuşum fakat deveye de benzerim.*” The pun, which is only apparent in Turkish, was obviously intended.

“professional” manner.

Mizancı Murad Bey states succinctly that seen from a philosophical point of view he was socialist evolutionist, but from a political perspective authoritarian, liberal and conservative.⁴¹ He is one of the very few who tried to explain their politics and philosophy from within a Western framework of thought. Here, we must also note that Rıza Tevfik chose the word “optimist” over the more common “*nikbin*,” signaling that at least a part of his vocabulary about this self-analysis essentially belonged to Western sources. One must also note here that even though the signifiers of certain ideas were taken from a Western context, the framework which encompassed these concepts was largely ignored, thus allowing us to speculate about a translation rather than a derivation of cultural concepts. Through his education and his own efforts, Rıza Tevfik could claim the word as his own.

Most of the members were probably less familiar with such ideas than Mizancı Murad Bey, since their education did not supply them with similar points of reference. Kazım Nami Duru draws our attention to the “autodidact” (“*otodidakt (kendi kendini yetiştiren)iz.*”) qualities of the men of the era, where the formal schooling was understood as a mere gateway to more knowledge.⁴² Knowledge was, however, very valuable, because it served to exalt different aims. Rıza Nur Bey, an extraordinary member who later grew disillusioned with the Committee of Union and Progress, claims that he had a “philosophic nature” (*filozof yaradılışlı*) along

⁴¹ Mizancı Mehmed Murad. *Meskenet Mazeret Teşkil Eder mi?* (İstanbul: Şehir Yayınları, 2005), p. 109. “*Sosyalist evölistyonist, otoriter serbest muhafazakar [...]*”

⁴² Kazım Nami Duru. *“İttihat ve Terakki” Hatıralarım*, (İstanbul: Sucuoğlu Matbaası, 1957), p. 12.

with a wish to serve the Turk and the science (note that he is a *Tıbbiyeli*).⁴³ To sum up, the designation of being a *philosophe* or a man of the world was articulated with a need to make these qualities serve a sublime purpose. The dominant pragmatic note here could also be read as a certain wish to stabilize what was seen as a very unpredictable environment. The memoirists had few tools to do so, and did not agree on the employment of these, but were nevertheless determined to act.

The Tradition of Nicknaming

Being a recognized member of a community may mean that one has to deal with new features of communal life, one of which is the possession of a nickname. The examples here are of course more local, since locality predates the involvement in the political life. What we aim to see here is what in an industrial society would be called the vestiges of the pre-modern order, where the local community was *the* community of one's lifetime. On the other hand, we must be aware that the place we are concerned with is not Europe *per se*; it is the Ottoman Empire, whose version of modernity happened differently. Following Şerif Mardin's cue, my main argument is that despite the fact that its influence on the individual had waned, the locality of the person still remained an important feature of one's life.

The most "normal" of the nicknames were birthplaces that were used as a kind of faux-surname at the military schools. Resneli Niyazi would be a good example, along with Mersinli Cemal (who was named as such to avoid confusing with the "elder" Cemal). As such, it would also be the name that one's classmates and later

⁴³ Rıza Nur. *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, (İstanbul: Altındağ Yayınevi, 1967), Vol. 1, p. 51.

colleagues would call one by. Niyazi Beys may be many in Ottoman history, but there is indeed only one Resneli Niyazi Bey. In addition to that, it would help one build neighborhoods and clusters of acquaintances in one's mind, making it easier to navigate social relationships. If you knew a Yenibahçeli Şükrü Bey and a Yenibahçeli Nail Bey, you would conclude that they would at least know each other and behave accordingly.

From the memoirs, we learn that some nicknames reflected a certain reputation, especially among the brigands such as Apostol Petkov (*Vardar Güneşi*, the Sun of Vardar) or Dede Yuvan (*Tikoşlu eski kurt*, the old wolf of Tikoş).⁴⁴ There were also more frightening ones, such as *Kopuk Sait* (Sait the Vagabond) and *Kara Cehennem* (Dark Hell).⁴⁵ Please note that the author of the laudatory names, Tahsin Uzer, was sent to Macedonia to subdue these brigands. Of course, the bigger the reputation of the brigand, the bigger the reputation of the governor who manages to control him, thus the careful noting of the adjectives of the brigands. On a different note, the locality as it appears here also shows us that it was still a component in denoting persons.

Personal qualities of course contributed to some imaginative nicknames. Küçük Said Paşa, for example, was called Şapur Çelebi because Şinasi believed he resembled Şah Şapur, the name seems to have stuck.⁴⁶ Rıza Nur's memoirs include a variety of nicknames which were in circulation among the students of the Medical

⁴⁴ Tahsin Uzer. *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi ve Son Osmanlı Yönetimi*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1987), p. 184.

⁴⁵ Fuat Balkan. *İlk Türk Komitacısı Fuat Balkan'ın Hatıraları*, (İstanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1998), p. 146.

⁴⁶ Rıza Tevfik, p. 157.

School of the time. There were *Kabağöt* (Lazy) İbrahim,⁴⁷ *Kofturkof*,⁴⁸ *Kalafatçı*,⁴⁹ *Eşeklerin Allahı* (God of Asses) Reşit⁵⁰ and *Diyojen Rıza* as Rıza Nur himself.⁵¹

There seems to be a tradition of naming particularly brooding classmates after a philosopher, Ethem Ruhi Bey recalls one Volter İzmirli İbrahim Ethem.⁵² This tradition also ties in to the down-to-earthliness of the *Tıbbiye* alumni as well as their familiarity with the French culture. There were real French men around them as well, Lütfü Simavi Bey talks about a Şatonöf Nuri Bey, who used to be a Frenchmen and was called Monsieur Chateauneuf.⁵³ Again, his nickname would tie him immediately to his French roots and he would be understood as part of that circle. Another example of the French influence would be the fact that İbrahim Temo used to be called “Piyer Lermi” amongst his friends: “[...] they gave me the nickname of “Pierre Lermi [sic]” with the designation of revolutionary and they [his fellow students] believed I could accomplish any kind of job.”⁵⁴ Mete K. Kaynar’s take on

⁴⁷ Rıza Nur, p. 106.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 106. Not a real word, could be read as a faux-Russified way of saying empty (i.e looks strong but is not) Turk.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 106. Probably used as a double-entendre. Can mean both somebody who caulks ships and a man’s private parts, see: Hulki Aktunç. *Büyük Argo Sözlüğü (Tanıklarıyla)*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2010), p. 164.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 117. He also gives us a detailed account of how he gave Reşit this nickname.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 106.

⁵² *Canlı Tarihler*; (İstanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1947), Vol. 6, Ethem Ruhi, p. 8. I should note that “Volter” is indeed Voltaire, the famous philosopher.

⁵³ Lütfü Simavi. *Osmanlı Sarayı’nın Son Günleri*, (İstanbul: Hürriyet Yayınları, [197-?]), p. 18.

⁵⁴ İbrahim Temo. *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyetinin Teşekkülü ve Hıdematı Vataniye ve Inkılâbı Millîye Dair Hatıratım*, (Mecidiye: n.p., 1939), p. 23.
“[...] bana da ihtilâlcî sıfatile “Pierre Lermi”[sic] lâkabını vermişlerdi ve her türlü işi başarabileceğime inanırlardı.”

the issue is that the nickname reflected a choice for the taking up of French or Christian heroes as role models, since Pierre L'Hermit was a religious dignitary who was involved in the Crusades, thus unable to be cast as a hero from a Muslim point of view.⁵⁵ Kaynar takes this as a case of emulating knowledge without examining it, a cultural copy-and-paste.⁵⁶

I beg to differ; this was not a mindless wish to emulate a foreign culture. We must see that there was a little sample group when it came to Muslim heroes, a majority of who have been popularized only after the declaration of the Turkish Republic. The remaining others must have paled in comparison to the strong willed priest from a humble background. Moreover, I think we must also consider the fact that the postal conversations between the Young Turks were always in danger of being interrupted by the state, so the choice of nicknames could have tended towards what the members thought would go unnoticed by the not-very-educated spy staff of the Yıldız Palace.

Another explanation could be that these people thought of themselves as making history; if their letters were published one day in the future, they perhaps thought, it would be more notable to have chosen names that would simultaneously appeal to a Western and non-Western audience. This historical figure is mentioned by Ahmet Bedevi Kuran as well, when he refers to the ruthless invasions of Europe to get hold

⁵⁵ Mete K. Kaynar. "İbrahim Temo ve Resneli Niyazi'nin Anıları Üzerinde İttihatçılar ve Jön Türkler Üzerine Düşünceler," in: *Resmi Tarih Tartışmaları 3: İttihatçılıktan Kemalizme*, edited by Fikret Başkaya and Sait Çetinoğlu (Ankara: Türkiye ve Ortadoğu Forumu Vakfı Özgür Üniversite, 2007), p. 178.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 179.

of the Ottoman lands as “in the style of Pierre Lermite” (“*Piyer Lermite*” *usulü*).⁵⁷ There is also a tendency towards “japonaise” nicknames. Ali Müfit Yeğena notes a Japon Mazhar, who was the *mektupçu* of Kosova.⁵⁸ Hüsamettin Ertürk notes a Mülazımıevvel Japon Rıza Bey.⁵⁹ Probably, these people came from a Tatar background, giving them the slanted eyes, popularized with the Japanese look. The most intriguing example seems to come from İbrahim Temo, whose memoirs include a letter which gave the address of the sender as “Monsieur Micado, Poste français restante, Mersin.”⁶⁰ If we take the taking of a *nom-de-plume* as an attempt of veiling the individual behind it, going with foreign names seems to have been a meaningful choice. In this respect, the French and the Japanese influences are undeniable and the mobility of the members of the Committee of Union and Progress means that they are carrying these ideas around with them, even as far as Mersin.

Some members were known by their perceived ethnic origins. There were *Çerkes* (Circassian) Mehmed Reşid,⁶¹ *Pomak* Adem Ağa⁶² and *Gürcü* (Georgian) Hasan Efendi.⁶³ Such names mattered because it denoted a web of possible connections. İbrahim Temo recalls that when he first came to İstanbul, he connected with the

⁵⁷ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde İnkılap Hareketleri*, (İstanbul: Çeltüt Matbaası, 1959), p. 895.

⁵⁸ Ali Münif [Yeğenağa]. *Ali Münif Bey'in Hatıraları*, (İstanbul: İsis, 1996), p. 35.

⁵⁹ Hüsamettin Ertürk / Samih Nafiz Tansu. *İki Devrin Perde Arkası*, (İstanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, 1957), p. 35.

⁶⁰ Temo, p. 76. It was commonsense to use foreign post offices' “poste restante” services to avoid the interruption of the mail by Yıldız Palace officers.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 15.

⁶² Fuat Balkan, p. 129.

⁶³ Arif Cemil. *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*, (İstanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1997), p. 170.

Albanian network there, which provided for him.⁶⁴ It is to these networks of “*hemşehri*”s that I now turn my attention to.

One of the uses of any network would be the help one can harness from it. For example, İbrahim Temo remarks that knowing the useful people (in his case, İşkodralı Tahir Paşa and Tiranlı Gani Paşa, who are parts of the Albanian network) saved his neck one time.⁶⁵ Also, when the tides turned in Romania, he was helped by Nikola Naçu, a “*hemşehri* (fellow townsman) of Görice.”⁶⁶ Enver Bey’s use of the networks is worth noting, since these groups are the ones which supported him and his men as he took to the mountains.⁶⁷ From his narrative, we also get a glance of the power yielded by the word-of-mouth. The word about the Revolution of 1908 was spread from village to village and the makers of the revolution preferred to address their audience on a village / small town basis. Rıza Nur was once saved by a “spy” (*hafiyeye*), because both he and the spy hailed from the same town, Sinop.⁶⁸ Similarly, Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu once saved one of his brothers from the hands of a “*jurnalci*” with the help of his family and local network.⁶⁹ Halil Paşa reports that if a member of the group was arrested, the rest would try to warn the family so that they

⁶⁴ Temo, p. 9.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 61.

⁶⁷ Enver Paşa. *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları. 1881-1908*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), p. 83.

⁶⁸ Rıza Nur, p. 98.

⁶⁹ Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu. *Hariciye Hizmetinde 30 Sene, 1892-1922: Mutlakîyet, Meşrutîyet ve Millî Mücadele Yıllarında Şahidi veya Amili Olduğum Hâdiselere Ait Vesikalar*, (İstanbul: Maarif Basımevi, 1949-1955), pp. 63-68.

could get rid of the “dangerous materials” in time.⁷⁰ In summary, nicknames reflected the educational and cultural choices of the individuals in a community. The situation within a local network was also denoted by them, and such connections were of importance for the whole society.

Family Connections

The Ottoman family has always been an interesting topic of research,⁷¹ but here we shall content ourselves with the perceptions of family as articulated by the members. Belonging to a specific local group and falling back on it in times of trouble was a solid scheme which would only be complete if one adds the family as another factor in these relationships. In the face of the fast changing times, the family is presented both as a rock to fall back on and as yet another aspect of life tarnished by brutality.

First and foremost, the family is presented as a source of consolation and moral support. An example is provided by Enver Bey, who declares that having his family’s approval of his actions consoled him and made him feel more confident.⁷² His mother even conveyed to him that he should not return before finishing the job.⁷³ According to Tahsin Uzer, the main reason for his success was the prayers of his

⁷⁰ Halil Paşa. *Bitmeyen Savaş: Anılarım ve Belgelerle*, (İstanbul: 7 Gün Yayınları, 1972), pp. 16-17.

⁷¹ See, for example, Alan Duben and Cem Behar. *İstanbul Haneleri*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1998).

⁷² Enver Paşa, p. 74.

⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 87.

mother.⁷⁴ When Sultan Abdülhamid II asked Ali Fuat (Türkgeldi) about his family, he proudly replied : “[...] from the line of Seyyid Mehmed Tefvik Efendi, who was Minister of Gunpowder Mill in the time of Sultan Selim III [...]”⁷⁵ He may never be more exalted than the Sultan himself, but this lineage was quoted to impress him nevertheless. İbrahim Arvas uses his noble lineage as a guarantor of truth; since he would not endanger his good name with deviating from the truth, he wrote nothing but the truth, he claims.⁷⁶

For some, it was a way of connecting to a broader network. Kazım Karabekir’s elder brother, Hamdi,⁷⁷ was the one among them who had originally enrolled in the Committee of Union and Progress. This is how Kazım, as a young man, found out about the movement in the first place.⁷⁸ Ahmet Cevat Emre named his son Cahit after the journalist defender of the Committee, Hüseyin Cahit, who had just won a debate against the opposing fraction, Ali Kemal.⁷⁹ As such, the family was also a means of politicization and participating in broader networks.

While the “practical” aspects of family were loved and cherished, the idyllic life of a family man did not rank high on the priorities’ list of the members of the

⁷⁴ Uzer, p. 56.

⁷⁵ Ali Fuat Türkgeldi. *Görüp İştiklerim*. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1949), p. 60. “[...] Selim-i Sâlis asrı ricalinden Baruthâneler nâzırı Seyyid Mehmed Tefvik Efendi [...]”

⁷⁶ İbrahim Arvas. *Tarihi Hakikatler: (İbrahim Arvas'ın Hatıratı)*, (Ankara: Yargıçoğlu Matbaası, 1964), p. 4.

⁷⁷ Kazım Karabekir. *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti Neden Kuruldu? Nasıl Kuruldu? Nasıl İdare Olundu?* (İstanbul: n.p., 1982), p. 44.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 46. It is also worth noting that Karabekir talks about the “secrets” his brother had told him. As any anti-government group of the era would do, the Unionists valued their code of secrecy.

⁷⁹ Ahmet Cevat Emre. *İki Neslin Tarihi: Mustafa Kemal Neler Yaptı*, (İstanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, 1960), p. 78.

Committee of Union and Progress, exemplifying the tension between the wish for a new order and the urge to retain the status quo. For example, a family could be perceived as a hindrance on the way to revolution. As Enver Bey states: “The more I got away from the family, I felt that I got closer to the aim [...]”⁸⁰ Ahmet Bedevi Kuran is also of the opinion that a man of ideals should take into account a lot of bad situations such as going to jail, and that his family should not be a drawback in this respect.⁸¹ We, the audience, feel that the “sublime aims” were sublime precisely because they took precedence over other important foci of care, such as the family.

The *da'va*, the new order that was anticipated so vigorously, would be presented as being more important than the old notion of family. In at least one narrative, the family appears only when the narrator decides to take part in the Revolution and leaves them behind.⁸² Talat Bey, for one, states that in a moment of danger he did not think of himself, his friends or his family, he only thought of the homeland.⁸³ Resneli Niyazi puts his family problems after the problems of the homeland: “Their [his sister and nieces] memory and future was tearing my heart apart. My spirit, which was filled with the power of attempting great things, was unable to deal with such small problems.”⁸⁴ The sentiment seems to have been a proof of good intentions, of

⁸⁰ Enver Paşa, p. 67.

“Ailemden uzaklaştıkça maksada yaklaşmakta olduğumu hissediyor, [...]”

⁸¹ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran, p. 895.

⁸² Resneli Niyazi. *Hürriyet Kahramanı Resneli Niyazi Hatıratı: Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, (İstanbul: Örgün Yayınevi, 2003), p. 205.

⁸³ Talat Paşa. *Talât Paşa'nın Hatıraları*, (İstanbul: Güven Yayınevi, 1946), p. 149.

⁸⁴ Resneli Niyazi, p. 210.

“Onların [kızkardeşi, kızkardeşinin beş çocuğu] hayali ve istikbali kalbimi parçalıyordu. Büyük bir davaya teşebbüs etmenin kuvvetiyle dolu olan maneviyatım böyle küçük problemlerle uğraşmaz hâle gelmişti.”

binding people together. For example, Resneli Niyazi Bey met once a *kaymakam* who stated that he loved his homeland more than he did his own mother. Niyazi Bey was thrilled to have made the acquaintance of this similar-minded public servant.⁸⁵ I believe the rhetorical proof for the replacement of the old sublime, family, by the new sublime, the new order, comes from Enver Bey's memoirs. Enver Bey agreed to the murder of his brother-in-law, Nazım Paşa, because he thought Nazım would harm the cause of the Unionists.⁸⁶ Resneli Niyazi Bey confirms the informed execution of Nazım.⁸⁷ One cannot but feel a vague echo of Namık Kemal's sentiments as he was writing "*Vatan yahud Silistre*"⁸⁸ in the family narratives of the members.

The family may also appear as a victim of the times. Many family members of the Unionists suffered from the harsh policies of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Resneli Niyazi Bey, for one, had such family members: his brother, who was a student at the Medical School, was put under pressure, so he had to defect from the school and join Niyazi Bey. A similar intimidating policy was exercised upon Niyazi Bey's nephew, who had to leave *Mülkiye* because of it.⁸⁹

The beloved grandmother of Ahmet İhsan Tokgöz lost her mind when she found out that her grandson was taken for questioning. When he came home, his

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 323.

⁸⁶ Enver Paşa, p. 51.

⁸⁷ Resneli Niyazi, p. 167.

⁸⁸ Namık Kemal. *Vatan yahud Silistre*, (n.p: n.p, 1872). From Milli Kütüphane Catalog <http://eyayinlar.mkutup.gov.tr/cgi-bin/WebObjects/EHT.woa/2/wo/nVyhL8mo9uymdYW3UdecUw/2.3#>

⁸⁹ Resneli Niyazi, pp. 335-336.

grandmother was sitting on the porch. Although she looked at him, she did not recognize him and told him that she was waiting for İhsan to come home.⁹⁰ Seen from this angle, the family is presented as another facet of life ruined by the modern practices such as a formal police questioning. The elderly grandmother is, for Tokgöz, not cut out for this sort of experience, so she cannot respond accordingly.

The mirror image of this oppressed figure is also supplied by the memoirists whereby the narrator takes up the role of the righteous victor. The family could also be employed as the justification of violence. Hüsametdin Ertürk states that in order to avenge his daughter, who died because of a bad cold she got while the family was fleeing from the Bulgarian brigands, he killed Bulgarians he met later on.⁹¹ In the minds of the Unionists, sacrifice occupied an important position. Real or imagined, the discourses on the family as a hindrance and family as a victim for a bigger cause show us only their rhetorical evaluation of the position of homeland. The discourse that made the love for the homeland surpass the love for the family became relevant only around that time.

Belonging to the School of Medicine (*Tıbbiye*)

After very briefly looking at the environs that surrounded the members, another look at their schools and occupations is now due. In one of his articles, Şerif Mardin attributes the coming of the new value system directly to the newly established high

⁹⁰ Ahmet İhsan. *Matbuat Hatıralarım*. (İstanbul: Ahmet İhsan Matbbası, 1930), Vol. 1, pp. 27-28.

⁹¹ Ertürk, pp. 90-91.

schools. According to him, there are two important points to be made about these schools: one point is that they functioned much like a “total institution,” while the other is about the “utopian” quality of the education.⁹² Since in many of the narratives the group is pointed out as having started in the School of Medicine, we shall also begin from there. One of the important sources in this respect would be, again, İbrahim Temo’s memoirs, where the word “*Tıbbiyeli*” (an alumnus of the School of Medicine) stands for many things. It stands for good education and having seen the good and the bad ways of the world, in stark comparison to, for example, the uneducated Rum members of Etniki Eteryä.⁹³ When Temo hears the school director Saip Paşa exclaiming loudly “Damn! Is that him?” he coins the attitude as “the good old *Tıbbiyeli* attitude.”⁹⁴ One may only guess that Temo was referring to the down-to-earth attitude of doctors which seemed to prevail regardless of hierarchy. Hasan Vasfi Kocatürk would agree, since he states that the education gained from the School of Medicine made one step away from dreams and get closer to reality.⁹⁵ Rıza Nur adds that for a *Tıbbiyeli*, belonging there is an honor; they would consider themselves amongst the enlightened (*münevver*).⁹⁶ Halide Edib Hanım would also agree: “The medical faculty has the historical honor of starting almost every new movement, especially when it is directed against personal tyranny

⁹² Mardin, p. 191.

⁹³ Temo, p. 18.

⁹⁴ Temo, pp. 35-36
“[...] *eski bir tıbbiyeli tavrile: vay anasını, bumudur? [sic] diye [...]*”

⁹⁵ Hasan Amca. *Doğmayan Hürriyet: Bir Devrin İçyüzü 1908 -1918*, (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1989), p. 18.

⁹⁶ Rıza Nur, p. 111.

of despots...”⁹⁷ Ahmet Bedevi Kuran also believes that the alumni were the force which fought the most and eventually brought about the Declaration of the Constitution.⁹⁸ Hasan Vasfi Kocatürk suggests that this is due to the close contacts the doctors had to reality.⁹⁹ These claims are at a contrast with Mardin’s assertion of the bookish, utopia-seeking alumni, since it tells of a group of people who were acutely aware of their own conditions.

The relationship between the medical knowledge and the political enlightenment is clearly demonstrated. Cami Baykurt, himself a graduate of *Harbiye* (School of Military), met Abdullah Cevdet when they were in Tripoli, around 1897. Cami Bey’s impression was that Abdullah Cevdet, like his friends from *Tıbbiye*, was against religious beliefs that were not in line with scientific rules.¹⁰⁰ Abdullah Cevdet was of course a famous positivist of the era, but Baykurt took him as the pinnacle of a wider group, namely the alumni of the School of Medicine. According to Mardin, the new code of honor was the foundation of the order of Atatürk, to which science supplied the formula.¹⁰¹ It is true that the scientific methodology was greeted with much enthusiasm, but I think it was understood as an option among a variety of options that could be employed to maintain the status-quo. The political ideas and ambitions springing from these schools seem not to depend on the newly gained way of

⁹⁷ Halide Edip Adivar. *Memoirs of Halide Edib.* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2004), p. 322.

⁹⁸ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran, p. 160.

⁹⁹ Hasan Amca, p. 73.

¹⁰⁰ Cami Baykurt. *Son Osmanlı Afrikası’nda Hayat*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2009), p. 19.

¹⁰¹ Mardin, p. 196.

scientific research but on the experiences that one gained from or because of this education. Being a doctor would thus count as one feature of an individual among many. For Cemal Topuzlu, his time in high school would stand for carefree days of youth:

The school was so much of a hotel that, say, if there was a good play in Manakyan's or something like that, the students would all (except for Celal Muhtar) leave and go to the theatre. Almost the entire theatre would be filled with us students. After we had left the theatre, we would come to the school with the same crowd, forcibly open the doors and go in. We would attend the lectures if we felt like it.¹⁰²

He adds that some of his friends got their diplomas without knowing much about medicine, but others who were interested, graduated as good doctors.¹⁰³ To return to Mardin's first point, this imagination of the school should suggest that the establishment, although obviously intended as such, did not function as a brilliant total institution. There was room to negotiate a life outside of it and individuals could take initiative of their own will.

In summary, in the context we have at hand, attending medical school was not done solely for the sake of a profession. It meant being in touch with hard science as well as a large part of the population; that is being both more "enlightened" and more down-to-earth. It was no surprise that these doctors decided to take the initiative in their own hands.

The meanings attributed to the medical calling aside, we understand that Temo's

¹⁰² Cemil Topuzlu. *İstibdat, Meşrutiyet, Cumhuriyet Devirlerinde 80 Yıllık Hatıralarım*, (İstanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 2010), p. 51.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 53.

profession occupies a higher place on his “hierarchy of loyalties.” It is, for example, not a case of conflicting loyalties when he poses for a picture wearing a Red Cross.¹⁰⁴ It is also interesting to note that the closure to his autobiography comes from the same source: he dedicates his book “to the *Tıbbiyelis* working both within and out of the homeland for reforms and knowledge.”¹⁰⁵ Atıf Hüseyin, the personal doctor of Sultan Abdülhamid II in Selanik, would perhaps agree, since he once stated to Sultan Abdülhamid II himself that if cholera turned into an epidemic, he would say so because his “superior is the science of medicine” and he would not care to answer to nobody else.¹⁰⁶

Apparently, not everybody was on the same page. Mehmed Reşid Bey, so Mithat Şükrü Bleda says, claimed that although he was a doctor by profession, he was a Turk by birth. His observations on the actions of Armenians near Diyarbakır area let him to conclude that this was a fight for survival, so a preemptive strike was called for.¹⁰⁷ The emphasis on science and the legitimacy drawn from it was thus also used to justify atrocities.

¹⁰⁴ Temo, p. 262.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. [304].

“*Dahilî ve haricî vatanda inkılâp ve ilmü irfan[sic] için çalışan tıbbiyelilere*”

¹⁰⁶ Âtıf Hüseyin. *Sultan II. Abdülhamid'in Sürgün Günleri (1909-1918): Hususi Doktoru Âtıf Hüseyin Bey'in Hatıratı*, (İstanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 2003), p. 131.

“*Benim âmirim fenn-i tababettir [...]*”

¹⁰⁷ Mithat Şükrü Bleda. *İmparatorluğun Çöküşü*, (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1979), pp. 57-58.

Being a Soldier

This group of members was more or less homogenized, since only the Muslim men were allowed to participate lengthily in the military affairs of the Ottoman Empire, while there were a great deal of non-Muslim doctors and less in number but greater in significance non-Muslim diplomats. Rıza Nur puts the issue very bluntly when he says that letting only the Turkish amongst the ranks of soldiers is “a tradition” (*an'ane*) because the non-Turkish elements of the Ottoman Empire were considered as enemies. The custom needed to be retained.¹⁰⁸ Considering the fact that his memoirs were published almost a century later than *Tanzimat*, his comments could be read as a long-standing suspicion against non-Muslim soldiers, also connecting the profession inevitably to concepts such as Turkishness, loyalty, nation and tradition. In fact, the so-called tradition was, according to Şerif Mardin, a relatively new phenomenon. After the demise of the Janissaries, whose main fault was to have built an organization that commanded the loyalties of the soldiers to itself, the idea of *Tanzimat* reformers was to bring about a new system which would train armed forces with a single focus of loyalty.¹⁰⁹

The main critique against this implementation was that it functioned in two strata, favoring the children of the high-ranking bureaucrats and commanders over the children from lower socio-economic backgrounds. During the Hamidian regime, the dichotomy of urban-rural (*taşralı-şehirli*) was added as an axis of differentiation

¹⁰⁸ Rıza Nur. *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, (İstanbul: Altındağ Yayınevi, 1968), Vol. 2 p. 386.

¹⁰⁹ Şerif Mardin, *Siyasal ve Sosyal Bilimler: Makaleler II*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1990), p. 118.

to the student body.¹¹⁰ The rhetoric embedded in the profession also differed widely from the ones mentioned above, since it rose on ideas such as protection of the state and the Sultan, rationality and being aware of the enemy. Whereas the School of Medicine could flourish on the premises of positivist science and a certain degree of humanism which allowed them to interact with the larger population more easily, the soldiers were perceived from the start as men on a mission.

The first issue to be discussed is the loyalty question. For the military wing of the Committee of Union and Progress, one also hears a certain commitment to the profession, albeit a more ambiguous one. Ahmed Bedevi Kuran lived the events of 1908 in Harbiye, so he was caught up between his Unionist leanings and his loyalty to his school and fellow students who, according to him, needed to stick together.¹¹¹ Enver Bey, for one, claims to have felt badly when he took his military insignia off and rebelled like “a man of the masses” (*ahaliden biri gibi*).¹¹² On the other hand, he is aware that his position in the eyes of the government was similar to the brigands he used to chase.¹¹³ His worry is quite founded given the circumstances of the time, where armed men could and would sympathize with each other despite the wide gaps in religion or nationality that separated them.

The profession was seen in close connection with the new concept of the homeland. According to Eric Jan Zürcher, the military Young Turks were many in

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

¹¹¹ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Harbiye Mektebi 'nde Hürriyet Mücadelesi*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2009), pp. 121-122.

¹¹² Enver Paşa, p. 64.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, p. 67.

number and their training was obviously linked to the ways in which they sought for answers to grand questions such as how to save the state.¹¹⁴ Resneli Niyazi Bey claims that he chose soldiering as a profession because of his love for the *patrie*,¹¹⁵ while also remarking that there were people who misused this occupation.¹¹⁶ Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, from a later generation, suggests that in his childhood the army was perceived as the basis of the “*patrie*.”¹¹⁷ Eşref Kuşçubaşı’s remark regarding a soldier who deserted the ranks and joined the opposite army is as follows: “This one has committed a corruption. Betrayed a nation which he swore to protect.”¹¹⁸ Since the profession was loaded with the duties towards one’s nation and homeland, the people partaking in it came to perceive themselves as the ones who had a legitimate understanding of these ideas. Kazım Nami Duru states that the soldiers were “the only conscious group who could bring about the freedom and the constitutional regime.”¹¹⁹ İhsan Aksoley seems to believe that through the hardships one endured as a soldier, one would grow up.¹²⁰ The obstacle’s in one’s way was thus rationalized as making a person stronger. The leave one was bound to take from the profession was also not easy. Esat Sagay, whose memoirs rarely depict any emotion, states: “It

¹¹⁴ Erik J. Zürcher. *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk’s Turkey*, (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010), p. 117.

¹¹⁵ Resneli Niyazi, pp. 133-134.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 139, also see: p. 146 and p. 161.

¹¹⁷ Şevket Süreyya Aydemir. *Suyu Arayan Adam*, (Ankara: Öz Yayınları, 1959), p. 47.

¹¹⁸ Eşref Kuşçubaşı. *Hayber’de Türk Cengi*, (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1997), p. 113.
“Bu bir mesleksizlik yapmış. Müdafasını aht ettiği bir millet hıyanet etmiş.”

¹¹⁹ Duru, p. 29.
“[...] hürriyeti, meşrutiyeti kurmak için, [...] biricik idrakli kuvvet [...]”

¹²⁰ İhsan Aksoley. *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa’dan Kuva-yı Milliye’ye*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2009), p. 21.

was very bitter for me to withdraw from the military service to which I have dedicated my body sincerely.”¹²¹

One should, however, not presume that all the soldiers of the Ottoman army were cut from the same fabric; we know for a fact that older soldiers were educated and trained in a very different manner than the generation we have as subjects of investigation. Resneli Niyazi Bey was also very much aware of the hierarchical divide between soldiers, since he states that after the Reval talks, it was up to the middle and lower ranking soldiers to prevent any danger that might befall the homeland.¹²² Şerif Paşa comments on the same confusion of ranks when he says that during the events of 31 March, the command chain was broken and the responsibility was on the shoulders of officers who got caught up in politics.¹²³

Apart from the hierarchical divide within the army, there was also a minor question about the amelioration of the relationship between the soldiers and the laymen. Kazım Karabekir draws our attention precisely to this perceived gap. When he was still a student of the School of Military, he believed that the makers of the revolutions did not care much for the common people. His solution to the problem was that they should both evolve intellectually and meet on a common ground.¹²⁴

While recalling a particular conversation with a Russian soldier, Halil Paşa states

¹²¹ Esat Sagay. “*Hocam*”: *Maarif Vekili Esat Sagay’ın Hatıraları*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2012), p. 58.

“*Candan vücudumu vakfetmiş olduğum askerlikten çekilmek bana oldukça acı geldi.*”

¹²² Resneli Niyazi, p. 201.

¹²³ Şerif Paşa. *Bir Muhalifin Hatıraları: İttihat ve Terakkiye Muhalefet*, (İstanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 1990), p. 47.

¹²⁴ Karabekir, pp. 99-100.

that in Russia the soldiers were the noblemen, whereas in the Ottoman Empire they were peasants, so Turkish peasants loved the soldiers.¹²⁵

Civilians *versus* Soldiers

There arises later a question that confused many a great mind of the times, especially after the 1908 Revolution. Were the soldiers now allowed to act as politicians or were they supposed to go back to their battalions, where they belonged? Such a question was raised and answered by the opponent Şerif Paşa, who claims to have drawn himself back from the scene after the “declaration of freedom” since he was a soldier and the Committee of Union and Progress was going astray.¹²⁶ Ali İhsan Sabis followed a similar train of thought and resigned after 1909.¹²⁷ In one of the congresses, Celal Bayar reports, there was serious discussion about keeping the Committee and military businesses apart.¹²⁸ An “exemplary” quote for Bayar comes from a soldier who was opposed to the Committee of Union and Progress and was sentenced to death. He apparently regretted not being able to retain the honor of his duty and having meddled with “*komitecilik*”, i. e. politics.¹²⁹ For Rıza Nur, politics and the army had to be divorced because otherwise eventually the “tyranny of

¹²⁵ Halil Paşa, pp. 346-347.

¹²⁶ Şerif Paşa, pp. 33-34.

¹²⁷ Ali İhsan Sabis. *Harp Hatıralarım: Birinci Cihan Harbi*, (İstanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 1990), Vol. 1, p. 66.

¹²⁸ Celal Bayar. *Ben de Yazdım*, (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1966), Vol. 2, p. 510.

¹²⁹ Bayar, Vol. 4, p. 1250.

Janissaries” (*yeniçeri zorbalığı*) would ensue.¹³⁰ Ali Münif Yeğena gives the priority to soldiers when it comes to decide to enter a war. He states that even though he was not a soldier, the way the Ottoman Empire entered the war seemed not very rational.¹³¹ From a different point of interpretation, the question can be seen as linked to the future of the state: Now that the Constitution was declared, were there further changes to be affected politically or was the revolution ended, once and for all? Chronologically, it would be hard to pin down the exact moment when the military interference in political life became established as a matter of fact, but one could point to 31 March Incident as a major turning point to that effect.

There was also a certain tendency to militarize the otherwise non-military population, instigated by the Committee of Union and Progress. This is probably an extension of the newly popularized concept of the nation in arms, as Zürcher points out.¹³² Arif Cemil Bey reports that in dire situations, the organization could ask its civilian members to behave as if they were soldiers. The İstanbulite general secretaries (*katib-i mesul*) were advised to adhere to every order without questioning, in accordance with military behavior.¹³³ Celal Bayar talks about the special “military volunteer” camps of the Committee of Union and Progress.¹³⁴ For Arif Cemil Bey, the case of Yakup Cemil coincided with the peak of civilian and soldier conflict which also manifested itself in a closer surveillance of the civilian wing by the

¹³⁰ Rıza Nur, Vol. 2, p. 335.

¹³¹ Ali Münif, p. 86.

¹³² Zürcher, pp. 117-118.

¹³³ Arif Cemil, p. 75.

¹³⁴ Bayar, Vol. 4, p. 1204.

military one.¹³⁵ These instances prove that Tunaya was right when he stated that “[t]he politicization of the army was indeed its Unionization. In turn, the Unionists have become militarized.” This power on the hands of military, says Tunaya, upset the balance of political life.¹³⁶

Celal Bayar’s inclusion of a story from Eşref Kuşçubaşı’s memoirs is also very telling, since the story shows how double-layered operations, involving both military and civilian politics, were taking place. While the discussion about the Western Thracian Government was going on, Kuşçubaşı was told by Talat Paşa that his services were appreciated and it was time to return. Enver Paşa took him to a corner of the same room and asked him if he could carry on. Kuşçubaşı said he would and advised the government to blame him for not withdrawing to avoid a conflict with Russians. Talat Paşa intervened and said the soldiers surely would follow the official line, Hacı Adil (a soldier) supported him, and Kuşçubaşı seemed to give way. Yet, Enver Paşa ordered that every need of Kuşçubaşı such as ammunition and food supplies should be granted to Kuşçubaşı, continuing the armed resistance.¹³⁷ The situation discussed in the room was, from Eşref Kuşçubaşı’s point of view, a double entendre; what was expected of him was to continue the “national movement” without involving the government, which is what he ended up doing. As such, the seeming conflict between non-military versus military could also be employed as a tool to cover dangerous operations, while maintaining a clean slate for the official

¹³⁵ Arif Cemil, p. 387.

¹³⁶ Tarık Zafer Tunaya. *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler: İttihat ve Terakki*, (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1989), Vol. III, p. 252.

“*Ordunun siyasallaşması, aslında “İttihatçılılaşması” olmuştur. Buna karşılık, İttihatçılar da askerileştirmiştir.*”

¹³⁷ Bayar, Vol. 4, p. 1282.

government.

In sum, the perceived civilian and soldier gap came to mean politics or inertia within this specific context. Moreover, in line with their German training, the soldiers became agents in militarization efforts. One of the tell tale signs of such a process would be the precedence of the soldiers over the government; the delicate balance had to be retained and the military wing needed to be able to pursue its own agenda. The double-layered pattern of action is here obvious and it has a place in the mindset of the Unionists; I will look at different manifestations of this feature later on.

The Role of the “Savior”

According to Şükrü Hanioglu, after the Revolution of 1908 the “*komitaci*” wing of the Committee of Union and Progress gained precedence over the old guard such as Ahmet Rıza or Mizancı Murad Bey. Especially Ahmet Rıza Bey’s remarks lead Hanioglu to think that Ahmet Rıza considered these new leaders as intellectually lacking. However, Hanioglu’s view is that this new group was more aware of the circumstances of the state and society than the old guard.¹³⁸ Be that as it may, the lack of a long-term political agenda and the ever-challenging circumstances definitely played a role in adopting an improvising state of mind. The fact that most of the higher ranks of the Committee of Union and Progress received varying degrees of high education was also used as leverage to lend legitimacy to their

¹³⁸ Hanioglu, p. 253.

claims of actually *being* the saviors. Thus, the definition of an intellectual, as used here, becomes more complex: It could denote a literary figure with high political aims in mind (such as Namık Kemal) or a person who is educated and is of the opinion that the state should be saved.

The perception of the intellectual tended to hold him equal to a possible savior. A possible reason for such a perception is recorded in Kazım Nami Duru's memoirs. According to him, the theory of Tuba tree that postulated the diffusion of knowledge from top to bottom influenced many intellectuals of the time.¹³⁹ A very literal interpretation of this theory would suggest that the reigning power was automatically a disseminator of culture, thus the intellectual was the one with a valid claim to power. İbrahim Temo puts the earlier Young Turks in this group, stating that they saw the terrible situation of the state and went on "opening high schools of medicine and military" to bring about enlightenment. The second wave came after Midhat Paşa and his generation from these schools.¹⁴⁰ He himself tried to "wake up" his younger fellow students in the same vein.¹⁴¹ It is worth noting that the process is still imagined as an automatic one, once the schools had been opened and the people had been "touched" with right ideas, it would progress of its own accord. Moreover, there is no mention of the religion-based education of the old days, which still continued to exist.

Another aspect of this enlightenment would be its reactionary character. Many of

¹³⁹ Duru, p. 57.

¹⁴⁰ Temo, pp. 3-4.
"[...] *tıbbî ve askerî âlî mektepler açarak [...]*"

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 12.

the students of the time felt oppressed by the strict Hamidian regime and sought a way out. Thus, one did not Halil Halid, an earlier example of a Young Turk, claims that while the rest of the population was unable to recognize the true nature of Sultan Abdülhamid II's rule, he was "enlightened enough" to see through and hate his tyrannical ways.¹⁴² His efforts went on even through the cholera epidemic,¹⁴³ displaying us the urgency of the case at hand. Kazım Karabekir's perception put the "enlightened" Young Ottomans such as Namık Kemal or Ziya Paşa in direct opposition to the Hamidian regime.¹⁴⁴ Various schools are credited by the memoirists as having taken part in this movement. Ahmet Bedevi Kuran sees the young soldiers fresh out of *Harbiye* as the "*münevver*" who brought about the granting of freedom.¹⁴⁵ Ahmet İhsan Tokgöz would stand for the intellectuals who graduated from *Mülkiye*, the academy for civil servants.¹⁴⁶

Their own political tendencies as well as their temporal circumstances played a role in the people they considered to be enlightened. Resneli Niyazi Bey lists his preferred intellectuals, among which he counts Mizancı Murad,¹⁴⁷ Prens Sabahattin, İsmail Kemal Bey, İsmail Hakkı Bey, Musoros Bey and Ahmet Rıza.¹⁴⁸ Keeping in mind that he wrote his memoirs around 1908, it is possible to speculate that a few

¹⁴² Halil Halid. *The Diary of a Turk*, (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1903), pp. 257-258.

¹⁴³ Temo, p. 40.

¹⁴⁴ Karabekir, p. 28.

¹⁴⁵ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Harbiye Mektebi'nde Hürriyet Mücadelesi*, p. 1.

¹⁴⁶ Ahmet İhsan, Vol. 1, p. 31.

¹⁴⁷ Resneli Niyazi, p. 141.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 154.

years later some individuals such as Prens Sabahattin would be dropped out of that list, since they disagreed with the policies of the Committee of Union and Progress. İsmail Kemal Bey still counts as a true patriot and the “otherization” of non-Muslim groups was not full-fledged, so Musurus Bey was included. Cemal Paşa, writing from a different accumulation of experiences, would pin down Aziz Ali as a *münevver*,¹⁴⁹ which could suggest that the group of intellectuals could include a non-Turk member.

These intellectuals were supposed to take up the role of the pioneer teacher within the society. Şerif Paşa agrees on the need to teach the public about the “liberal” (*hürriyetçi*) and constitutionalist ideas.¹⁵⁰ He is sure that the demands of *şeriat* during the 31 March incident were really a misnomer; a more educated rebellion would ask for the same thing under the rubric of justice and freedom.¹⁵¹ The language of politics was not a very solid one, so that an entirely different argument could be presented as a mere confusion of terms, springing from an undereducated public.

One could also further the argument: the teaching of correct political vocabulary would lead to the demand of correct concepts, so that a better future would ensue. The *münevver* needed to instigate this process. Şevket Süreyya Aydemir complains about his soldiers (and the public by implication) “who is ignorant even of its own identity” (*hattâ kendi hüviyetinin cahili.*)¹⁵² He even robs this silent mass out of its

¹⁴⁹ Cemal Paşa. *Hatıralar*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2008), p. 76.

¹⁵⁰ Şerif Paşa, p. 16.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁵² Aydemir, p. 116.

own voice when he says that its ignorance is to be blamed on the intellectuals who should have known better and explained it better to the public, even if the issues were not very clear to themselves yet.¹⁵³ Here, one must note that the intellectual, who was supposed to inspire a love for the sublime ideals such as freedom and equality, is now also charged with the teaching of a national identity that had not yet fully developed. Aydemir's Caucasian ideal was to "[...] become idealists, awakeners, leaders and multiply."¹⁵⁴ Again, the ideal was not very clear, the leaders were leading what they perceived as a clueless folk and the whole enterprise seemed to depend on numbers. Enver Bey is more useful in that respect, since he vaguely delineated his own process of awakening. According to him, when he was in Mekteb-i İdadi, he heard things about the Sultan being "evil" (*fena*),¹⁵⁵ but he was properly woken up after his first questioning that took place in Yıldız Palace.¹⁵⁶ He then proceeded to touch others with his new awareness.¹⁵⁷ The reactionary nature of the "awakening" is emphasized here to a large extent.

Hüsametdin Ertürk's take on the later nationalist movement is that even though there were few "people from lower echelons" (*halk tabakalarından kimseler*), the majority of the participants were the intellectuals.¹⁵⁸ Ali İhsan Sabis' memoirs point out to the diverging paths of the soldiers and intellectuals before the wars. He states

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 117. By presenting the issue as such, Aydemir denies agency to his "ignorant" soldiers.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 145.

"İdealistler, uyandırıcılar, önderler olacaktık ve çoğalacaktık."

¹⁵⁵ Enver Paşa, p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 74-76 includes a speech he gave to peasants.

¹⁵⁸ Ertürk, p. 220.

that some intellectuals fervently supported the war but were living the easy life.¹⁵⁹ Here, the usual merger of the soldier as intellectual is broken to favor the soldier, who is actively saving the state and to accuse the intellectual of useless inertia. On the other hand, Zekeriya Sertel, one of the non-military memoirists, claims that one of the reasons why they started a journal called *Yeni Felsefe* (New Philosophy) was due to their wish to demolish the ancient past and save the people from “the outdated traditions” (*köhne gelenekler*).¹⁶⁰ From the non-military point of view of the time, one of the options that could aid the state-saving efforts was an intellectual one. The two examples stand in direct opposition to each other, displaying the wide variations attached to the concept. For Ahmet Cevat Emre, the tyrannical regime was suffocating the intellectuals (read the Young Turks and the Committee of Union and Progress).¹⁶¹ However, once they got hold of the power, they continued the parasitical ways of the Hamidian regime.¹⁶² Here, the intellectual is cast in the role of the victim, who turns into a victor in time, but this is an isolated example.

All the lip service for the value of the intellectual aside, we cannot answer this simple question: Was it possible for somebody to be an intellectual and to believe that the homeland did not need any rescuing? Or, to ask it in another way, was pressing forth the need of liberation from the evil yoke of the Sultan enough for one to be counted as “enlightened”? The examples above display that politically active men of the times would like to harness the power of being enlightened for their own

¹⁵⁹ Sabis, Vol. 1, pp. 195-196.

¹⁶⁰ Zekeriya Sertel. *Hatırladıklarım*, (İstanbul: Yayıncılık Matbaası, 1968), p. 14.

¹⁶¹ Emre, pp. 34-35.

¹⁶² *ibid.*, pp. 198-199.

purposes. Thus, being educated came to mean more than a diploma; it also denoted a will towards an action for a fixed aim amongst the members of the Committee of Union and Progress.

A similar shift in meaning can be observed in “*hamiyet*,” badly translated as “honor” or “zeal” into English. The word’s usage goes back to Kutadgu Bilig in 1069, where it was defined as “fiery effort” (*ateşli gayret*).¹⁶³ When we skip some centuries to arrive at James Redhouse’s seminal lexicon of Turkish in 1884, we encounter “[a] nice sense of what is right, with zeal in corresponding action; honor, zeal, public spirit.” Redhouse notes that “*sadakat, hamiyet and gayret*” fidelity, honor and zeal were the motto of the Ottoman decoration.¹⁶⁴ A slightly later source, the famed *Kamus-ı Türki* of Şemseddin Sami, shows clearly that the concerns of the author and the context had changed considerably. There, the word was defined as “the ambition to struggle for the homeland” (“*vatan uğruna mücadele hürsi*”).¹⁶⁵ The concept was not unique in having undergone such a drastic change over time. A very similar observation on change and indeed “genderization” of a word comes from Afseneh Najmabadi within the Iranian context:

Closely linked to the maleness of millat and femaleness of vatan is the concept of namus [honor]. Rooted in Islamic thought, namus was delinked from its religious affiliation [namus-i Islam] and reclaimed as a national concern [namus-i Iran], as millat itself changed from a religious to a national community. Slipping between the idea of purity of woman [ismat] and integrity of Iran, namus constituted purity of woman and Iran as subjects both of male possession and protection:

¹⁶³ Sevan Nişanyan, <http://www.nisanyansozluk.com/?s=detay&dq=hamiyet&dt=&dd=&dk=>, as accessed on 27.12.2011.

¹⁶⁴ James W. Redhouse. *A Turkish and English Lexicon*, (İstanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 2006), p. 807.

¹⁶⁵ Nişanyan, <http://www.nisanyansozluk.com/?s=detay&dq=hamiyet&dt=&dd=&dk=>, as accessed on 27.12.2011.

Sexual and national honor intimately constructed each other. The Iranian national emblem, adopted in 1834, was initially a male lion and a female sun; it was eventually thoroughly masculinized through the complete erasure of the sun's femaleness.¹⁶⁶

Hamiyet was seen as the fuel that would propel the enlightened youth forward. Enver Bey, right after the revolution of 1908, stated boldly that it was such a power that one could not stand against it.¹⁶⁷ Refik Nevzat Bey, whose voice we hear through his correspondence with Bahaeddin Şakir Bey and who later became a convinced socialist, states that this particular zeal was exactly the emotion of “the doctor” towards the “sick *millet*.”¹⁶⁸ In a particularly poetic parallelism, Midhat Şükrü Bey discusses nation, morals and *hamiyet* in relation with each other: “The morals were pulled to the skies, the nation has sunk deep in the ground, *and hamiyet* is between the heavens and the earth.”¹⁶⁹

The word *hamiyet*, as used to denote a trigger of change, was usually used to refer to people who were of the same (i.e. Unionist) persuasion. Again, when Enver Bey heard the word from his brother-in-law, Nazım Bey, he thought that the latter had the same political agenda as himself. However, throughout the conversation, it

¹⁶⁶ Afsaneh Najmabadi. “The Erotic Vatan [Homeland] as Beloved and Mother: To Love, to Possess, and To Protect”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (July, 1997), p. 444.

¹⁶⁷ Enver Paşa, p. 72.
“*Hiss-i hamiyet öyle bir güç ki, karşısında durulamaz.*”

¹⁶⁸ Bahaeddin Şakir. *Bahaeddin Şakir Bey'in Bıraktığı Vesikalara Göre İttihat ve Terakki*, (Ankara: Alternatif Yayınları, 2004), p. 54.

¹⁶⁹ As quoted from a letter by Midhat Şükrü [Bleda] to Tunalı Hilmi, Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde İnkılap Hareketleri*, (İstanbul: Çeltüt Matbaası, 1959), p. 227.
“*Ahlak göke çekilmiş, millet yere batmış, hamiyet beynessema vel'arz*”

turned out that Nazım Bey thought differently.¹⁷⁰ Leskovikli Mehmet Rauf Bey uses it as an adjective to denote Rahmi Bey, İshak Sükuti and İbrahim Temo.¹⁷¹

Of course, the opposition saw this “zeal” as just another concept which was hijacked by the Committee of Union and Progress and was now turned into their monopoly. Şerif Paşa complains that they held the sole domination over the love of the *patrie* as well as *hamiyet*.¹⁷² Indeed, there are only a few occurrences of a non-Unionists being brought in connection with the concept. If one was without the zeal, one was almost automatically an adversary to it. Mizancı Murat Bey’s later disillusionment with the works of the members is apparent from his words, where he presents himself ironically as “a great criminal” (*bir “büyük cânî”*), whereas the members of the Committee of Union and Progress were “embodiment of zeal” (*cisimleşmiş hamiyet*).¹⁷³ Ali Said Bey, an officer of the Palace, called *hamiyet* “the magic robe of the universe” (*âlemin sihirli elbisesi*) which was used by people to flee to Europe, if they were not promoted to their dream jobs.¹⁷⁴ Ahmet Bedevi Kuran employs the same argument in explaining the flight of Bahaeddin Şakir Bey to Europe. According to him, “this sketch of zeal” did not escape because of his love for the *patrie*; he had to escape because he was engaged in a family matter of a

¹⁷⁰ Enver Paşa, p. 51.

¹⁷¹ Leskovikli Mehmet Rauf. *İttihat ve Terakki Ne İdi?* (İstanbul: Arba, 1991). For Rahmi Bey, see: p. 20, for İshak Sükuti, p. 21 and for Temo, p. 22.

¹⁷² Şerif Paşa, p. 21.

¹⁷³ Mizancı Murat, p. 13.

¹⁷⁴ Ali Said. *Saray Hatıraları*, (İstanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 1994), p. 120.

Palace dignitary.¹⁷⁵

The Hope in *Komitacılık*

The suggestion that one was enlightened enough to take an initiative for the improvement of political, social and economic conditions with a considerable degree of zeal brought other implications with it. Once the cause had been set and the determination to reach it had been expressed, there was no room for pessimism or withdrawal. From a very different line of argument, Mardin states that the generations of soldiers, who had been brought up after 1876, were less dependent on science than their predecessors and more dependent on hope. He attributes this to the censoring activities of the regime,¹⁷⁶ but I think this belongs to the militarized state of mind where the delay of certain orders is punishable by death. For many members of the Committee of Union and Progress, saving the state was urgency and gaining more than necessary education was only an obstacle to the grand cause. For Rıza Tevfik, the Unionist mind was filled with an “effort arising from the will to dominate” (*tahakküm hürsından doğan bu gayret*) and with a hope that like many other hurdles they had overcome, “this too shall pass.”¹⁷⁷ It may look too “Oriental” and too fatalistic, but within the context described by Rıza Tevfik Bey, it was more of a point of perseverance. Mehmed Reşid Bey may be considered as an early

¹⁷⁵ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde İnkılap Hareketleri*, p. 447.

¹⁷⁶ Mardin, *Makaleler II*, p. 120.

¹⁷⁷ Rıza Tevfik, p. 190.

appearance of such a state of mind. As he was held prisoner in 1897 in Taşkışla, one of his guards approached him and accused him of spying for the benefit of the Greeks. Vehemently refusing, he concluded:

We saw these, learned about those who caused the situation, and declared war against the tyrants, the ones who live in luxury, the traitors; to alleviate these harms, to feed the hungry peasant and to save them from misery. We are sure we will triumph. [...] But we shall not be sad, because we know that sooner or later we will triumph, will save the nation and the homeland from this gang of bandits and will conduct festivities in our country which is now in grief. We are sure that you too will understand the reason behind your hardships and will rebel with us against the cruel ones who demolish your homes, snatch away your earnings and suck your blood.¹⁷⁸

Muhittin Birgen seems to have agreed on the point of hope when he states that “[...] it was forbidden to be pessimistic back then!” about the future within the close Committee of Union and Progress circles. He speculates that it was perhaps this sort of hope that led to victory after the defeat in World War I, but it was exaggerated to a fault back then.¹⁷⁹ Reading back from the end of World War I, Zürcher comes to the conclusion that the events around the Balkan Wars were the actual reason why the Young Turks believed they could emerge victorious after a particularly devastating battle.¹⁸⁰ I speculate this self-confidence started when they took to the mountains in 1908 and were “granted” the constitution unexpectedly. The fluid circumstances they found themselves in were partly inexplicable and incalculable, so they seem to have taken themselves as a point of reference. Even the relatively non-political members

¹⁷⁸ Mehmed Reşid, p. 61.

¹⁷⁹ Muhittin Birgen. *İttihat ve Terakki'de On Sene*, (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2006), Vol. 1, p. 399. “[...] o zaman bedbin olmak yasaktı!”

¹⁸⁰ Zürcher, pp. 120-123.

of the Committee of Union and Progress such as Servet Yesari, who is actually a musician and joined the movement shortly before 1908 because his friends recommended it strongly, were convinced that it was “we” who claimed the freedom by force, and not “them” who granted it benevolently.¹⁸¹

Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın likens the Unionist state of mind to “a mystical power.”¹⁸² According to Birgen, Doktor Nazım displayed this state of mind when he refused to accept that the Committee of Union and Progress could ever cease to exist.¹⁸³ Eşref Kuşçubaşı has reportedly commented on his memoirs as such: “We had nothing to lose. We believed that our cause was a just one... We were engaging in an effort to deny that we would not win at the end. We thought we could gain at least some little victories before the world around us fell to pieces...”¹⁸⁴ Here, the hope is not tied in to a better future, but gains its power from the unavailability of such a bright prospect.

One of the most important insights into the Unionist mind comes from Ahmet Bedevi Kuran, who stated that “[...] our revolutionaries, too, had to act according to this principle of making a revolution: the aims justify the means.”¹⁸⁵ For him, the

¹⁸¹ Hasan Cemil Çambel. *Makaleler Hatıralar*. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1964), pp. 133-134.

¹⁸² Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. *Siyasal Anılar*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1976), p. 51.

¹⁸³ Birgen, Vol.1, pp. 499-500.

¹⁸⁴ Kuşçubaşı, p. 209.

“*Kaybedecek hiçbir şeyimiz yoktu. Davamızın haklı bir dava olduğuna inanmıştık.... Sonunda kazanamayacak oluşumuzu gözardı etme gayreti içindeydik. Etrafımızdaki dünya yıkılıp gitmeden hiç olmazsa birkaç küçük zafer elde edebiliriz diye düşünüyorduk...*”

¹⁸⁵ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde İnkılap Hareketleri*, p. 320.

“*[...] bizim inkılâpçılarımız da, inkılâpçılığın şu esas umdesine göre hareket etmek zorunda kalmışlardır: Gaye, vasıtayı mübah kılar.*”

aforementioned aims were “without sense” (*şuursuz bir gaye*) and there was a certain amount of ill will against the “minorities” (*ekalliyetler*).¹⁸⁶ This pragmatism of the Committee of Union and Progress has drawn many comments and is seen as a defining feature of the group.

Apart from the prerequisite of hope of getting their way, there is another concept that eludes the attempt of a strict definition. It is the “*komitacı*,” *mot-à-mot* translated as “brigand.” As with *hamiyet*, the automatic translation is here misleading, since the Turkish term is used to denote not only rebels, but a specific mindset that these brigands supposedly had. Kazım Karabekir tries to define a *komita*. For him, the men who took up their arms and took to the mountains were just the tip of the iceberg. The real organization was within the centers; Manastır’s consulates, churches, etc. provide support for these groups. The smaller towns and villages have their back-up organizations as well, sometimes even supplying manpower to a fighting *komita*.¹⁸⁷ A small group of men in the mountains may have looked like a minor incident, but they had back-up from their local networks, which also meant that the action could possibly spread anytime to the villages and small towns.

Perhaps not very surprising for the readers of Karen Barkey’s *Bandits into Bureaucrats*,¹⁸⁸ the lines between the lawful soldier of the Ottoman Empire and the brigands in the mountains seemed to be really fuzzy at times. One could probably switch from one side to the other. Another story of brigandage is thus told by Halil

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 538.

¹⁸⁷ Kazım Karabekir. *Hayatım*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2011), p. 265.

¹⁸⁸ Karen Barkey. *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

Paşa, with perhaps a degree of exaggeration. According to him, he negotiated with the Greek brigands to wipe out the Bulgarian brigands. Since such an action could not be undertaken under Ottoman banner, he would dress up as a Greek brigand. The Greeks agreed; they gave him ammunition and Greek brigands, even a seal with the name of “Kaptan Aetos” so that he could make himself known. In this manner he claims to have disbanded many a Bulgarian band and eventually received orders as Halil Bey to chase Kaptan Aetos, so he ended the ruse.¹⁸⁹

Around 1915-1916, some people came to believe that the battle movements of the Ottoman army against Russians were not really meant for war, but was brigandage (*çetecilik*) through army.¹⁹⁰ Halil Paşa once suggested officially that a non-military staff was needed and got to lead a brigand-like group.¹⁹¹ While he was fighting in Tripoli, he asked for a feat of courage of a man who used to be a “*şaki*.” The man took up the challenge and made a half-built castle explode, also fatally injuring himself. He managed to come home and told Halil Paşa that he who had been living as a *şaki* for sixteen years was now dying as a *şehit* (martyr), thanks to Halil Paşa. Halil Paşa then reflected: “I was crying now in front of this man who the Sultanate, not thinking of the people, had let loose in the mountains as *şaki* and who was actually pure-hearted and loved his country...”¹⁹² Halil Paşa’s language makes the reader empathize with the person who would otherwise be seen as a lawbreaker.

¹⁸⁹ Halil Paşa, pp. 40-42.

¹⁹⁰ Birgen, Vol. 1, p. 284.

¹⁹¹ Halil Paşa, p. 123.

¹⁹² *ibid.*, pp. 105-107. The quotation is from pp. 106-107.

“*Halkı düşümeleyen saltanatın dağlara Şaki diye saldığı, aslında temiz yürekli ve toprağını sever bu insanın önünde şimdi ben ağlıyordum...*”

He understands the brigand's predicament as one caused by the system, and not by the man himself, which means if the system changed, the man could come back to his village as a law-abiding citizen.

Around Van, he displayed also a similar state of mind. There were Kurdish brigands whom he got hold of. Instead of killing them, which would be replaced, he assigned them the job of “*köy koruculuğu*”, an institution similar to a local gendarmerie.¹⁹³ By incorporating the rebels into the system, Halil Paşa was following an older example of managing the state, whereby flexibility on such issues played an important role.

For the opposition, the brigand state of mind was far from being a benevolent one. Kuran, for example, draws attention to the “*komitacı*” mindset of the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress, never acquiring a broader point of view and always following their own mind instead of the requisite steps. He also criticizes the transformation of the members of the Central Committee (*Merkez-i Umumi azaları*) into various state ministers,¹⁹⁴ as well as the ruthless suppression of opposition.¹⁹⁵ Yahya Kemal also blames the “Makedonya Komitesi” for the fear instilled in the Muslim community of Üsküp.¹⁹⁶ For Yahya Kemal, the fact that the politics were conducted with a *komitacı* state of mind had further implications. There was no harmony among the ruling group, and such a group would not be able to leave a

¹⁹³ Halil Paşa, p. 133.

¹⁹⁴ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde İnkılap Hareketleri*, p. 479.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 590.

¹⁹⁶ Yahya Kemal. *Çocukluğum, Gençliğim, Siyâsi ve Edebi Hâtıralarım*, (İstanbul: Yahya Kemal Enstitüsü, 1973), p. 61.

decipherable politic legacy.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, some political actions such as lawmaking, which is usually a part of a more general policy, did not carry the same weight within the Unionist governments, as we shall investigate further in “*Yok Kanun, Yap Kanun.*” For Ahmet Refik Altınay, the Turanism of the Unionists had its roots in their *komitacı* mindset which dictated the eradication of “hostile elements” (i.e. authors who opposed their rule, the Rum and the Armenians) and the establishment of a Turkish group of traders.¹⁹⁸

The army was apparently bound by laws and was held responsible for its actions, however, the same rules did not apply to a guerilla band; a fact which could and did come in handy when the Unionists felt the need to save the day. The liquidity could thus be employed for double-layered operations, although I doubt that the Unionists specifically were able to plan the rise of a Turkish trading class. Hasan Amca, who actually belongs with the Unionists, states that the “*komitacı*” mind saw the responsibility of a death on the shoulders of decision makers,¹⁹⁹ while Ahmet Refik Bey stated that the Unionist mind was ready to forgive all crimes and murder was understood as “the brightest virtue that showed perseverance and determination.”²⁰⁰ A few instances are given as examples by the Unionists on the *komitacı* mindset, especially on the point of secrecy. One example would be the “*komitacı* correspondence,” writing with lemon juice to maintain secrecy. This emphasis on

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 172.

¹⁹⁸ Ahmet Refik Altınay. *İki Komite İki Kıtıl: Kafkas Yollarında*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2010), pp. 20-21.

¹⁹⁹ Hasan Amca, p. 67.

²⁰⁰ Altınay, p. 54.
“*azim ve metaneti gösterecek en parlak fazilet.*”

private correspondence is noted by both Enver Bey²⁰¹ and Kazım Karabekir.²⁰²

Along these lines, Karabekir also states that when they started recruiting members in İstanbul, they refrained from keeping the contents of the oath on paper to avoid the upheaval it would cause in case of a government investigation.²⁰³

In sum, the brigand state of mind dictated an incredibly violent and militarized life style where the leaders had to take drastic decisions for the sake of “the cause,” which was not very clearly stated. There was little attention paid to the sustainability of policies or even their concordance with each other. Whatever one may attributed to exist within a *komitacı* state of mind, there seemed to be a common ground on its uselessness for future use.²⁰⁴ Tunaya claims that its obsolescence was grasped after the Balkan Wars, as *komitacılık* had ripped the lands apart.²⁰⁵

I believe Mevlânzade Rıfat Bey, belonging to the group of “disillusioned,” sums up the idea nicely when he states:

A union which seeks to prepare for the revolution does not look for a group of homogenous people; does not see it necessary to ascertain and detail its point of view on governance; only looks at the resolution aimed at destroying the government it is rising up against. Thus, instead of scrutinizing the ideas and beliefs of the people it is recruiting, it gathers these people under “degrees” and “ranks” and manipulates them to execute its aims and decisions blindly. The ideas about governance are always discussed after the revolution and then take effect.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Enver Paşa, p. 58.

²⁰² Kazım Karabekir. *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti Neden Kuruldu? Nasıl Kuruldu? Nasıl İdare Olundu?* p. 248.

²⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 266.

²⁰⁴ Altınay, p. 67.

²⁰⁵ Tarık Zafer Tunaya. *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler: İttihat ve Terakki*, Vol. III, p. 463.

²⁰⁶ Mevlânzade Rıfat. *Mevlânzade Rıfat’ın Anıları*, (İstanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1992), pp. 26-27.

As one can deduce from the examples above, there was an important degree of ambiguity in the minds of the revolutionaries of the age. Cami Baykurt summarizes this state of mind brilliantly:

Sometimes we were bragging about the glorious nation which built a state out of 400 tents, but sometimes looking at the material superiority of today's Europeans, which were vanquished yesterday, made us question our racial capability and the ancient civilization of the East. While we were dreaming desperately of a great Islamic union to resist to the European imperialism which, using the policies of reform as a two -faced knife, was tearing our country apart; we were also trying to imitate the decadent French ways of the Levantine mass in an effort to be like Europe. The mentality, which was left to us as a legacy of *Tanzimat*, was simplifying the reasons of European material grandeur and without even looking for the real motives, the reason behind Eastern backwardness only to the racial superiority of the Europeans.²⁰⁷

This feature of action without deliberation is almost positively affirmed later. A very late example of this sort comes from Gazi Mustafa Kemal in 1931. In a dictated note, he claimed that men of their age, experience and learning shall no more read to gain inspiration, but instead display their own reasoning and produce something out of knowledge. If one failed to do so, “[...] one should humbly abandon the place of being a *rolör* in the area of mankind.”²⁰⁸

“*Yok Kanun, Yap Kanun*”

This persistent insistence on movement can also be traced within the attitude the

²⁰⁷ Baykurt, p. 33.

²⁰⁸ Esat Sagay. “*Hocam*”: *Maarif Vekili Esat Sagay’ın Hatıraları*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2012), pp. 63-64. The quotation is from p. 64.
“[...] insanlık sahasında rolör olma mevkiini tevazu ile terk etmelidir.”

Unionists had with regard to laws and lawmaking. The famous adage “*Yok kanun, yap kanun*” is attributed to Enver Paşa. *Se non è vero, è ben trovato* since it reflects a peculiarly Unionist turn of mind. Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın’s recollections about Enver Paşa include such a statement. Yalçın writes:

Perhaps he was imagining the Assembly as an unnecessary machine, a cog-wheel turning in vain. When it was pointed out that some of his thoughts were out of line with the law, he would say with a calm scorn: - There was [supposedly] no law! Make law, then there is law!²⁰⁹

An example would be the attitude of Fuat Balkan, who had to recruit soldiers around Drama and did not have proper guidelines for recruitment or management. So, he narrates, he started to use his own wits to make everything (laws, hats for soldiers) from almost scratch. He goes on stating that “[...] there was no other way. My government, appreciating this, gave me unlimited authority in this respect.”²¹⁰ Commenting on the spontaneous nature of the Babiali Coup, Kazım Nami Duru conveys a general Unionist state of mind: “We the Unionists were always under the pressure of sudden requirements in our collective actions. The actions which had to be done in the name of the country and the nation were often decided upon in few hours and put into action immediately.”²¹¹

There is another story told by Halil Paşa which would bear witness to the

²⁰⁹ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. *Tanıdıklarım*. (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001), pp. 24-25.

²¹⁰ Balkan, p. 34.

“[...] Zâten başka türlü yapmağa da imkân yoktu. Hükümetim de bunu takdir ederek, bana bu hususta hudutsuz salâhiyet vermiş bulunuyordu.”

²¹¹ Duru, p. 54.

“Biz İttihatçılar birlikte yaptığımız bütün hareketlerimizde, âni ihtiyacın tesiri altında bulunurduk. Memleket, Millet [sic] için yapılması zarurî görünen hareketler; çok defa birkaç saat içinde kararlaştırılır; derhal de işe başlanırdı.”

persistence of the practice. In 1918, while he was fighting against the British around Süleymaniye, he was cut off from possible sources of help and thought of a solution:²¹²

Amongst the Kurdish tribes which had to make a living by means of plunder, there was this ağa, Şeyh Mahmut, who I used to know and who was smart, also commanding a leadership quality... What I was going to do was to grant him full independence. Since the lands he was living in were Ottoman lands and were still counted as Ottoman territory I could give him his independence...²¹³

He then proceeds to send Şeyh Mahmut a telegram declaring him the “irremovable emir of Süleymaniye and its environs.”²¹⁴ Şeyh Mahmud provided the connection of the Ottoman soldiers for getting out of Süleymaniye and according to Halil Paşa, the action prevented a tribal rebellion.²¹⁵ Halil Paşa’s “innovation” of a new *emirlik* around Süleymaniye seems to have fulfilled its *raison d’etre* for that moment. The circumstances and the dilemmas these memoirists found themselves in were complex and they tried to rise up to this chaotic challenge by manipulating what they could. It is not just a mindless act to save the day; it is also an attempt to sort out a modern situation. For the last example, the *ancient regime* of the Ottoman Empire had a place for a minor sheikh like Şeyh Mahmut and the military had its own ways of finding subsistence. This state of affairs was shaken when the Ottoman army

²¹² Halil Paşa, pp. 214-215.

²¹³ *ibid.*, pp. 215-216.

²¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 216.

“[...]*SÜLEYMANİYE SANCAĞI ve havalisinin azlolunmaz Emiri*[...]”

²¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 216-217.

found itself facing the more modernized British army and the fluidity with regard to the boundaries of the Ottoman map seems to have enabled Halil Paşa to take an exaggerated administrative initiative. Moreover, the *ancien regime* would be not very familiar with the notion of “gaining independence,” since many of the tribes were already independent in the sense of self-governing. Even if the whole story is not true and there never was a Şeyh Mahmut, Halil Paşa was able to imagine that independence was now something he could bribe people with, a tool to get his way; the modern allure of the nation-state was starting to be felt.

Indeed, Tunaya has found out that from 1908 to 1918, the Committee of Union and Progress managed to pass over a thousand temporary laws.²¹⁶ He understands this to be an attempt at authoritarianism and at “governing without assembly” (*meclissiz hükümet et[mek]*).²¹⁷ The stories as related by the memoirists display a negotiation between the ideal modern and the practical present: While they felt the need for a more legitimate way of governing than the Sultan’s way, they also felt pressured by the circumstances and by their lack of experience in managing the affairs of a state. The temporary laws as well as a number of other tools served to maintain the illusion of a functioning modern political system and solved some important immediate problems, albeit sometimes in a very non-official way.

²¹⁶ Tunaya. *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler: İttihat ve Terakki*, Vol. III, p. 385.

²¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 387.

The “Silence” in the Committee of Union and Progress

We have actually touched upon a very important point in understanding the brigand mentality when we noted the correspondence in invisible ink. Secrecy was of high priority, as was a certain measure of silence. İhsan Aksoley states the matter very clearly when he says: “[t]he key to success in such secret business is secrecy. I have concealed my work even from myself. I forgot what I did immediately.”²¹⁸ Resneli Niyazi Bey strikes a similar note, saying that he would not be able to write about the establishment of the Committee and does not carry total autonomy over his own memoirs due to “political kindness.”²¹⁹ Cami Baykurt, who published his notes as “*Trablusgarb’dan Sahra-i Kebir’e Doğru*” in 1910,²²⁰ published another version in 1945. In the second version there are additional chapters and the author’s claim is that he could not have written about the Young Turk movement in Tripoli around 1910, so now he will write about it.²²¹ In a letter from the *Merkez-i Umumi*, we see how a mechanism of obstruction is constructed. The center answers a former inquiry of Niyazi Bey by stating that the shooter of Nazım is not the one put forward by Niyazi, and the name of this gunman should not be committed to paper.²²² The letter should suffice as an example that the Hamidian regime was one factor that pushed

²¹⁸ Aksoley, p. 174.

“*Bu gibi gizli işlerde muvaffakiyetin sırrı gizliliklidir. Çalışmalarımı kendimden bile gizledim. Yaptıklarımı hemen unutuverdim.*”

²¹⁹ Resneli Niyazi, p. 129 and also p. 173.

²²⁰ Milli Kütüphane Catalog. <http://eyayinlar.mkutup.gov.tr/cgi-bin/WebObjects/EHT.woa/1/wo/gpnAIed5YiJLbAjsM3Nrr0/3.74.25.1.1> accessed on 25.02.2012.

²²¹ Baykurt, p. XLV.

²²² Resneli Niyazi, p. 290.

anti-regime organizations to become more underground. Another instance shows us how people who coincidentally got involved in the Committee business were kept silent: Mithat Şükrü Bleda reports that Doktor Nazım was hiding in his house as Hoca Yakup Efendi. He was very cautious about his new personality, even changed his tone of voice and way of speaking.²²³ However, as he had many friends in Selanik, one of them chanced upon him in the street and recognized him immediately, opening his arms and calling out “Nazım, Nazım!” Nazım pretended not to know his non-Unionist friend Toledo, who went ahead and told a certain non-Unionist Refik Bey that he saw Nazım. Refik Bey referred the matter to a Unionist, Rahmi Bey, who replied that it was common knowledge that Nazım was in Paris and they would know it before Toledo would if he was to come to Selanik. Rahmi Bey knew of course that Nazım was in hiding, so he told Talat Bey that Toledo had recognized Nazım.²²⁴ Talat Bey thus went to “set the record straight” and told Toledo that Nazım was hiding in Selanik, nobody but Toledo had found him out yet, so if anything happened to Nazım he would personally blow out Toledo’s brains. Toledo promised not to say anything else and to tell the non-Unionist Refik Bey that he was mistaken.²²⁵ There is also a very significant anecdote about how family members were left in the dark when it came to important matters: Mithat Şükrü Bey’s wife, who did the laundry for Hoca Yakup as well, noticed his beautiful, expensive handkerchiefs, each embroidered with the letter “N”. When she asked for an explanation, Şükrü Bey lied and said that the Hoca had many rich acquaintances, one

²²³ Bleda, p. 25.

²²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 26.

²²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 27.

of which could have given him the handkerchiefs.²²⁶

Another instance of such a silence appears when Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın decided to dig into the issue of the alleged assassination against Mustafa Kemal. He tried to contact his old friends to gain information, but some had sworn off of politics -such as İsmail Canbulat- and the remaining families did not have a clue concerning the event at hand, since the *komitacı* spirit would not allow such secrets to remain in women's hands.²²⁷

There are whole stories in which the authors prefer to keep the names of the actors a secret.²²⁸ Conversely, the non-official nature of the enterprise may be glossed over. In occupied İzmir, for example, Ahmed Nuri Bey assumed a nickname and started to gather intelligence. In his memoirs, he is silent about the official aspect of his efforts.²²⁹

Sometimes silence is attributed to the qualities of one's profession and not to the brigand state of mind as such. Birgen states that as a journalist, he has heard many things, but he refrained from writing all of them.²³⁰ He admits that he once replaced a "rude" word by Talat Paşa with a more neutral one, because he felt the slang was due to their close relationship, unfit for the public eye.²³¹

To sum up, there was a Chinese Wall around the "business" of the Committee of

²²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 27.

²²⁷ Yalçın, p. 285.

²²⁸ Arif Cemil, pp. 310-314.

²²⁹ Ahmet Nuri Diriker. *Cephelerde Bir Ömür: Ahmet Nuri Diriker Paşa'nın Hatıratı*, (İstanbul: Scala Yayıncılık, 2009), p. 83.

²³⁰ Birgen, Vol. 1, p. 170.

²³¹ *ibid.*, p. 204.

Union and Progress. The loud, violent and militarized mind of a *komitacı* had to be kept in check, because the stakes were simply too high. Suppressing memories of one's experiences was a way to maintain silence, so a faux-forgetting was also talked of. One cannot but quote Renan here:

Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, [...] Indeed, historical enquiry brings to light deeds of violence which took place at the origin of all political formations, even of those whose consequences have been altogether beneficial. Unity is always effected by means of brutality; [...]²³²

If we disregard his insistence on the latent benevolence of violence, I think the points made above by Renan prove that nation making is inevitably related to brutality, so much so that the individuals may feel compelled to get rid of some memories which are deemed inappropriate. The tempering of history to fit an agenda may be observed on many levels that involve different actors on the way of making a new nation.

Foundations of the Committee of Union and Progress

Tarık Zafer Tunaya's work on the Committee of Union and Progress and its mechanizations is in many ways still unsurpassed. Although he does not devote a whole chapter to the mindset as such, his analyses that crop up along the book supply us with valuable insights. He is the one who stated that the *Meşrutiyet* framework imposed certain conditions on political parties, including the Committee of Union and Progress. Moreover, there was no way that the Committee of Union

²³² Ernest Renan. *What is a Nation?* <http://ig.cs.tu-berlin.de/oldstatic/w2001/eu1/dokumente/Basistexte/Renan1882EN-Nation.pdf> as accessed on 14.07.2012.

and Progress would constitute a homogenized body, since “its situation arose from a strategy of abstract salvation and of allying themselves with any element to demolish the Abdülhamidian regime.”²³³ From Tunaya’s narrative, we gain the impression that the Committee of Union and Progress was a force on the move, specially attuned to the “sensitive times” (*nazik zamanlar*).²³⁴ They also had a sense of discipline and valued education, specifically a non-religious one; thus the youth of the country was very important to them.²³⁵

T.Z. Tunaya also tries to delineate a motto of Unionism for the reader. In his view, it was to have a sense of mission to save the country. This mission, however, was an appeal to the Unionists only, excluding the wider population..²³⁶ I tried to elaborate on that aspect when we tackled the role of the savior earlier. Being a Unionist (or a *komitacı*, Tunaya used them interchangeably) meant being an active revolutionary, being honest and altruistic. They did not wish to discuss various aspects of any given ideology; there were few thinkers among them.²³⁷ From the discussion around political enlightenment and the practical uses of the written word, one may arrive at the same conclusion as Tunaya. He also claims that their aversion of political and social debates seems to have spread to a dislike of opposition.²³⁸ The

²³³ Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler: İttihat ve Terakki*, Vol. III, p. 213.

“Çünkü, bu durumu soyut kurtuluş ve Abdülhamit rejimini her çeşit unsurla birleşerek yıkma stratejisinden doğmuştu.”

²³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 213.

²³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 214.

²³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 326.

²³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 327.

²³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 328.

issue of opposition is not mentioned in the Young Turk memoirs explicitly; it is either ignored completely or spoken of on the basis of individuals and not as a unified group of people, which it was not. Resneli Niyazi Bey's memoirs which appeared immediately after the Revolution claim that the Committee of Union and Progress was an "orderly and secret government,"²³⁹ while Feridun Kandemir equates it to a *komita*, an armed band.²⁴⁰ Obviously, a group of brigands is not as legitimate as a government, but as we have established while looking at the brigand state of mind, the line between these entities was and still is fuzzy. Kandemir's definition seems to have been thought as an insult.

For Muhittin Birgen, the early Committee of Union and Progress stood for "good emotions" (*iyi hisler*) and was intimidated by the sight of power.²⁴¹ As Tekeli suggested, one of the ways in which people reconstruct their narratives is the "defensive" (*savunucu*) way, where the author attempts to prove his good intentions behind what he perceives as a failed project.²⁴² In this case, Birgen knew that the Committee of Union and Progress was not exactly a political success and was trying to explain its circumstances. He is aware of the fact that the group did not have a "national" (*milli*) or a class-related (*sınıfi*) agenda.²⁴³ According to him, the Committee of Union and Progress was something that was unable to execute its

²³⁹ Resneli Niyazi, p. 163.

²⁴⁰ Kan Demir [Feridun]. *Zindan Hatıraları (1848-1908): Bir Devrin Siyasî ve Fikrî Tarihi*, (İstanbul: Sinan Matbaası, 1932), p. 225.

²⁴¹ Birgen, Vol. 1, p. 71.

²⁴² İlhan Tekeli. "Bireyin Hayatı Nasıl Tarih Oluyor?" *Toplumsal Tarih*, 95, (November 2001), p. 19.

²⁴³ Birgen, Vol. 1, p. 74.

plans properly and that eventually turned into the very thing it sought to avoid.²⁴⁴

The exploitation of power and the lack of a plan seep through his narrative, which is otherwise pro-Unionist. In another passage, Birgen claims that the Committee of Union and Progress was the “Turkish *komite*” in answer to other Balkanic *komites* of the time.²⁴⁵ This time, the concept of *komita* is not used as a derogatory one; instead it is employed to show a relationship between armed groups of the time. Vartkes Efendi, representative of Erzurum in the Assembly, once elaborated on the “revolutionary” (*ihtilalci*) aspect of the scene. Upon a threat by *Halaskar Zabitan*, he proceeded to give a speech: “[t]he lowly revolutionaries who lack the courage to sign their writings cannot frighten the revolutionaries here. Gentlemen, when we were revolutionaries we let such crooks be murdered.”²⁴⁶

It is interesting to observe that many of the members of the Committee of Union and Progress, who also found their way into the Assembly, would sympathize with this sentiment because of their own background as revolutionaries. Ahmed Rıza Bey reflects the impression that the Committee of Union and Progress made on people at the time of its establishment: “Union and Progress would fix everything, make it rain, and make the homeland into a better place.” When this failed to happen immediately, disappointment followed.²⁴⁷ Hüseyin Kazım Kadri thinks that if it was

²⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 111.

²⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 245.

²⁴⁶ Bayar, Vol. 2, p. 543.

“Yazılarının altına imzalarını atamıyacak [sic] kadar cesarettten mahrum âdi ihtilâlciler, buradaki ihtilâlcileri korkutamazlar. Efendiler, biz ihtilâlcî olduğumuz vakit böyle sahtekârlık yapanları katlettirmişizdir.”

²⁴⁷ Ahmed Rıza, p. 41.

“İttihad ve Terakki her şeyi düzelterek, yağmur yağdıracak, vatani şenletecekti.”

not for the National Struggle, everybody would still pledge allegiance to the Unionist agenda.²⁴⁸ Considering the fact that many of the former Unionists, including Mustafa Kemal Bey, helped to establish a new order, it is true that the Unionist influences did not stop immediately with the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

After highlighting the brigand legacy of the Committee of Union and Progress along with some explanations on its political failure, let us now take a look at the premises on which the enterprise was built. İbrahim Temo's list of influences on the establishment of the group includes Etniki Eteryä.²⁴⁹ As with Birgen's explanation of the group as a "Balkan versus Turkish brigandage," Temo provides us with a contemporary and similar group, this time specifically from the community of the Rum. Birgen explains the original make-up as a mixture of Macedonian "brigandage" (*komitacılık*) that informed the actions and of French Revolution that informed the ideals of the Committee of Union and Progress.²⁵⁰

Here, we should perhaps note that the notions of liberty, equality and fraternity was taken up in the Ottoman context, but was interpreted in another manner, as we shall see in our discussion about the liberties. He and others add that Freemasonry and the "Young" wave in Europe²⁵¹ influenced them as well.²⁵² It is unfortunate that they do not elaborate on the ways in which this influence happened. The Committee

²⁴⁸ Hüseyin Kâzım Kadri. *Meşrutiyetten Cumhuriyete Hatıralarım: İstanbul/ Trabzon/ Selanik/ Suriye*. (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2000), p. 157.

²⁴⁹ Temo, p. 18.

²⁵⁰ Birgen, Vol. 1, p. 79.

²⁵¹ Baykurt, p. 31.

²⁵² Birgen, Vol. 1, pp. 87-88.

was held together by patriotic love.²⁵³ Cami Baykurt adds the Islamic influences which, according to him, have been understated so far. The point made by the Unionists in Europe was that according to Islamic law, the sultan could be held responsible for his actions and would be dethroned if he was found to be in error.²⁵⁴ Cami Bey states that even the very positivistic-minded Ahmed Rıza Bey employed Quranic subtitles in his *Meşveret*, since he wished to “make the Islamic public like democracy.”²⁵⁵ The new Young Turkism was spreading through the *tekkes* more than it spread through schools. The sheiks of *tekkes* approved of the revolutionary ideas and provided shelter from the surveillance mechanisms of Sultan Abdülhamid II.²⁵⁶ Again, this is a point which would be hard to prove through memoirs alone, since they rarely supply any information related to the subject.

The narratives around the nature of the Committee of Union and Progress usually fall within two broadly defined categories. On the one hand there are the demolishers, who had a bone to pick with the sultan and his regime, but never with the existence of the state as such. From the memoirs, we gather that the “demolishers” were the ones most active around 1908. The most efficient interrogation in this respect comes from Muhittin Birgen, who put the question to Talat Paşa. Talat Paşa reportedly quipped that he did not know what it was, but it was hard to manage. Ziya Gökalp reflected on it and came up with “... an act of ideal

²⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 142.

²⁵⁴ Baykurt, p. 25.

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 26.
“demokrasi rejimini İslami halka beğendirmek için”

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 27.

that springs directly from Turkish soul.”²⁵⁷ It is interesting to note that even Ziya Gökalp, who is generally considered the ideologue of the movement, defines the group as being based on action. Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil defines the group as one “that has made a revolution in the country” (*memlekette ihtilal yapmış cemiyet*),²⁵⁸ again using terms of translocation. Şevket Süreyya Aydemir’s take puts the Committee of Union and Progress as a group that is after monarchic constitutionalism, also “nationalist, even chauvinist,” (*nasyonalist, hattâ şoven*).²⁵⁹

Leskovikli Mehmet Rauf claims that the principle aim of the Committee of Union and Progress was to change the government as to rejuvenate the state.²⁶⁰ He likens their meeting room to Darünnedve, the meeting room of the elders of Kureyş tribe,²⁶¹ and their revolution of 1908 to the Conquest of İstanbul.²⁶² In this case, the Islamic reference is coupled with an Ottomanist or Turkist one, aimed at addressing all of his imagined audience. Galip Vardar also focuses on this reactionary feature; since his description of aims entails first and foremost the demolition of the Hamidian regime. The list goes on with declaration of “freedom,” the reconvention of the assembly, etc.²⁶³ The group, for the demolishers, had no real political agenda

²⁵⁷ Birgen, Vol. 1, pp. 63-64.
“Türk milletinin ruhundan kopmuş bir mefkûre hamlesidir.”

²⁵⁸ Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil. *Kırk Yıl*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaacılık ve Neşriyat, 1936), p. 9.

²⁵⁹ Aydemir, p. 293.

²⁶⁰ Leskovikli Mehmet Rauf, p. 10.

²⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁶² *ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁶³ Galip Vardar / Samih Nafiz Tansu. *İttihad ve Terakki İçinde Dönenler*, (İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1960), p. 49.

save for the Redecclaration of the Constitution. However, the Committee of Union and Progress went through its own life-story as well. Here, we must also clearly note that the Committee of 1909 was of course different than the Committee of 1914. Yahya Kemal sketches a historical turn of Unionist aims when he states that the group set out to bring about a reform (*teceddiid*) but then switched to a love for the nation (*milliyetperverlik*) as its first aim.²⁶⁴ The push to Revolution was thus replaced by a concern for maintaining the status quo. The demolishers usually argue that the Committee had no real program and if it did, they did not know about it. On the program of the Committee, Aydemir reports from Dr. Nazım, who supposedly said that before 1908 they were working towards reclamation of the Constitution of Midhat Paşa, but they were not so knowledgeable on the contents of this constitution. Nazım Bey could not tell the details, but he was sure that there was a program of the Committee of Union and Progress, and a voluminous one at that.²⁶⁵

Zekeriya Sertel, whose connection to the Committee consists of having worked in *Rumeli*, the organ of Unionists in Selanik, states that the sole aim of them before 1908 was the Redecclaration of Constitution, the rest was not very clear.²⁶⁶ Cami Baykurt states it very succinctly: “The only talisman that this generation relied on was the Constitution of 1293 [1878]. If we made the sultan to proclaim the validity of this law, we believed that every ill would correct of its own accord.”²⁶⁷ Once

²⁶⁴ Yahya Kemal, p. 175.

²⁶⁵ Aydemir, pp. 298-299.

²⁶⁶ Sertel, p. 9.

²⁶⁷ Baykurt, p. 35.

“Bu neslin güvendiği yegâne tılsım da 1293 [1878-date of the editor] *Kanûn-ı Esasî*’iydi. Bu kanûnun mer’iyetini ilana padişahu mecbur edersek, her sakatlığın kendiliğinden düzeleceğini

again, we are left with an automated understanding of the society that nevertheless sprang from a very valid and modern entity, namely, the constitution. Before 1908, the group encompassed a variety of individuals whose political visions were different from each other, save an urgent need to fix what was seen as the tyrannical regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Once the most necessary step had been taken, the political fissures started to surface, leading to divergent ways.

Galip Vardar's perspective suggests that a need for a set program arose only after 1908, and the resulting list of aims included first and foremost being "Turkist and nationalist" (*Türkçü ve milliyetçi*). The second was the Committee's recognition of the Central Committee as standing above the state and the government. The third item of the list is of particular interest since allegedly, it foresaw the withdrawal of the soldiers from the military duty, if they wished to be involved in politics.²⁶⁸

Kazım Nami Bey would agree, he states that their only clear aim was to bring the Constitution of Midhat Paşa back. Once the Assembly gathered, their mission would be over. "Further than that nobody thought, there was no such need; since freedom preceded every progress, every happiness and every strength. We learned its love from Namık Kemal."²⁶⁹ Although some authors are credited as inspirations of the movement, the main emphasis of the roots of the Committee of Union and Progress seems to have been an urge to act.

Against this strong current of "movers," we can also distinguish some

sanıyorduk."

²⁶⁸ Vardar, p. 60.

²⁶⁹ Duru, pp. 8 -9.

"Bundan sonrasını düşünen yoktu; düşünmek de lâzım gelmiyordu; çünkü her terakkinin, her saadetin, her kuvvetin başında hürriyet geliyordu. Biz onun aşkını Namık Kemal'den öğrenmiştik."

“deliberators” who preferred to emphasize other dimensions of the Committee of Union and Progress in their memoirs. Celal Bayar is the one who comes nearest to a full description: the Committee of Union and Progress was established on 5 September,²⁷⁰ 1906.²⁷¹ It consisted of Oath-Taking Committees (*Tahlif Heyetleri*), Gunman Branches (*Fedaî Şubeleri*) and Judgement & Punishment Bureaus (*Usûl-i Muhakemat ve Mücâzat Faslı*).²⁷² Although the branches are counted as such, there is little to no reference further in the narrative. One must also speculate that the Oath Taking Committees gradually fell into disuse and ceased to be a part of the general organization in time. On the other hand, one could also imagine a link between this early *fedaiin* and the later *Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa*. Committee of Union and Progress was an orderly and progressive committee; Bayar pays homage to Jacobins as well.²⁷³ The influence of other European forces was noted earlier, this is a specific nod to the French Revolution. Bayar also tries to give an impression of the Unionist mind; placing an emphasis on the social endeavors of the group. One of its duties was to “convince and guide” (*ikna ve irşat*) the people to bring about a unified Ottoman nation. Such an endeavor would require various scenes such as schools, firms and philanthropic activities. The elevation of people would eventually result in national sovereignty.²⁷⁴ His point about Ottomanism is in concordance with the Ottomanist discourse that prevailed briefly around 1908. Moreover, Bayar argues, the Unionist

²⁷⁰ Bayar, Vol. 1, p. 7.

²⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 126.

²⁷² *ibid.*, p. 128.

²⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 138.

²⁷⁴ Bayar, Vol. 2, p. 438.

should prove himself to be a role model and display qualities such as altruism.²⁷⁵

Here, I must note that the individual was burdened with a precise role to be played in this fluid context: that of representing a political stand. As such, he was not only expected to deliberate upon an essentially vague notion of Ottomanism, but also he was to set an example with his behavior, which was connected to his political persuasion. The main problem was that while the Committee of Union and Progress tried to run the country they carried the responsibilities but not the execution.²⁷⁶

From my point of view, this is another rephrasing of the “good intentions” argument. Kazım Karabekir states that “The Committee of Union and Progress was born out of necessities,” and then goes about explaining his take on other concepts such as duty and freedom from the perspective of the state and the nation.²⁷⁷ For Yahya Kemal, it was a flexible organization among other features, and this versatility is attributed by Yahya Bey to the nature of Talat Bey.²⁷⁸ Once more, the terms overlap to reveal the embeddedness of the individual in the group and vice versa. If this was a political organization in modern terms, or an earlier form of a *kapu*, it would have its own rules and regulations which existed outside of the individuals. The transitory quality of the context allowed however only for a different kind of formation where the individual was give more leeway.

While the discourse about the nature of the Committee of Union and Progress

²⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 439.

²⁷⁶ Bayar, Vol.1, p. 140.

²⁷⁷ Kazım Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti Neden Kuruldu? Nasıl Kuruldu? Nasıl İdare Olundu?* p. 25.

“İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti’ni zaruretler doğurdu.”

²⁷⁸ Yahya Kemal, p. 171.

revealed a preference for a flexible organization that included only vague aims beyond the declaration of the Constitution, it was sometimes found useful to equate the Committee of Union and Progress to the nation itself. It goes without saying that the connotations of the word “nation” were also left blank. Azmi Bey, former governor of Beirut, was to take over the post of the Chief of Police after the Babiali Coup. He told the current Chief of Police that the Unionists, which overthrew the government in the name of the nation, had ordered him to become the Chief of Police. The officer complied.²⁷⁹ The context suggests that the nation is possibly the Ottoman nation or even the Committee of Union and Progress itself. On the other hand, Rıza Nur likened the Committee of Union and Progress to the Tower of Babel and to the country itself.²⁸⁰ His emphasis was thus on the multiplicity of the nations contained within the Ottoman Empire, even though he would see this as a negative trait.

The make-up of the Committee of Union and Progress is usually told through a professional or ethnical lens. For Resneli Niyazi, it comprised of “[...] soldiers of high and low ranks, state officials, locals, townspeople, peasants, intelligentsia and honest people.”²⁸¹ Galip Vardar’s perception of the first members was a mixture of lower ranking soldiers and state officials “who had felt the national enthusiasm” (*milli heyecanı duyan*).²⁸² Celal Bayar’s definition is that the Assembly included

²⁷⁹ Bayar, Vol. 4, p. 1111.

²⁸⁰ Rıza Nur, Vol. 2, p. 333.

²⁸¹ Resneli Niyazi, p. 243.

“büyük ve küçük rütbeli zabitlerle devlet memuru, yerli, şehirli, köylü, münevver ve dürüst insanlar”

²⁸² Vardar, p. 58.

people of the Committee who presented a mixture (*halita*) made up of “Turks, Arabs, Albanians, Rums, Armenians, Jews, Ulahs, Bulgarians and Serbians.”²⁸³

Perhaps I am being too Rankean here. A new line of argumentation by Eelco Runia may help us better grasp the making of history. His argument is that events which disrupt a social continuum unpredictably and violently are made by deeds and not necessarily long, ideologically loaded deliberations. The justification for that comes only after the disruption has proven to be powerful enough to exist.²⁸⁴ It is possible that this was what the Unionists did around 1908: they saw an opportunity and seized it without further ado. What followed shows that the consequences were dear and more unforgettable.

One may wonder how this organization collapsed at the end. For Mithat Şükrü Bleda, the end was Talat Bey’s death.

The day Talât said farewell to the world was the day when the Committee of Progress and Union drew its last breath. Those who claim that it resurrected later are in a state of misgiving. Talât was the thinking brain, the seeing eye and the working machine of this historical party. When he disappeared, the brain could not think, the eye could not see and the machine could not work.²⁸⁵

Once more, the whole mechanization of this group is represented as depending on one individual whose fall dragged the whole Committee behind. This perhaps an overexertion of the agency of one individual, but nevertheless it serves to show that certain *persona* were perceived as figures who changed history. Such an emphasis on

²⁸³ Bayar, Vol. 2, p. 413.

²⁸⁴ Eelco Runia. “Into Cleanness Leaping: The Vertiginous Urge to Commit History,” *History and Theory*, 49, (February 2010), pp. 1-20.

²⁸⁵ Bleda, p. 151.

“great men” was perhaps not new, but the fact that Talat Paşa, who came from a very humble background and education, was allowed into the ranks of these men is certainly novel.

Liberties

For many of the Unionists who looked up to the ideals of the French Revolution, freedom was a pillar of life. As any ideal of the Unionists, it was not a very clear concept. According to Ahmet Bedevi Kuran, there were people who entertained “visions of freedom and reform” (*hürriyet ve islâhat tasavvurları*) since the times of Sultan Abdülmecid; to name a few Şeyh Ahmed and Arif Bey (Didon Arif).²⁸⁶ The failed Çırağan Incident, which was instigated by Suavi in order to replace Sultan Abdülhamid II with Murat V was directed towards a similar aim.²⁸⁷ There was another attempt, this time by the committee of “*Kleanti Skalyeri*” which, in addition to former aims, targeted the life of the reigning Sultan.²⁸⁸ This plan also failed, but made Ali Şefkati famous and gave birth to a newspaper in Napoli, “*İstikbal*” (Future).²⁸⁹

Mevlânzade Rıfat talks about a freedom that had to be taught to the people so that they could shake off their previous ways of governance and get used to a more

²⁸⁶ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde İnkılap Hareketleri*, p. 61.

²⁸⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 138-140.

²⁸⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 140-142.

²⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 144.

democratic life style.²⁹⁰ We may read Kuran's elaboration on the subject as trying to prove the movement's authenticity: "Freedom" was not a foreign thing, it was perceived as a "native" aim that people could pledge allegiance to. Nor was it a direct translation of the French "*liberté*"; it was fashioned as the times when Sultan Abdülhamid II was not quite so ubiquitous, his network of intelligence did not spread everywhere and his powers were at least formally delineated by a higher power, the Constitution. The feeling of being free also depended on the proximity to the center, Cami Baykurt dwells on "a relative freedom" (*izafi bir hürriyet*) which one could enjoy at the outposts of the Ottoman Empire, such as Tripoli.²⁹¹

Freedom could also be used in a provocative manner, as a watchword. This is what İbrahim Temo did during Damad Mahmud Celaleddin Paşa's funeral, he shouted "Long live freedom, down with the despotism!" The attendants lost apparently a little bit of their countenance.²⁹² In many cases, we see that the concept of liberty was on a par with the Redclaration of the Constitution. When the freedom was "declared" again in 1908, Temo immediately attributes it to one specific group of people, that is, the self-sacrificing Turks.²⁹³ Temo attributes the exact words to a crowd which came to his house after the Declaration of the Constitution, but the eloquent way of stating, as well the narration of the story in an approving manner, show us that the idea of equating the freedom to the Turks belongs to Temo. Mithat

²⁹⁰ Mevlanzade Rıfat, p. 25.

²⁹¹ Baykurt, p. 11.

²⁹² Temo, p. 174.

"[...]Yaşasın hürriyet[sic], mahvolsun despotism, diye bağırdım. Hazirun biraz karıştı."

²⁹³ Temo, p. 207.

Şükrü Bleda also comments on the joy around the Declaration of Freedom, stating that even those who had no idea what liberty was joined the general atmosphere of enthusiasm.²⁹⁴ For Lütfü Simavi Bey, himself staff at the Yıldız Palace, the freedom was taken by manipulating the cowardly sultan, meaning that it had no real support, save for some Albanians and young soldiers.²⁹⁵ While the concept of liberties was commonly used to refer to constitutional rights, anti-tyrannical government and general human dignity by the members of the Committee, there were others who unexpectedly dwelled on the concept. Şeyhülislam Cemaleddin notes that the Constitution did not contradict the Islamic law anyway, and would not be put on hold this time.²⁹⁶ His seal of approval would mean that the cause was supported by various quarters of the society.

The case is that freedom has been used in conjunction with other ideals to fight for. Enver Bey, for example, notes the celebration and cheers in the name of the nation, constitutional regime and freedom.²⁹⁷ For this specific case, the nation was probably the Ottoman one, which was no longer under the strict governance of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Şerif Paşa uses liberalism (*hürriyetçilik*) and constitutionalism as almost interchangeable concepts.²⁹⁸

Although much eulogized, freedom was also a dangerous concept, since it could easily become uncontrollable. From my point of view, there seems to have been a

²⁹⁴ Bleda, p. 50.

²⁹⁵ Lütfü Simavi, pp. 196-197.

²⁹⁶ Cemaleddin Efendi (Şeyhülislam). *Siyasi Hatıralarım*. (İstanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 1990), p. 21.

²⁹⁷ Enver Paşa, p. 91.

²⁹⁸ Şerif Paşa, p. 16.

fear of an over-correction, where the newfound liberties would be abused and the fluid political tables would turn against the Committee. Its inherent power had to be contained and possibly channeled to other outlets. The “others” of their own community, which are the women, the workers, the non-Turks and the non-Muslims, may fail to value this precious asset. Cemal Paşa claims that it has been misunderstood,²⁹⁹ while Şerif Paşa warns about the “good,” “limited” use of freedom.³⁰⁰ For Celal Bayar too, the unlimited freedom of press carried bad connotations.³⁰¹ For Temo, freedom is a sweet drink which could get you intoxicated.³⁰² Mustafa Ragıp, speaking through Temo’s memoirs, warns that this drink may also turn into poison.³⁰³

In some cases, it was used in direct relationship with education, indicating that its beneficial uses could only arise if the people were trained in it. A similar concern belongs to Ahmed Rıza, who states that although the Committee of Union and Progress gave the freedom to the people, the people were not used to it.³⁰⁴ After noting that there was a “good” and “bad” way in the employment of the liberties, we may ask ourselves who a really free man might be. Cami Baykurt’s example for a free man is the Bedevi:

Is there a man freer than a Bedevi who does not tolerate being looked down on

²⁹⁹ Cemal Paşa, p. 379.

³⁰⁰ Şerif Paşa, pp. 19-20.

³⁰¹ Bayar, Vol. 1, p. 185. He is quoting a text, but is approving of the ideas nevertheless.

³⁰² Temo, p. 212.

³⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 219.

³⁰⁴ Ahmed Rıza, p. 41.

because of his needs and who does not bow to the mighty of the earth? He does not quail before the mercilessness of the most powerful of sultans. I saw amongst the children of the desert Bedevi who went hungry for days and days and who bind a stone around their bellies; after squeezing a belly which is eating itself from inside like a rabid dog, to whom would one be obliged? If you look for a Bedevi and ask “Where is this person?” he would say “*Has fi'l halâ*” (entered into emptiness). Truly, man becomes free after he enters the emptiness. The emptiness of the desert is as deep as the emptiness of death.³⁰⁵

What is interesting in this passage is that, unlike the other “civilizer”s we have briefly quoted, Cami Bey is pointing out to a type of man who was for him the pinnacle of being uneducated. He seems to understand this concept as a birthright of men who are not spoiled by the sights of civilization and stood true to their nature, which vaguely resembles a noble savage.

Devletin Bekası (Continuation of the State)

In some cases, freedom and the continuity of the state were perceived as being at odds. In İsmail Kemal Bey’s example, we see that his definition of the Albanian community rests on “fidelity to their word of honor and the religion of patriotism, with which goes the love of independence.”³⁰⁶ Yet, these values did not contradict the Ottoman rule over Albanians since in their opinion; they had to yield in order to exist. İsmail Kemal Bey states that they stood loyal to the Ottoman Empire until it betrayed them, thereby absolving them from their ties of obligation.³⁰⁷ Ironically enough, the next page displays a more pragmatic turn of events since İsmail Kemal

³⁰⁵ Baykurt, p. 63.

³⁰⁶ İsmail Kemal. *The Memoirs of İsmail Kemal Bey*, (London: Constable & Co., 1920), p. 360.

³⁰⁷ İsmail Kemal. *İsmail Kemal Bey’in Hatıratı*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2009), p. 258.

Bey describes the independence of Albania as one would describe breaking away from a group of people who decided to commit suicide.³⁰⁸ Therefore, it is to be concluded that benefits assigned to the “survival” of one specific *patrie* could outweigh the benefits assigned to the continuity of the Ottoman Empire.

According to Bahaeddin Şakir, the Committee of Union and Progress would be a place where every idea could be defended as long as it was aiming at the continuation of the state and the exulted sultanate.³⁰⁹ The same idea of continuum was a default in both Committee and Freedom & Accord Party, reports Celal Bayar.³¹⁰ For Muhittin Birgen, the Committee saw the declaration of the Constitution as an end on its own, its continuation was the essential duty. The state, on the other hand, was signified by the ministers of the Hamidian regime.³¹¹ Generally, it is possible to think that the Committee’s stance on the issue was a conservative revolutionism: they believed that the state was going down, but their preferred option to save it dictated that it must stay as one big piece, under the sultan and the Constitution. Other options such as federalism or republicanism were rarely points of discussion. In his influential work about the era, Feroz Ahmad states that the Constitution of Midhat Paşa was declared thirty two years earlier than 1908. According to him, the revolutionary aspect of the endeavor became apparent later; due to “the failure of its pragmatic policies” and due to other reformatory actions

³⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 259, see also: p. 261 for another telling of this complicated relationship.

³⁰⁹ Bahaeddin Şakir, p. 142.

³¹⁰ Bayar, Vol. 2, p. 450.

³¹¹ Birgen, Vol. 1, pp. 75-76.

giving way to societal change.³¹²

There is usually a point in time where it became apparent to the memoirists that the Ottoman Empire was inevitably going down. The concept also figures in Mizancı Murad Bey's memoirs, who stated that when the Bulgarian army was in Eastern Rumelia, he anticipated that the general trend was not towards perpetuity, but towards going down.³¹³ İsmail Kemal Bey also remembers the years 1900-1908 with a sense of urgency, stating that the possible ways out of the imminent doom seemed to diverge into two: one was violent and recommended revolution (*ihtilâl*), while the other was more vigilant and focused on getting the European support. İsmail Kemal Bey leaned towards the latter one.³¹⁴ Later, he changed his point of view due to bad management from the capital and riots in Macedonia, so that he focused on rescuing Albania.³¹⁵ A loss of hope about the fortunes of the Empire forced him to take the next best option, which is to hold on to what he was sure of saving.

In opposition to this view is Şeyhülislam Cemaleddin, who claims that the Committee put the state so much in danger it became an issue to set things right.³¹⁶ He would press for other points of convergence such as the religion or the sultan. For Şadiye Osmanoğlu, herself a member of the royal family by birth, the continuity of the state rested upon the shoulders of the ruler. Sultan Abdülhamid II bode his time

³¹² Feroz Ahmad. *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics 1908-1914*. (London: Hurst Company, 1969, 2010) p. 14.

³¹³ Mizancı Murad, p. 78.

³¹⁴ İsmail Kemal. *İsmail Kemal Bey'in Hatıratı*, p. 220.

³¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 224.

³¹⁶ Cemaleddin Efendi (Şeyhülislam), p. 77.

to transfer his duties because he “waited patiently for the [...] group of people, for Turkish nationalism to politically develop.” His legacy was a family of Middle Eastern and Balkan states who were still bound to each other.³¹⁷ From my point of view, it is highly impossible that the sultan would sit back and let a powerful movement develop under his own nose. He had other stakes in this game, but his daughter found it more convenient to portray him as the beneficial but somehow helpless sovereign, in accordance with the political atmosphere of the Republican times when she penned her memories.

Perception of History

For some Unionists, history was something of a moral tale; one that could be read to derive lessons for the present day. This is what led Kazım Karabekir to state that “[t]he life of each man is a perfect piece of history,” worthy of being studied and understood as a guide for history (“What were we? What have we become?”).³¹⁸ His statement is interesting from another point of view as well: He is actually attributing an agency to the single man in contrast to the grander mechanisms of history.

Leskovikli Mehmet Rauf Bey states that a similar historical perspective directed him towards writing his memoirs.³¹⁹ İsmail Müştak Mayakon states that everybody in the Yıldız Palace needed to write their memoirs, since these were important for the

³¹⁷ Şadiye Osmanoğlu. *Babam Abdülhamid*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2011), p. 139.

³¹⁸ Karabekir. *Hayatım*, p. [17].
“Herkesin hayatı, mükemmel bir tarih parçasıdır.””Ne idik, ne olduk?”

³¹⁹ Leskovikli Mehmet Rauf, p. 9.

history of the era.³²⁰ His point of view is part of the usual Unionist state of mind that hoped for a future where the winner would write history through these memoirs. The fact that he worked at the Yıldız Palace makes his narrative even more interesting.

Moreover, the same emphasis on the value of the individual is not to be missed here. Ali Kemal Bey, who later resigned from being a member of the Committee, states that the idea was to present his recollections to the historian as pure memoirs, not backed up with any documentation.³²¹ Such a view is presented by Resneli Niyazi Bey. He says that history is “an exemplary mirror” and the government official he is trying to intimidate with his words should read it more closely to conclude that only the good (read Resneli) prevails in this world.³²² He is very aware that his actions are making history, as he has been ordered by the *Merkez-i Umumi* to keep track of people and documents which will later serve as the basis of “our history of revolution.”³²³ This sort of consciousness seems to be new; there was never a time in Ottoman history where the people took a moment for themselves to claim that it was them who made history; and not some other power. In addition to that, being ordered from a collective entity to keep a track of their individual yet public actions is an interesting overlap, where we can see how a generality was perceived to be built out of many particularities. Kazım Karabekir would fully agree; as he states that the Congress of 1908 decided to collect documents on various

³²⁰ İsmail Müştak Mayakon. *Yıldız'da Neler Gördüm?* (İstanbul: Semih Lütfi Kitabevi, 1940), p. 10.

³²¹ Ali Kemal. *Ömrüm*, (İstanbul: İsis Yayıncılık, 1985), p. 40.

³²² Resneli Niyazi, p. 313.

³²³ *ibid.*, pp. 265-266.

subjects in order to inform the historians of tomorrow better.³²⁴ Karabekir presents a very Rankean state of mind on historiography as he states:

Writing history means making an analysis and a compilation. Analysis is the research into the roots of events, which is to objectively criticize and pin down the value of the stories, monuments and documents which are collected under the rubric of evidence. Compilation or construction is the building of history's backbone by bringing together all collected evidence.³²⁵

Similarly, Mevlânzade Rıfat Bey, who actually belongs to the ranks of opposition, states that he was not about to judge the Revolution of 1908 since that duty belonged to history. In his memoirs, he states, he merely tried to defend himself in public opinion.³²⁶ His is one of the few examples where can trace a self-confessed defensive, subjective memoir. The claims to objectivity were mirrored by the other side as well, an example would be Mehmet Selahaddin Bey's opening claim of being "very unpartisan" (*gayet bî-tarafane.*)³²⁷

Ahmet Bedevi Kuran, who published his book in 1959, has a more modern point of view concerning the modern uses of history. His description is largely in line with the way in which the nation-state creates a citizen: "History is a phenomenon which educates the feelings and asserts the knowledge. One should ignite the national fire and enliven the emotions within young souls."³²⁸ The instrumentalization of history

³²⁴ Kazım Karabekir. *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti Neden Kuruldu? Nasıl Kuruldu? Nasıl İdare Olundu?* p. [19]- 20.

³²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 20.

³²⁶ Mevlânzade Rıfat, p. 8 and p. 57.

³²⁷ Mehmed Salahaddin. *Bildiklerim: İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin maksad-i teessüs ve suret-i teşekkülü ve Devlet-i Aliye-yi Osmaniye'nin sebep-i felâket ve inkısamı: muhalif hatıralar.* (Ankara: Vadi Yayınları, 2006), p. 3.

³²⁸ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde İnkılap Hareketleri*, p. 93.

in making a new nation is only then fully acknowledged.

Even if the author refrained from the serious task of writing history, he would ironically still be writing it, since he would go on writing his recollections about a particular issue. Ahmet İhsan Bey would be a case in point; stating that he was not writing history, just his memoirs relating to his years in press. He then goes on telling us the 31 March Incident from his point of view.³²⁹ The negotiation between the wish to record and to maintain a modest character can be seen at play here. Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil likewise notes that he does not attempt to write history³³⁰ yet there was a genre in French literature, *la petite histoire*, which was not well represented in Turkish literature.³³¹

Some of the memoirists were able to supply a fresh perspective on historical conditions for change. Şevket Süreyya Aydemir had time to reflect on the nature of change in Turkish society when he was tried in *İstiklal Mahkemesi*. He claimed that transformations (*inkılab*) occurred within a certain kind of law, and this law was always imposed from above onto the people. Such was the “historical leverage of progress” (*terakkinin, tarihî manivelası*) that was transmitted to the early Republican society.³³² He was also aware that such transformations claimed lives in order to

“Tarih, hisleri terbiye ve bilgiyi tasrih eden bir mefhumdur. Genç ruhlarda milli ateş tahrik edilmeli ve duygular canlandırılmalıdır.”

³²⁹ Ahmet İhsan. *Matbuat Hatıralarım*, (İstanbul: Ahmet İhsan Matbaası, 1931), Vol. 2, p. 73.

³³⁰ Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil. *Saray ve Ötesi: Son Hatıralar*, (İstanbul: İnkılap ve Aka Kitapevleri, 1981), p. 145.

³³¹ *ibid.*, p. 113.

³³² Aydemir, pp. 412- 413.

settle.³³³ The brutal waves of history were for him a matter of fact and not an anomaly in an otherwise peaceful perception of the world. Leskovikli Mehmet Rauf attributes the discourse of the “natural” period and cycles of states to İbn-i Khaldun.³³⁴ The reference is interesting, since it is one of the rare cases where a non-Quranic source of Middle East was mentioned explicitly. Once more, it is important to see the “natural” state of violence within Mehmet Bey’s discourse. Cami Baykurt elaborates on the speed of the Turkish revolutions and attributes it to the always impending “foreign threats” (*dış tehlikeler*).³³⁵ Here, the urgency is grounded in imminent danger from outside, which is a rhetorical way to evade further questions on the subject of revolutions. As such, the kinetic part of the movement is underlined at the expense of the potential part. Mithat Şükrü Bleda once conceptualized the history as an obliterating force when he talked about the “*jurnal*”s given to Sultan Abdülhamid II.³³⁶ Once the older style of governing was brought down, the agency of the persons feeding that system was conveniently left alone to be forgotten soon. The 1908 Revolution thus had an impact on the collective memory as well.

Hüseyin Kazım Kadri puts the Revolution (*inkılap*) as the moving factor of history, attaching a quote from Qur’an to validate his point: “Everything but Him shall perish.”³³⁷ His idea was that any revolution that stemmed from anything else

³³³ *ibid.*, p. 417.

³³⁴ Leskovikli Mehmet Rauf, p. 10.

³³⁵ Baykurt, p. 146.

³³⁶ Bleda, pp. 76-77.

³³⁷ Hüseyin Kâzım Kadri, p. 203. He gives the reference as Kasas 28 / 88, whereas the correct one would be 88 / 88.

than a social need was doomed to go down. The way of ruling after 1908 only aggregated the pains, states Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, and “we” deserved nothing else but this bad treatment.³³⁸ A sense of “fate” is obvious in Mithat Şükrü Bleda’s memoirs as well. The most intriguing example of such a view is presented by him as he watches the Unionist leaders leave: “I understood once more that man is nothing but a toy in the hands of destiny as I watched tearfully the German boat with its lights off leave the pier of İhsan Namık Bey’s seaside residence.”³³⁹

There is one particular example where the author, Ali Kemal, preferred to keep silent about his Unionist phase in his memoirs which were written in 1920.³⁴⁰ Considering his later anti-Committee stance, the choice is perhaps not very surprising. There are of course different interpretations possible; perhaps he wished to obliterate his own recollection of the times or he feared the wrath of the still-existing Committee members.

Very occasionally, the memoirists would attempt at a retrospective look into their personal history. Mithat Şükrü Bey summarizes his whole life as a series of struggles which started out when he started to work against Sultan Abdülhamid II and continued for a long time. “I am thinking about the worries and hardships I have endured throughout the war years and I am amazed at how I persevered. How did I

³³⁸ Hüseyin Kâzım Kadri, p. 204-205.

³³⁹ Bleda, p. 126.

“İnsanların, kaderin elinde bir oyuncaktan başka bir şey olmadıklarını, bütün fenerlerini söndürmüş olan Alman motorunun İhsan Namık Bey’in yalısı rıhtımından ayrılışını yaşlı gözlerle takip ederken bir kere daha anladım.”

³⁴⁰ Ali Kemal, p. 4.

not get sick, how did I not fall victim to a stray bullet, I am still in wonder...”³⁴¹

After his stay in Malta, he came back to Buca, but was yet again disturbed, this time by the İzmir Assassination investigations.³⁴² He was questioned and released,³⁴³ but the traumatic period of his imprisonment is making up the longest story in his narrative. A similar sentiment comes from İsmet İnönü, who seems to have been surprised to some degree to find himself alive after so many of his generation had passed away: “As I was struggling to do my duty while the empire fell, it has come unexpectedly to pass that amongst innumerable martyrs and people struck by disaster, I emerged alive.”³⁴⁴ In the picture he paints, the norm of the time seems to have been a short life, filled with sorrow and pain.

The perception of history is also revealed if the author is addressing an audience different than the Ottoman / Turkish one. Ahmet Emin Yalman, for example, was addressing an American one, so that he felt the need to elaborate on the subject. His narrative, which traces Turkish history from the steppes of Inner Asia,³⁴⁵ was by then the classical and official version. His contribution to the theme is to liken the

³⁴¹ Bleda, pp. 158-159.

“Savaş yılları içinde geçirdiğim üzüntüleri, meşakkatleri düşünüyorum da bütün bunlara nasıl tahammül ettiğime şaşıyorum. Nasıl hasta olmadım, nasıl o hengâmede sersersi bir kurşuna hedef olmadım hâlâ hayrettim...”

³⁴² *ibid.*, pp. 162-164.

³⁴³ *ibid.*, pp. 164-185.

³⁴⁴ İsmet İnönü. *Hatıralarım: Genç Subaylık Yılları (1884-1918)*, İstanbul: Burçak Yayınları, 1969, p. [13]

“İmparatorluğun çöküşü içinde vazife yapmağa çırpınırken, hesapsız şehitler ve felâkete uğriyanlar [sic] arasında, yaşiyarak çıkmak gibi bir umulmadık olay başımdan geçti.”

³⁴⁵ Ahmet Emin Yalman. *Turkey in My Time*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, [1956]), p. 5.

Seldjukids to the “melting pot” of the United States.³⁴⁶ His narrative strategy was aimed at closing the perceived cultural gap between the subject at hand and the American audience.

Marriage Politics

Marriage politics were indeed considered as a legitimate way of controlling the social scene by the members of the Committee of Union and Progress. On its own, it was already a hard assignment since the “Westernized,” male, Muslim members found themselves in an impossible situation. The old notion of marrying into a better household than one’s own to gain social leverage was slowly being abandoned to favor a more bourgeois marriage, where the man and woman were understood to be partners in the business of life. This sort of family was seen as the basis for the “new order” that was expected to come. The sociological imagination of the era also supported such claims.³⁴⁷ From Zekeriya Sertel’s narrative, we understand that they could not marry a “total” foreigner, since such marriages with European women tended to fail on the basis of cultural differences.³⁴⁸ They could not marry a Turkish girl, since their idea of a marriage included intellectual companionship as well and

³⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 6

³⁴⁷ Zafer Toprak. “The Family, Feminism, and the State During the Young Turk Period, 1908-1918” in: *Première Rencontre Internationale sur l'Empire Ottoman et la Turquie Moderne : Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 18-22 janvier 1985*, edited by Edhem Eldem (Istanbul-Paris: Editions Isis, 1991) pp. 441-452, especially pp. 441-443.

³⁴⁸ Sertel, p. 37.

the educational situation of the Ottoman Empire did not allow women to progress very far.³⁴⁹ As any “*münevver*” worth his salt would consider doing, Zekeriya Bey entertained the idea of educating a girl for himself in Europe and then taking her as his wife, but the conservative environment would hardly allow for such a heterodox endeavor.³⁵⁰

The help came from an unexpected quarter, a girl who communicated with Zekeriya Bey via *Yeni Felsefe*, a journal, turned out to be meeting the standards, the only catch being that she was a *Dönme*, an apostate. The family consented to the match. Doktor Nazım reportedly burst out with joy at the sight of building bridges between two communities which so far had lived separate lives. The Committee virtually hijacked the marriage; the stand-in for the girl’s side was Talat Bey and the groom was represented by Tevfik Rüştü Bey. The costs were met by the members of the Committee and the marriage was declared in all newspapers. Zekeriya Bey marks this as the point when the formerly clear boundaries between these two groups ceased to exist.³⁵¹ It is not likely that the gap would disappear just like that, but nevertheless this episode displays a change in the mindset of the actors involved. Another discourse concerning the marital status of “*komiteci*” (brigand, also used to mean a Unionist) was elaborated on by Talat Paşa, who strived to marry his friends into rich families so that if politics should prove a failure for them, the family would have some form of subsistence. Ali Münif Bey notes the irony that Talat himself

³⁴⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

³⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁵¹ *ibid.*, pp. 38-41, continuing at pp. 57-62.

married Hayriye Hanım, a girl from a poor family.³⁵² This line of argumentation could be used as an excuse to maneuver one's way out of a match. According to Halil Paşa, a girl saw his photograph as he was serving in Macedonia and wanted to marry him. He declined on the grounds that her family was wealthier than his family, the match was unequal.³⁵³ Another irony would be another statement of Talat Bey which was recorded by Ali Münif Bey; the former reportedly said that the brigand should neither get married nor have a child.³⁵⁴ It seems to have been part of the brigand mentality to leave no weak point behind.

Another sort of match-making, much discussed at the time, was to bind the royal family to the heroes of freedom. This attempt was, however, not rhetorically grounded as lending more legitimacy to the revolutionaries. In this discourse, it was seen as uplifting the royal family and ingratiating them with the public, thus almost a move towards further "democratization." Talat Bey influenced Sultan Mehmet Reşat V that social relationships such as exchanging brides with the people would benefit the Yıldız Palace and the royal lineage.³⁵⁵ Bleda tells another story on the motives; the Committee wanted to keep the Palace under its control so they orchestrated these marriages.³⁵⁶ It shall be noted that the real agency is attributed to the Committee and not to the Palace, although the latter retained the initiative to obstruct such schemes. The sultan consented; Enver and Hafız İsmail Hakkı were chosen by Talat Bey as the

³⁵² Ali Münif, pp. 82-83.

³⁵³ Halil Paşa, p. 22.

³⁵⁴ Ali Münif, p. 92.

³⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 94.

³⁵⁶ Bleda, p. 72.

prospective grooms because of their presentable personalities: Ali Münif Bey calls Enver “a pure-blooded, courageous, spirited and shy commander” and for him, İsmail Hakkı was “a fluent orator and a very gentle person.”³⁵⁷

One could speculate that these members were chosen as tokens of good behavior, their good reputation would no doubt reflect on Committee’s reputation. In this context, Ali Münif Bey found it useful to highlight characteristics such as being shy and gentle to recommend these otherwise intimidating men to ladies’ regards. Mithat Şükrü Bey adds the brides and one more groom to the story: Enver married Naciye Hanım and Fahri married Şadiye Hanım. He claims the latter match was pretty much a love story.³⁵⁸ Most interestingly, an arranged marriage could be thus also articulated as a love match, encompassing both older and newer ways of looking at a marriage.

Uşaklıgil also has a critical point of view, for him being the son-in-law to the Sultan was the greatest dream of every male child in the Empire.³⁵⁹ If one did not belong to the royal family by birth, one could enter by means of marriage and his social standing could be improved. Enver Bey’s marriage to Naciye Sultan inspired in him an emotion that was hard to explain, since he could not imagine the heroic man joining the royal family.³⁶⁰ In his eyes, these men were still trying to live according to the former ways where they had to be connected to a grander family to

³⁵⁷ Ali Münif, p. 94.

“Enver kanı temiz, cesur, ateşli ve mahcup bir kumandandı. Hakkı Paşa da hâtip ve natuk, gayet nazik bir zat idi.”

³⁵⁸ Bleda, p. 72.

³⁵⁹ Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil. *Saray ve Ötesi*, p. 123.

³⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 127.

lend them legitimacy. His perception of the royal family is also not very favorable, he states that despite the “fresh blood of Circassian girls” (*çerkes [sic] kızlarının taze kanı*) the family kept on deteriorating genetically and physically.³⁶¹ There is only one instance of disapproving; the case of Halil Paşa, who is also the uncle of Enver Paşa. Halil Paşa states that he was against marrying into the royal family, and he himself would not choose to enter into such a relationship.³⁶² Later on, it is revealed that he married hurriedly somebody else to avoid marrying a daughter of Selahaddin Efendi of royal lineage.³⁶³ One could and sometimes did, thus, manipulate his way out of an undesired match. When Mizancı Murad Bey came from Dağıstan into the circle of Şirvanizade Paşa (and, by proxy, Midhat Paşa), there were suggestions of favorable matches for him. He said that he devoted his life to the state and was thus able to get out of this impasse.³⁶⁴

Conclusion

To sum up, I try here to take a bottom-to-top approach with regard to various facets of a collective identity. My argument is that this period was one of transition, not only politically but also socially, in that it followed an earlier but weaker trend of emphasizing the individual at the expense of society. The older tradition of making one's way through one's profession through well-pointed connections was slowly

³⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 131. As a sidenote, he mentions Lombroso as one possible source where the name for such a deterioration could be found.

³⁶² Halil Paşa, p. 74.

³⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 78.

³⁶⁴ Mizancı Murad, p. 49.

giving way to a new sort of networking, to which one's education and political persuasion mattered a lot. My first stop is thus to ask how the memoirists defined themselves as individuals; my meager data suggested that they took pride in their versatility and practical knowledge. Also, the framework of this sort of self-expression was taken up from their conversations with the Western culture. Then, I move on to their social habitat and explore the meanings of nicknames. These epithets served usually to denote one's locality or perceived ethnic origins. Another way of using them was related to specific personal features or reputation. Here, once more I was able to assert an adaptation from other cultures, namely Japanese and French.

Then, adding one more layer to the picture, I search for the place of the family in the memoirs. My findings indicate that generally, there were two roles assigned to the family: one was to support the memoirists' schemes and the second was the role of the victim who fell because of the lamentable circumstances. I must note here that it was not depicted as one's source of subsistence or good standing in society. In the "list of priorities" the memoirists had in mind, the family ranked apparently lower than the love for the *patrie*, supporting our hypothesis that relatively new political ideas were given prominence over a fixed, older way of existing within a society. In addition to that, I understood this piece of representation as an indication that the attachment felt to the entirety of the Ottoman Empire was relevant to the lives of the memoirists.

My fourth axis is the educational background and occupational affiliations, which played an important role in the socialization of the newly rising individual. The first case in this regard is the Medical School, to which a good number of the

initial Unionists belonged. I once more try to place their ranking of the school amongst other loyalties. Moreover, I find that their self-description vaguely echoed the self-assigned characteristics that I described as our first point. The doctors tended to see themselves, and were perceived by their peers in turn, as knowledgeable and down-to-earth people. Emanating from this “intellectual of the people” image was also a certain sense of pride. The next group who played a significant role in the Committee as well as in politics is the soldiers. Apart from the common question of loyalty, I briefly sketch the militarized mindset and note the recent addition of the importance of the homeland to the occupation. After briefly looking at the generational gap between the soldiers, I move on to their encounters with the civilians, especially in the realm of politics. Following a very popular debate around 1908 and 31 March Incident, I come to the conclusion that the military wing of the Committee tended to militarize some processes within the Committee. Also, the civilian / soldier gap made a double-standard in the decision making process possible and, in some cases, even more viable than the alternatives.

From there on, I turn to a crucial question of the times: Who was legitimately entitled to a sense of duty? Whose job was it to save the country? Following the clues gained from the memoirs, I depict a “classic” intellectual, who was above all against the Hamidian regime and was well-versed in various new concepts such as the nation or the freedom. The Unionist mindset dictated that the “potential” accumulation of knowledge had to turn into “kinetic” action and the propeller behind this change would be a sort of zeal, *hamiyet*, which the anti-Committee politicians claimed was monopolized by the Committee. Continuing to point out some prominent aspects of this Unionist frame of reference, I dwell on the importance of

hope, which was mainly used to inspire better morale and was nearly devoid of any obvious references to a better future.

In addition to that, I try to define who a brigand (*komitacı*) was and what he did, although the answers I could harness were at their best only eclectic. Then, I consider the practical consequences of this brigand state of mind, as exemplified by the adage “*yok kanun, yap kanun.*” From my point of view, this practice could be read either as a nod to the value of improvisation and proper action or as a negotiation between the ideal (democratic and parliamentary) and practical (non-democratic and oligarchic) ways of governmental decision making.

Next, my attentions turn to other similar devices that served to obstruct the mechanizations of the Committee. My primary example is the self-professed silence of the memoirists concerning some “sensitive” issues, where the sensitivity was attributed to a historical context or to the nature of the business itself. After establishing the walls surrounding the group, I take a look at the foundational narratives and the self-made history of the Committee that included references to various movements and concepts.

My main conclusion is that the group of Young Turks seemed to consist of two persuasions; the majority belonged to the “demolisher” fraction of 1908, whose defining characteristic was the preference of action over deliberation. This group was also fiercely anti-Hamidian and favored a revolution for the improvement of conditions. The second group consisted of people who preferred to think beyond the Redecclaration of the Constitution of Midhat Paşa and who were a minority in the Committee. Going back to the brigand state of mind, I try to sketch how the “new” liberties were evaluated by the memoirists. For them, the liberties were welcome as

long as they were not used against them; thus they talked about “good” and “bad” ways of employing a freedom. Their belief was that the public should be taught how to use these new ideas, but ironically the only lengthy deliberation on the “free man” happens to be on the Bedevi, whom they perceived to be non-educated.

Their expressions on the survival of the state are also remarkable, since it made once more the point of conservative revolutionism. While the term is a blatant contradiction in terms, it fitted the Unionist bill perfectly, since a revolution was seen as the only way whereby the state could remain unscathed for times to come. The opposition to the Committee proposed different ways out such as saving the homeland one place at a time or rallying around the Sultan, which were not acceptable for the members of the Committee.

Finally, I try to grasp a very elusive point, namely how the memoirists positioned themselves in the grand historical narrative. Their perception was that winners made history and as such, their documentation (some of them included their memoirs in this group) would come in handy in the writing of this new history. The references to objectivity were in this context in line with their positivistic perception of history. They were also acutely aware of the cyclical perception of history which dictates that every power holder will eventually fall (including the reigning Sultan) and of the prominent role the revolutions play in history. My last point, which can also be read as an introduction to the next chapter, is about the marriage politics and how these alliances were reflective of other conceptions on national, religious and ethnic groups.

CHAPTER III
MOTHERS, SPIES, SIGNS:
UNIONIST PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN

The question of gender is in our context a very important one, since it ties together many other contemporary issues such as nationality or even the essential perception of society. I tried so far to highlight some of the aspects that formed the Unionists, and in their turn, were reshaped by the Unionists. For a moment, let us reconsider my grand emplotment of affairs; namely that the relationship between the Unionists and the homeland was a love story, complete with its platonic aspect and ubiquitous villains, i.e. the other nationalists. Keeping in line with my proposition of moving from the tangible to the intangible, from practical to ideal, I have come to the bridge that connects these two shores of the same narrative space.

For this bridge to be built, I have borrowed important stepping stones from Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, who sketched out five different ways in which the woman was integrated into the nation-state. The first was by giving birth to the members of the ethnic community, the second was by reproducing the boundaries which set ethnic communities apart, the third was by reproducing the ideology and the ethnic or national culture, the fourth was by standing as a sign that separated ethnic communities, and the fifth was by directly participating in economic, political and military struggles.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁵ Umut Özkırımlı. *Milliyetçilik Kuramları*, (Ankara: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2009), pp. 254-255.

Following the clues gained from my Ottoman data, I reduce the first and the third groups into “mothers.” The last way turns out to be “agents from ‘our’ side,” who were conceptualized as useful but powerless allies. It also includes the “spies from other side” to make the differentiation possible. I discard the second way, since my data did not yield sufficient examples; a study of the short-lived but significant “*Hukûk-ı Âile Karârnamesi*” would, for example, prove more fruitful in this respect.³⁶⁶ I find it beneficial to add another cluster to belabor the specific historical context, namely Westernization, also falling in line with Partha Chatterjee’s understanding of a post-colonial problem; that of building an identity which is distinctively separate than the Western one, yet still considered as modern.³⁶⁷ The relationship between various political stands such as Islamism, Westernism or Turkism, and the “situation” of women is so apparent that it is useless to make the point one more time.

Here, I shall merely recount the representations as found in the memoirs of the Unionists. Last but definitely not the least comes the fourth way, which happens to depict women as signs of ethnic or national community. I conceptualize this category as “gender as *mefkûre*” where the women and the homeland collapsed into one image to be loved and even die or kill for. During the time span I am interested in, such identities were in the process of being made, and therefore there are various responses and ways of subscribing to these. From there on, I shall discuss the

³⁶⁶ See, for example, Mehmet Ö. Alkan. “Tanzimat’tan Sonra ‘Kadın’ın Hukuksal Statüsü ve Devletin Evlilik Sürecine Müdahalesi,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, 50, (Summer 1990), pp. 85-95 for a look that focuses on an earlier period and touches upon the said law.

³⁶⁷ As understood by Nükhet Sirman. “Kadınların Milliyeti,” in: *Milliyetçilik*, edited by Tanıl Bora (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), p. 233.

practical and ideal appearances of the homeland and the nation in the upcoming chapter.

The one glaring shortcoming of this chapter, let alone of this thesis, happens to be the lack of female voices. Here it must be stressed that due to that, it may look like they were stripped out of possible agencies, but I believe that on the contrary, their agency was one that was strong enough to be signified by their absence. Here, I shall follow Nükhet Sirman, who makes us recall that "... the identities of national manhood or womanhood were not alien identities imposed from without, that these were features that the individuals willingly took up since they desired the ways of power that these identities offered."³⁶⁸ The one female voice I can pin down is not decidedly Unionist, but was close to the Unionist circles. Her education and her experiences make her extraordinary, and her views on gender deserve further attention as an "outlier" to general opinion:

He [Shakespere (sic)] made me feel clearly that there is such a thing as a difference between man and woman in art, in religion, and in all forms of culture. I cannot say that one is higher than the other, but they are distinctly different. The highest art and the highest beauty may be revealed by persons of either sex indifferently. Genius is a divine gift which either a woman or a man may have; and sometimes indeed it is a woman who may express the man's note in art while a man expresses the woman's. It does not depend on their sex; it depends on the quality of their souls. For me, both our poet Suleiman Dedé and Jesus Christ in their sublime note of love strike the supreme note of women in religion and art; while Mohammed and Shakespere [sic] sound the highest note of man, or rather the male note in the same realms.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 234.

"... millî kadınlık ya da erkeklığın, dışarıdan empoze edilen bir kimlik değil, kişilerin bu kimliğin sunduğu iktidar olma biçimlerini arzuladıkları için kendi istekleriyle üstlendikleri birer özellik olduğunu..."

³⁶⁹ Halide Edip Adivar. *Memoirs of Halide Edib*, (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2004), p. 221.

Although the passage has a distinct claim of advocating equality, all the examples given are selected from men. While Halide Edib assigns to “Shakespeare” a manly virtue in singing the praises of his barbaric ancestors, she feels that the Jewish and the Christian traditions were more womanly: frequent complaints and “sometimes very beautiful, but usually very hysterical” note behind the “manly” Moses and “the sublime yet womanly” ways of Christ are described as different than the “clear and well balanced creed” of Mohammad.³⁷⁰ She is struggling to keep her own account balanced, but her perception of the concept of gender seeps through. Nevertheless, no parallelism would be enough to close the gap between male and female worlds: Halide Edib writes that she was “not emancipated enough” to visit the headquarters of the magazine she wrote for.³⁷¹ She became later emancipated enough to address thousands of people in Sultanahmet Square on a nationalistic tenor or to serve on the war front, positioning herself out of her own accord in the national projects. Many women had similar tales of embeddedness, it is to them we now turn our attention to.

Mothers

The mothers play an important role in the lives of these people as well as in the nation-making process. For the postwar period, Birsen Talay Keşoğlu states that the ideal woman was fixed as one that stays at home and rears children.³⁷² There are a

³⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 222.

³⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 263.

³⁷² Birsen Talay Keşoğlu. “Son Dönem Osmanlı’da Türk Kimliğinin Oluşturulmasında Kadınlara Bıçilen Roller: Milliyetçilik ve Türk Kadını,” *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, 11, (Fall 2010), p. 162. She correctly ties this development to the end of the war, modernization and nationalism. I

couple of ways in which they were imagined as aiding the cause of their children. First was outright support to the point of declaring the house forbidden should they fail in their patriotic duty. Tahsin Uzer counts the prayers of his mother as his number one reason of success.³⁷³ Kazım Nami Duru's mother contributed to his son's cause by burying important documents in the front yard.³⁷⁴ Apart from prayers and other logistic support, there were those who urged their sons to press forward. Enver Bey's mother, for example, urged him not to come home before finishing the business as he took to the mountains.³⁷⁵ Ahmed Rıza's situation is particularly interesting because his mother was a foreigner and thus doubly "the other." While she was seemingly approving of the Palace decisions, Ahmed Rıza claims that he got another letter from his mother by English post in which she wrote: "Some have manipulated the nation and returned, if you should abandon your national duty and return to İstanbul, you will find the doors of the house closed."³⁷⁶ The cited examples are points in case that the mothers were indeed crucial figures in personal lives of the members of the Committee of Union and Progress. When contrasted with other appearances of female characters such as wives or sisters, they occur more frequently and are without an exception talked of with great reverence. The authors

believe the general atmosphere of the pre-war period was fertile ground for different roles as well.

³⁷³ Tahsin Uzer. *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi ve Son Osmanlı Yönetimi*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1987), p. 56.

³⁷⁴ Kazım Nami Duru. *"İttihat ve Terakki" Hatıralarım*, (İstanbul: Sucuoğlu Matbaası, 1957), p. 53.

³⁷⁵ Enver Paşa. *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları 1881-1908*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), p. 87.

³⁷⁶ Ahmed Rıza. *Meclis-i Mebusan ve Ayan Reisi Ahmed Rıza Bey'in Anıları*, (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1988), p. 20.
"... bir takımları milleti aldattılar, döndüler, şayet sende [sic] vatani görevini bırakarak İstanbul'a dönecek olursan evin kapısını kapalı bulursun."

of memoirs felt obviously more comfortable talking about their mothers than about their wives, or sisters and daughters, who became usually wives of other men. The category of motherhood, the elderly female wise person of the family, was enabling the men to discuss their feelings about them publicly whereas the categories of matrimonial partners, siblings or progeny provided them with no such liberty. The latter category usually appears at the margins of the marginal. What we have to keep in mind here is that the importance of margins springs from the fact that they are indeed delineating a structure; thus it is possible to argue that women are the frontiers of the private life of men at that time. The memoirs of men are, however, designed to make the reader familiar with a more public version of themselves. Therefore, the lack of female appearances in these memoirs should not be understood as a lack of love, intimacy or care. The demarcations of gender ruled supreme in the minds of these men at large, so much so that it does not only stand between the public and the private (with some allowed fuzziness, of course) it also marks the women outside of these lines as total strangers and possible threats to the *status quo*.

As the ideal “Ottoman Turkish mother” was at that time a fluid one, there were different ways of appropriating the image. For a mother with a different disposition, education or even intuition being a representative would be a service to the country; Rıza Nur's mother obviously thought of her son's troubles and advised him against it.³⁷⁷ Even if the position of the mother seemed to clash with the perceived duty of the sons towards the homeland, there was always a way of redeeming the sacred

³⁷⁷ Rıza Nur. *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, (İstanbul: Altındağ Yayınevi, 1967-1968), Vol. 1, p. 252.

mother: sometimes the mother's "unhelpfulness" was accorded to her religious beliefs or lack of education, the latter being the result to the "backward condition of women in the East."³⁷⁸ The unwillingness of the mother is thus presented as a societal problem and she is relieved of the guilt associated with the obstruction of national duty. Halil Halid, an early Young Turk, remembers the time when he tried to tell his mother that he would leave the Ottoman Empire for Europe. Her mother, who is portrayed by him as uneducated yet intelligent and tactful,³⁷⁹ became concerned: "[t]he poor Mussulman lady was terrified at the idea and began to put me such questions as ... And if I died there, should I desire to be buried according to the rites of the infidels?"³⁸⁰ This time, the mother's concern was similar to the case of Rıza Nur Bey, over the spiritual well-being of her son. Implicitly, we are given to understand that mothers were wise and good-intentioned. It was the lack of direction that made them look bad.

In some cases, mothers stand out as being equal to or signifying other concepts. For İhsan Aksoley, his mother is the one who stands as a signifier of homeland, often occupying the same narrative space. "I was very excited. The longing for homeland and my mother burns my heart. I wanted to leave the steamship and set foot on the soil of homeland and be united with my mother, whom I could not notify of my return to İstanbul, as soon as possible."³⁸¹ He often thinks about his mother when he

³⁷⁸ Halil Halid. *The Diary of a Turk*, (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1903), p. 19.

³⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁸⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 223-224.

³⁸¹ İhsan Aksoley. *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa'dan Kuva-yı Milliye'ye*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2009), p. 114.
"Büyük bir heyecan içindeydim. Vatan ve anne hasreti içimi yakıyor. Bir an evvel vapurdan çıkmak,

is away from home, because he lacks a girlfriend, he says,³⁸² and feels that his mother is the resort that he owes an explanation to.³⁸³ As usual, for him İhsan Aksoley's mother is an elevated figure who is nevertheless fixed on a pedestal and is immobile.

This divine figure of the mother created a problem if the actual mother belonged to what was perceived as the lower echelons of society, which were not the poorer ranks but the ranks of slaves. An inherent contradiction of the Ottoman society was that the girls of Circassian origins, who were beautiful and usually dwelled in the Imperial Harem, were nevertheless slaves. In case they were married off, they were assigned plentiful dowries and were thus also not wanting for money. However, there seems to have been one thing that their influential husbands, wealth or still-remaining beauty could not erase: their origins that assigned them a lower status than their free-born counterparts in the society. Rıza Tevfik's take on his mother reveals another instance where the mother stands as the primal oppressed figure that the son is supposed to be avenging. He says that he and Ali Kemal were taking the revenge of their mothers, both of whom were Circassian girls of the "kul" kind, by opposing bondage of any kind.³⁸⁴ Rıza Nur says quite frequently that he loves his mother³⁸⁵ and trusts her perception of things in many cases, since she is for him very

vatan toprağına basmak ve İstanbul'a döneceğimi haber veremediğim anneme kavuşmak istiyordum."

³⁸² *ibid.*, see: p. 32 and 55.

³⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 196.

³⁸⁴ Rıza Tevfik. *Biraz da Ben Konuşayım*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), p. 224.

³⁸⁵ Rıza Nur. *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, (İstanbul: Altındağ Yayınevi, 1967-1968), Vol. 1, pp. 56-57.

farsighted.³⁸⁶ Once she stated that being a representative in the Assembly was not a good job, since one could never make everybody happy. Rıza Nur later thought that she was indeed correct.³⁸⁷ He, along with İhsan Aksoley and Rıza Tevfik were obviously putting their mother on a pedestal, which falls in line with Birsen Talay Keşoğlu's observation for 1918-1919, namely that the "holy mother" should be protected and not allowed to mingle with the outer world. Such a view would condemn the women to immobility.³⁸⁸

To conclude, regardless of their degrees of patriotism or the "lack" of it, the mothers occupied a space where they signified the homeland or the zeal to fight against oppression. In the minds of the members, on the one hand they were supposed to remain in the private sphere and remain untouchable due to their holiness, on the other; they were the only group of women of whom the members could talk about freely. The women who had justifiable reasons for mobility and thus were more "public" in the eyes of the members were the not-yet-mother characters of their lives. The reasons, on their own, had to be solid ones too, and what other reason could be more solid than aiding the "grand cause?" Continuing from the "altruistic mother who helps his son" theme, which outweighs the "concerned" mother; we shall take a further look to other women who, willingly or unwillingly, participated in this decidedly male struggle as "spies from our side."

³⁸⁶ Rıza Nur. *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, (İstanbul: Altındağ Yayınevi, 1967-1968), Vol. 2, pp. 421, 423-424, and 440.

³⁸⁷ Rıza Nur, Vol. 1, pp. 252-253.

³⁸⁸ Talay Keşoğlu, p. 149.

Spies from “Our Side”

What was happening to the women who were not mothers (yet) then? They are presented as more or less suspicious figures. On the one hand, their services to the “grand cause” are scantily acknowledged and they are displayed as instances of fidelity, also falling in line with the concept of a “bourgeois” wife who stands by her husband through thick and thin. On the other hand, they are not entrusted with valuable information, as the *komitacı* state of mind is opposed to sharing the secrets of the Committee of Union and Progress with women, however tight-lipped or loyal they might be. As with other concepts this thesis tries to tackle, there is a two-layered approach to women on the part of the members of the Committee in this category as well. Seemingly, the woman is a necessary part of one’s life, but when it comes to matters that really matter, they are not *that* indispensable.

Having set the framework as such, let me now dwell on more specific examples such as the variety or the scope of duties assigned to female supporters. The papers of Bahaeddin Şakir give the number of “female members” (*kadın âzâ*) as 40, who were used mainly in the transportation of the documents.³⁸⁹ We neither know how he acquired this number, nor the names of the women included in that list. In most cases, the assignment of the women was limited to the transportation of documents which were perceived as dangerous, i.e. would cause the exile of the carrier to the far corners of the Ottoman Empire. Another similar task was, for example, not letting the police search the house.

³⁸⁹ Bahaeddin Şakir. *Bahaeddin Şakir Bey’in Bıraktığı Vesikalara Göre İttihat ve Terakki*, (Ankara: Alternatif Yayınları, 2004), p. 523.

There existed good reasons for assigning such jobs to women: women were not subject to the vigorous surveillance system that characterized Sultan Abdülhamid II's regime; besides they could not be seized and interrogated as easily. The Committee took advantage of these loopholes as it saw fit. The mother-in-law of Manyasizade Refik, for example, was one of the many women who transported risky documents.³⁹⁰ Fuat Balkan also states that women were used for correspondence.³⁹¹ One interesting case is conveyed by Kazım Karabekir, who reports a similar case of a certain Meveddet Hanım, who acted as a courier between Selanik and İstanbul. To stop the gossip, states Kazım Karabekir, Manyasizade Refik Bey performed a “political marriage” with this lady.³⁹² The interests invested in this enterprise were simply too high, so much so that Manyasizade Refik Bey felt compelled to withdraw Meveddet Hanım from the domain of the public view, where she was disdained as a breaker of the *status quo* through gossip, to his own domestic sphere. We lack the information about the rest of the affair, but we can safely assume that the gossip must have stopped and the domestic veil covering up this very public duty held for a while.

One also has to recall that such activities had an expiration date; the Constitution was declared in 1908 and women were inherently anticipated to take up their domestic duties and be glad with it until their help became indispensable again during the National Struggle. İhsan Aksoley provides another, albeit later, instance of

³⁹⁰ Enver Paşa, p. 59.

³⁹¹ Fuat Balkan. *İlk Türk Komitacısı Fuat Balkan'ın Hatıraları*, (İstanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1998), pp. 118-119.

³⁹² From: Enver Paşa, p. 10; Kazım Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti Neden Kuruldu? Nasıl Kuruldu? Nasıl İdare Ohundu?* (İstanbul: 1982), pp. 279-280.

the group as Saliha Hanım, the wife of Ruşen Eşref, who helped to transport a very important document concerning the life of Mustafa Kemal Paşa.³⁹³ She also carried a revolver,³⁹⁴ quite an unusual feat for the typical Ottoman woman. İhsan Aksoley calls her “my friend from National Struggle.”³⁹⁵ Hüsametdin Ertürk’s wife carried around dossiers while her husband was in prison.³⁹⁶ We mentioned that the protection and management of the domestic sphere and the documents contained within were also part of the role the women were supposed to perform. Celal Bayar’s wife was, for instance, courageous enough to prevent the police officer from performing a search in her house.³⁹⁷ Halil Menteşe’s wife once helped him to get rid of “unethical” sacks of flour. She gave these to Kızılay and to a sheik.³⁹⁸

The support of wives could take different shapes. Ali Fuat Bey supplies us with a peculiar story of that sort. According to him, there was a reshuffling of offices in the Assembly around 1909. Gabriyel Efendi was not willing to declare his approval of the Committee of Union and Progress, so *Tanîn* stepped in to campaign against him. As a result, he sued the newspaper, which was finally condemned to pay a fine to Gabriyel Efendi. The newspaper gathered the money from its readers among which

³⁹³ Aksoley, pp.144-146. The document was a list of questions which were found on Mustafa Sagir, proof that he was planning an assassination.

³⁹⁴ *ibid.*, pp.139-140.

³⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.147.

“... benim Milli Mücadele arkadaşımdır...”

³⁹⁶ Hüsametdin Ertürk / Samih Nafiz Tansu. *İki Devrin Perde Arkası*, (İstanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, 1957), p. 365.

³⁹⁷ Celal Bayar. *Ben de Yazdım*, (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1966), Vol. 3, p. 924.

³⁹⁸ Halil Menteşe. *Osmanlı Mebusan Meclisi Reisi Halil Menteşe'nin Anıları*, (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1986), p. 179.

the wives of the Unionists were a significant presence.³⁹⁹ Yet another example of the crucial household assignment comes from a former Head of the Assembly, Halil Menteşe. Once, the story goes, he was lying ill with severe bronchitis. Talat Bey called his wife to the phone and told her that her husband was needed to serve his country, so he had to be functional for the morning. The wife did all she could and Halil Menteşe could go back to the negotiations the following day.⁴⁰⁰ The wives in these instances were qualified enough to assist their husbands through a variety of problems; yet their resourcefulness fell short of their full inclusion in the lives of their husbands.

There is another group of women who were used in minor to medium intelligence-gathering. Again, their help was enlisted only as far as the Committee found it useful. After they completed their missions, they were expected to remain silent and resume their previous roles. Enver Bey, for one, states that his sister helped to his schemes concerning his brother-in-law, the husband of the mentioned sister. The issue at hand was some photographs and lists which were in possession of the said brother in law, Nazım Bey, which were leaked by his wife to Enver Bey.⁴⁰¹ Another such “patriotic” story is told by Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu. The wife of Count Corinald, who was working at the Italian Embassy at the time, had an Armenian wife, Nazlı Hanım, who anonymously smuggled the Italian plans to Galip Kemali Bey. He attributes her loyalty to her father’s occupation: he was the money-

³⁹⁹ Ali Fuat Türkgeldi. *Görüp İşittiklerim*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1949), p. 50.

⁴⁰⁰ Menteşe, p. 209.

⁴⁰¹ Enver Paşa, p. 51.

changer and banker (*sarrâf*) of the Palace.⁴⁰² This narrative is interesting, since it plays with the concepts of nationality as well: Nazlı Hanım is not construed as a Turk, it is stated clearly that she is Armenian and stays true to her Ottoman origins. Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu's narrative is usually punctured with Republican perceptions of nations and foreign policies, but here he slips into an older frame of mind, where people can place their allegiance on belonging to an empire.

The most striking story of this sort comes from Hüsametdin Ertürk. The principle actors involved are Galip Vardar, a member of *Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa*, and the daughter of Sadrazam Damad Ferid Paşa's private secretary, who was also a student in American College for Girls. He pretended to be a student of *Dârü'l-fünûn* in order to get to know her better.⁴⁰³ She was apparently smitten and refrained to report the issue to the police. Bit by bit, Galip Vardar was able to gain her trust and thus could access valuable information.⁴⁰⁴ The "affair" ended when Galip Vardar joined the National Struggle and had to leave for Anatolia. The unnamed heroine of the story came to resent her father and supported the Nationalists. Hüsametdin Ertürk notes that she shall be remembered as an anonymous contributor to the national cause.⁴⁰⁵

These women are in a more precarious position than the mothers: they are "good" and are allowed to occupy a lower pedestal than the mothers -note the "my friend from National Struggle" rubric- as long as they function in a prefixed manner.

⁴⁰² Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu. *Hariciye Hizmetinde 30 Sene, 1892-1922: Mutlakiyet, Meşrutiyet ve Millî Mücadele Yıllarında Şahidi veya Amili Olduğum Hâdiselere Ait Vesikalar*, (İstanbul: Maarif Basımevi, 1949-1955), Vol. 1, p. 266.

⁴⁰³ Ertürk, p. 397.

⁴⁰⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 399-401.

⁴⁰⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 401-402.

Once their part is over, they are erased from the scene of the memoirs. Their appearance in the narrative may serve another purpose as well: the masculine men of the stories proved their manliness by manipulating women without even becoming attached to them. Their love was only reserved for the homeland, the rhetoric goes, which gave them legitimate grounds to exploit women along the way.

I mentioned earlier that their agency was situated even through its superficial lack; therefore it can be easily assumed that not all women were content with this state of affairs. After all, why should they lose the stakes they worked and suffered for? Thus, there arises also the question of a possible Unionist lady. Despite their various “services,” they were never counted as a full-member of the group, yet apparently, some of the wives of the members had to be registered to the Committee of Union and Progress because the oath ceremony took place in their houses, making it difficult to keep secrets.⁴⁰⁶ Even so, it is hard to imagine they were let into the discreet mechanisms of the Committee and we encounter no evidence to back up such an approach. Halide Hanım states that there was a female *İttihâdçı* around 1908, who was the daughter of Cevdet Paşa, Emine Semiye.⁴⁰⁷ In her book about Emine Semiye Hanım, Kadriye Kaymaz states that Semiye Hanım was active in propaganda around 1908 in Selanik, also giving speeches.⁴⁰⁸ After the Declaration of the Constitution, she grew disillusioned with what she perceived as the disregard of the rights of women and pursued these rights in another way.⁴⁰⁹ She is the mark of

⁴⁰⁶ Duru, p. 32.

⁴⁰⁷ Adivar, p. 255.

⁴⁰⁸ Kadriye Kaymaz. *Gölgedeki Kalem: Emine Semiye*, (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2009), p. 51.

⁴⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 54.

erosion *par excellence*: while Halide Edib became famous around the National Struggle by lending her support to it, Emine Semiye Hanım was left in darkness, probably because she picked the wrong cause. Another possible scenario would suggest that the Unionists only used her as a tool to gain some sort of popular support, which would fall in line with the pragmatic schemes the members often fell back to. One should not expect her to be mentioned in the official minutes of the Committee of Union and Progress, but it is worth noting that she is not talked about in the memoirs as well. The degree of organization among the female supporters of the Committee is not very well known. Ahmed İhsan Tokgöz writes about a Women’s Union Club in Divanyolu,⁴¹⁰ which may or may not be related to the Committee of Union and Progress.

In line with the sentiments of suspicion surrounding the non-mothers, there is one anecdote that displays specifically how these feelings surface in the memoirs. Moreover, it is one of the few instances where you can see a woman looking for a way out and finding it, thereby providing us with a small glimpse of what might have been when Ottoman women decided to take action. The story is about a wife who ratted on her high-ranking husband (*eczâcîbaşı* for the Palace) and caused him to be exiled to Erzurum. Later, she was decorated with a *Şefkat Nişân-ı Hümayûnu* and taken to the palace where she enjoyed a good life. Nizamettin Delilbaşı’s rubric for this woman is “female snake” (*dişi yılan*).⁴¹¹

⁴¹⁰ Ahmet İhsan. *Matbuat Hatıralarım*, (İstanbul: Ahmet İhsan Matbaası, 1930-1931), Vol. 2, p. 74.

⁴¹¹ *Canlı Tarihler*. (İstanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1946), Vol. 4: Nizamettin Delilbaşı, p. 14.

Gendering the “Other”

So far I tried to sketch what the female figure looks like from the lens of the Unionist: Altruistic mothers in close relationship with the concept of homeland or civilian *aides-de-camp* employed in various secondary businesses of the Committee of Union and Progress despite a certain lack of trust. In order to complete the fictional picture, I shall now turn my attention to women who appeared as the other. First, I shall examine various stories of women which crop up in the memoirs and which demonstrate different facets of being alien, be it because of ethnicity or gender. Second, I shall focus on a small yet significant group that portrays the “danger” within this unknown creatures; namely spies from the other side.

The first group would be the European women, who drew comment mainly because of their decidedly different chances of visibility, springing from their more “public” life. İhsan Aksoley recounts his encounters with European women with a certain amount of fascination and wants us to believe that he was seen likewise as a curious, strange, possibly oriental, subject.⁴¹² For the members of the Committee who were used to see women in more secluded environments, this seems to have been quite a change. Sultan Abdülhamid II compares the Turkish woman to the European ones and concludes the former to be superior; more beautiful and loyal. “The European women are too free to be considered proper women.”⁴¹³ The reverse reading of this quip would of course suggest that “the proper woman” was, above all,

⁴¹² Aksoley, p. 29 and 99.

⁴¹³ Sultan Abdül Hamid. *Siyasi Hatıratım*, (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1975), p. 199. “Avrupalı kadın, tam kadın sayılabilmek için fazla serbesttir.”

a constricted one. Elsewhere, he declared that the women had a “tickling effect” (*huylandırıcı tesir*), but were nevertheless needed as companions. The Unionists were neither alone in their appreciation of women’s “dangerous” qualities nor in their superficial understanding of the “bourgeois” wife.

Sometimes the other woman in the shape of the mistress was two times the other, since she differed ethnically. Ahmet Cevat Emre states that, while he was married he also kept a Russian mistress. It does not seem to be a secret.⁴¹⁴ The anecdote is interesting from many perspectives. If we fall back on our distinction between the public and the private spheres, which is in the process of making, we would have to note one group of women who were decidedly “public”: the prostitutes. This is the sole group which is missing from the corpus entirely, except for this little note. As stated before, one should keep in mind that the memoirs also showcase a man’s personality and public appearance; therefore it is no wonder that there is only one confessed instance of such behavior, which would probably be considered as indecent. Another reason for the suppression may be that the Republican regime, where the majority of these memoirs were penned, frowned upon multiple spouses, let alone upon foreign partners.

There is another group of women who have been observed by some members of the Committee of Union and Progress and were noted down as being distinctively different. Cami Baykurt’s memoirs include his observations about Arab women. For

⁴¹⁴ Ahmet Cevat Emre. *İki Neslin Tarihi: Mustafa Kemal Neler Yaptı*, (İstanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, 1960), p. 100.

Cami Baykurt, there were the free Bedevi women and not-so-free Arab women.⁴¹⁵ He observes a similar differentiation among the female population of Murzuk, Fizan. While the “*mahcûbe*,” the female members of wealthier families, would never leave the house; the girls of the lower echelons, called *benât-ı murzûk*, could go to the market and even mingle with men.⁴¹⁶ However, this sort of liberty was not limitless since there was a strict social code to follow. If any of the women thought she had been slighted by men, she could call on other women who then displayed their discontent as a sort of social boycott.⁴¹⁷ In one of Cami Baykurt’s stories, the women appear as the social force which drive men to battle and prevent any withdrawal. The way Baykurt displays these women highlights their hazardous aspects to the extreme. “When the women start with their *zigarit*, the men cannot show defeat before the horrible face of death; the fate of a man who ran away from a battle in front of women is humiliation in his tribe, and death is better than such humiliation. Sometimes the sound of a female war *zigarit* is for the Bedevi the sound of destiny.”⁴¹⁸ The women are presented as *femme fatales* in this example, but a careful reading between the lines would reveal that they are reflecting a social custom and not particularly aiming at killing the men. Muhittin Birgen reports of the Beirutian scene as one that belonged to women. The scene itself was filled with extravagance;

⁴¹⁵ Cami Baykurt. *Son Osmanlı Afrikası’nda Hayat*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2009), see: p. 68 for Bedevi women; and, p. 70 for Arab women.

⁴¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 158.

⁴¹⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 160-162.

⁴¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 76.

“Kadınlar zigarite başlayınca erkekler ölümün korkunç yüzü karşısında yılgınlık gösteremiyor; kadınların önünde cenkten kaçan erkeğin aşireti içinde nasibi hor görülmeği ve ölüm böylesine hor görülmeğten iyidir. Bazen kadının cenk zigariti Bedevi için kaderin sesidir.”

he cites the way Beirutian women were playing poker.⁴¹⁹ The differences as well as the similarities between the rural and urban scenes are worth noting. The activities in which the women engage are different, but their “tickling” effect is manifest through driving their men to battle or through simply playing poker.

The women were in themselves a danger, foreign women were perceived as being even more dangerous. Cemil Topuzlu recalls how the *Şeyhülislam* advised him against the women of Paris.⁴²⁰ This is perhaps the reason why Dr. Cemil approached the idea of getting married to his professor Dr. Pean’s spinster daughter with utmost caution.⁴²¹ Kazım Karabekir believes that the Bulgarians were penetrated by a “*komitaci*” spirit; so much so that even women were caught up in it.⁴²²

Spies from the “Other Side”

As there were “good” spies who helped the national cause, there was bound to be spies from the other side. Muhittin Birgen names a certain Viktorya Mitran, who was making efforts towards a French-Turkish friendship, and was “perhaps” working for the French intelligence as well. He adds that she performed important feats during the Balkan Wars which benefited the Ottoman Empire.⁴²³ The same woman appears as a salon lady in Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın’s memoirs. His representation of her is that

⁴¹⁹ Muhittin Birgen. *İttihat ve Terakki’de On Sene*, (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2006), Vol. 1, p. 266.

⁴²⁰ Cemil Topuzlu. *İstibdat, Meşrutiyet, Cumhuriyet Devirlerinde 80 Yıllık Hatıralarım*, (İstanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 2010), p. 59.

⁴²¹ *ibid.*, p. 66.

⁴²² Karabekir, p. 262.

⁴²³ Birgen, p. 160.

she seemed to be a *İttihâdçi* and entertained a politically minded circle of people in her “Sen Antuan” apartment. She was acquainted with the Arab circle as well; Mehmed Arslan, representative of Lazkiye, and Şekip Arslan frequented her salon. Her zealous ways caused Hüseyin Cahit to think about the possibility of her being a spy.⁴²⁴ Viktorya Mitran seems to be part of a certain political circle that was close to the Unionists, yet her actions were followed with a certain degree of mistrust, her inclusion into a more intimate group of Unionists was, despite her best efforts, not very possible.

Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu’s tale of a female spy is more intriguing, since occurs within diplomatic circles and is thus more perilous. A certain “Mösyö M. Asher” from Israel was frequenting the Sinaian diplomatic circles in Romenia, to which Galip Kemali Bey also belonged. One day, Madam Asher asked Kemali Bey if *Erkânıharbiye Reisi* also attended a certain meeting. Surprised, Kemali Bey kindly replied that politics were uncalled for in their leisure time. Later, it was revealed to Kemali Bey that the woman in question spied for the Russian side, for a certain Frederick.⁴²⁵ Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu’s tendency to look for a sinister motive behind a foreign woman’s attentions is actually more widespread. İsmail Kemal Bey talks about a certain Madam Frankfurten, wife of the manager of the Austrian Lloyd at that time. He claims that she acted as a go-between to rejuvenate the reputation of the company, which was badly hurt due to the recent boycotts.⁴²⁶ In a similar vein, Eşref Kuşçubaşı recalls a certain “Madam” of Cebel-i Lübnan, who approached him

⁴²⁴ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. *Siyasal Anılar*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1976), p. 76.

⁴²⁵ Söylemezoğlu, Vol. 1, pp. 185-186.

⁴²⁶ İsmail Kemal. *İsmail Kemal Bey’in Hatıratı*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2009), p. 228.

with a plea of help. In the following days, the narrative goes; she did not break off the contact and proposed to give a feast in honor of Eşref Bey, who immediately thought about the female spies in history and concluded that she, too, was perhaps one.⁴²⁷

The image of these women was painted differently than Ottoman women: they were more at liberty with their conduct towards men, which also may hint clandestinely at sexual largesse. On the other hand, the freedom that is attached to this group is not a positive trait in the Unionist picture, since it implies an unwelcome meddling in public affairs as well as a break from their “ideal” structure of womanhood. The female “spies,” as depicted by men, usually had various resources at hand. If they were poor and their level of life experience failed to show as financial resources, however, they were still seen as untrustworthy figures. One of the most striking spy stories in this respect is narrated by Ali Münif Yeğena. After the Armenian Deportation,⁴²⁸ a certain Madam Çeçeyan, whose son and husband went missing during the Deportation and thus left her with her daughter, came to their door and proposed to take care of their newborn baby. Ali Münif Bey eyed the proposal with suspicion, since he did not believe that an “enlightened” (*münevver*) and “mature” (*güngörmüş*) woman would really sign up for the job. She pleaded with them until they gave in. After a while, so Yeğena claims, it turned out that the woman working for the Armenian committees was reading and stealing documents related to the Armenian Deportation. He was surprised, when the few documents he

⁴²⁷ Eşref Kuşçubaşı. *Hayber 'de Türk Cengi*, (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1997), pp. 27-30.

⁴²⁸ Ali Münif [Yeğena]. *Ali Münif Bey'in Hatıraları*, (İstanbul: İsis, 1996), p. 97.

failed to destroy later showed up during the military court trials.⁴²⁹ Although Armenians were at that time still citizens of Ottoman Empire, Ali Münif Bey's mind tended to think of them as "the others" and thus, their spy was a spy of the "other" side. If one recalls the "good" spy Nazlı Hanım who was mentioned earlier, one can see that the pragmatic Unionist mind was keen to classify people according to their level of use, other concerns such as nationality or gender were secondary to that.⁴³⁰

I must note here that although objectively both "spies" seem to engage in a similar line of business, the spying of the other side is depicted as more dangerous, more sophisticated and definitely more sinister. To counter the examples above, the instances of male spying is not noted as vigorously; except for Mustafa Sagir, which was too great an issue to miss and also happens later. The reasons for the inclusion of such stories is of course open to debate; one suggestion would be that the members of the Committee of Union and Progress were trying to build a hard-boiled public image for themselves: if they could resist the beauty of women, what could possibly sway their opinion and their loyalty to the cause?

Gender(ed) Indicators of Westernization

The status of women in the Ottoman Empire was, in the minds of many Young Turks, directly linked to standards of civilization and Westernization. Cemile Burcu Kartal, in her study about the "appropriate women" of the Ottoman Empire, agrees

⁴²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 97.

⁴³⁰ p. 110.

with the opinion of Fatmagül Berktaş and states that this exact point was a break-point on the road from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic: the Republic saw it as a necessity of modernization to remove the Islamic aspect of the women, which was elaborated upon in the Second Constitutional Period.⁴³¹ Halil Halid provides an early example of that when he discusses his mother's status with these words: "My mother is a woman of tact and great natural intelligence, but owing to the backward condition of women in the East, due to their surroundings, her intelligence has not had the benefit of culture."⁴³² She was a fatalist and could only read, but not write.⁴³³ The usual way of rearing female children dictated that they should not be taught how to write so that there was no possibility for them to become talisman-writing witches. The real motive behind this semi-literacy, explains Halil Halid, was to prevent the girls from writing love letters.⁴³⁴ The "backwardness" he talks about extends to the children, since a semi-educated mother could hardly be expected to raise educated children.⁴³⁵ This seems like the run-of-the-mill Unionist public opinion on female education: there was nothing inherently lacking in Ottoman women, they just needed to be thoroughly educated so that they could become good mothers. Similar to all "liberties" the Unionist mind was ready to argue for; there was an implicated limit to it: the daughters of the Ottoman Empire should receive

⁴³¹ Cemile Burcu Kartal. "II. Meşrutiyet'tin [sic] Cumhuriyet'e Mirası". *İ.Ü. Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, No. 38 (Mart 2008), p. 234. From: Fatmagül Berktaş. "Türkiye'de Kadın Hareketi: Tarihsel Bir Deneyim", *Kadın Hareketinin Kurumsallaşması, Fırsatlar ve Rizikolar*. (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1994), p. 22.

⁴³² Halil Halid, p. 19.

⁴³³ *ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 55.

enough education to be mothers, and little else. Yet it is interesting to note the loving tune of Halil Halid's remarks on his mother which buttresses our former point of the holy mother.

The point of education is not elaborated in detail in the memoirs, since it was perceived as secondary to the issue of seclusion, i.e. veiling and "*kaçgöç*," which is definitely more pertinent to the daily life. About veiling, Muhittin Birgen talks about the views of Ziya Gökalp on the point of family and women. Gökalp thought that the "*eş*" -which means both "one of two equal things" or wife- of a Turkish man should not be covered, Talat Paşa seems to have agreed whereas Enver Paşa pursued another project with his ordinances.⁴³⁶ Under Enver Paşa, states Muhittin Birgen, the Central Commandery in İstanbul issued an ordinance for the lengthening of women's *çarşaf* to the soles of the feet. The reinforcement of the ordinance proved to be difficult, since the officials kept scolding the relatives of the Committee of Union and Progress members. The practice was later dropped.⁴³⁷

The issue of female apparel was one closely associated with Islam within the debates of the time, but the religious aspect makes no appearances in the memoirs. Because of its connection to religion, the opinions on women's clothing also serve to identify the standpoints of different members; which speaks for the heterogeneity of the group. We may deduce for example that Enver Paşa leaned towards a conservation of what he perceived as religious rules, whereas other members were not so keen and even had different conceptions of women's clothing in public life. A

⁴³⁶ Birgen, pp. 368, 374, and 382.

⁴³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 240.

good example is provided by Muhittin Birgen, who was taking his own female relatives to operas in Vienna with hats.⁴³⁸ There was even talk of “unveiling” the women amongst the intellectuals once the Constitution was declared, but it failed to happen.⁴³⁹ Within the context of constitutional rights, it was possible to debate various sorts of “freedom” where the attires of women would be listed with the rights of the workers.

As already pointed out, such debates were not followed to their logical conclusions and the conversation closed with the declaration on behalf of the ruling elite that “freedom,” as a concept, was widely “misunderstood.” The measurement of freedom as well as Westernization seemed to depend on women. Halil Halid saw the equation between apparel, especially female, and perceived degree of civilization earlier. His account is interesting since he addresses a foreign audience and feels the need to explain the situation almost from scratch. He expresses also a certain sort of sympathy to the European point of view. According to the European mind, he states, one had to dress as a European to prove he was civilized.⁴⁴⁰ The Turks took up this point as early as the reign of Sultan Mahmud II.⁴⁴¹ The most difficult gap occurred in the woman’s clothing: “If the Turkish government would make the women of harems discard their ‘barbarous’ veils, and go about like European women, and urge all its subjects to put on European costumes, and also hats instead of the fez or the turban, its action would doubtless be hailed in many quarters as the beginning of the

⁴³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 369.

⁴³⁹ Ahmet İhsan, Vol. 2, p. 27.

⁴⁴⁰ Halil Halid, p. 137.

⁴⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 139.

civilization in Turkey.”⁴⁴² I must note that this is one of the very few examples where male apparel was also mentioned.

On a fundamentally different note, Şadiye Osmanoğlu, daughter of Sultan Abdülhamid II, hints at the different kinds and social functions under the umbrella term “veil.” She remembers that the thin veil (*yaşmak*) actually served to enhance female beauty: “the tulle, being transparent, served not to conceal the covered area but to reveal more transparently and caused the glances to linger on such areas for a longer time.”⁴⁴³ The privilege, no doubt, belonged to the higher echelons of women who actually could afford such tulle veils. As such, it implied social eligibility and belonged to a system of signs which were about to change.

Ahmet Cevat Emre is another Unionist who links progress directly to “*kaçgöç*” (*purdah*) and says that it is a very salient tradition.⁴⁴⁴ The term itself does not refer to the Muslim female apparel solely, it is a more general form of seclusion which includes social rules such as women’s invisibility at home to men who are not related to them or the necessity of a male relative’s accompaniment during their travels. If I take Deniz Kandiyoti’s use of Carol Pateman’s arguments⁴⁴⁵ on the dawning of the modern life to be based on a separation between the public and the private spheres to be true, I should reach the conclusion that this was the time when such a discussion

⁴⁴² *ibid.*, p. 138.

⁴⁴³ Şadiye Osmanoğlu. *Babam Abdülhamid*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2011), p. 29.
“Tül, şeffaf olduğu için, örtülen yerleri gizlemeye değil, daha şeffaf bir şekilde açmaya hizmet ederdi ve nazarları buralarda daha uzun müddet tutup oyalamaya sebep olurdu.”

⁴⁴⁴ Emre, p. 125.

⁴⁴⁵ Deniz Kandiyoti. *Identity and its Discontents: Women and the nation*. <http://www.wluml.org/node/482> accessed on 18.08.2012.

of modernity became relevant to a small fraction of Ottoman society. Women, whose situation went not debated for a long time, were now seen as signifiers of an ancient divide between the outside and the inside. The application of what Ahmet Cevat Emre called a “tradition” varied vastly according to social status and local culture. A corresponding commentary on the link between social status and purdah comes from Ahmet Bedevi Kuran, who recalls that in Kula near Manisa, only women of high status such as soldiers’ or public servants’ wives would observe the *kaçgöç*, the rest was freer.⁴⁴⁶ Another example, this time about the importance of the local culture, is provided by Şerafeddin Mağmumi who elaborates on this tradition when he sees the Arab villages around Cebel-i Lübnan, where women cover only their hair - Mağmumi calls it “pure and sincere way of covering”- and engage in chitchat with male villagers. Mağmumi would agree that women’s excessive veiling and the practice of non-mixing (*adem-i ihtilât*) are obstacles to progress.⁴⁴⁷

Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu elaborates on the point from another perspective: the wives of the diplomats, who represent Turkey in the world. Here we must observe that women were selected out to stand for an entire nation, separating the Turks from the others. Söylemezoğlu is pleased with the “honorable” ways of Turkish women and states that the random marriages should be left to the European colleagues.⁴⁴⁸ He does not discuss the issue of veiling *per se*, since he writes in Republican times and is embedded in that ideology more; but we still see that he

⁴⁴⁶ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Harbiye Mektebi’nde Hürriyet Mücadelesi*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2009), p. 4.

⁴⁴⁷ Şerafeddin Mağmumi. *Bir Osmanlı Doktorunun Anıları: Yüzyıl Önce Anadolu ve Suriye*, (İstanbul: Boyut Kitapları, 2008), p. 254.

⁴⁴⁸ Söylemezoğlu, Vol. 1, pp. 317-318.

expects the women to observe a certain degree of modesty, which is one of the main arguments pressed forward in favor of the veil. The “random” European marriage is also in stark contrast with the supposedly deliberate pairing of the Turkish nation, where the carrier of the sign is -once more- the women.

Women were not just perceived as signifiers, but also victims of the process of Westernization. In other words, women were the mirror which reflected the anxieties about the new, unpredictable, and thus threatening and “modern” order. Their borderline position made them even more vulnerable. Muhittin Birgen, for example, recalls a story of “... a poor girl who could not digest the half Western education she got ...” who was seen with a theatre artist in Beyoğlu and was treated badly in police station. She was later exiled to İzmit, and is dubbed by Birgen as “... one of the first victims of Turkish women’s modernization ...”⁴⁴⁹ As we have seen before, Birgen is more liberal-minded when it comes to the unveiled public appearances of women but even for his taste, the “freedom” graciously granted to women did not extend to certain areas. A line had to be drawn and going around in public accompanied by foreign men was apparently the limit to that misunderstood liberty.

The most vivid case in point comes from Rıza Nur, who is an outlier to our sample of members not only because of his different political stance after 1908 but because of the different tenor of his narrative. He tends to be too honest for comfort. According to him, his friend “S.” had an adventurous wife who had multiple affairs. After three pages of colorful story-telling, Rıza Nur concludes:

⁴⁴⁹ Birgen, pp. 77-78

“... aldığı yarım garp terbiyesini hazmedememiş biçare bir kıza ... Türk kadınının ilk asrileşme kurbanlarından biri olan ...”

The past and current situation of this woman is a good example of the eventual seduction of a woman who comes into contact with men. The situation is a natural one. I know its beginning. She was unable to look a man in the eye. Here it is, today's alafraŋga life in İstanbul is making hundreds and thousands of such victims.⁴⁵⁰

Here, the woman is presented as the victim *par excellence*: According to Rıza Nur, if let alone, she would have led a completely happy life; but now that she was corrupted by foreign influences, she was bound to fall from grace. For this case and the case before, one must note that the corrupting influence is attributed to a vague concept of "outside." From my point of view, it is possible to link these examples to a general apprehension of trading the familiar status quo for an unknown future. The change is considered inevitable and for some, it is even possibly beneficial, but the fact remains that it is also bound to be unstable. It would be impossible for the masculine members of the Committee of Union and Progress, who were raised for a military career or grew up in a militaristic environment, to confess to such feelings openly. Nevertheless, the sentiment of fear is one that crops up being articulated through a variety of prisms; gender happened to be just one of them.⁴⁵¹

Women as Signifiers of *Mefkûre*

There is no doubt that the process of homeland and nation making was discussed in

⁴⁵⁰ Nur, Vol. 2, p. 394.
Emphasis belongs to Rıza Nur.

⁴⁵¹ For other sorts of anxieties that manifested themselves during the nation-making process, see: Taner Akçam. *From Empire To Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide*, (London & New York: Zed Books, 2004), especially: pp. 59-114.

relation with women. In one particular case, we can observe that the love for a woman and the love for an ideal were collapsed into one story. Although Şevket Süreyya is a later example we have at hand, it is too intriguing to be left out. He admits that he was much influenced by a novel of Müfide Ferit, *Aydemir*, published in 1918,⁴⁵² in which the hero sacrificed his love because of her Western way of life, and took his ideals to be his only goal in life.⁴⁵³ The book *Aydemir* in itself is an interesting one, since it is a utopia written by a woman, coming chronologically only second to Halide Edib's attempt, *Yeni Turan* in 1912. Süreyya Bey's love for a girl in Nuha, Sitare, is similarly ill-fated. His description of the girl is somewhat Orientalist; he states that she was "a true beauty of the East" and likens her to the "daughter of the Fairy Padişah."⁴⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Sitare was engaged to an insensitive man and eventually became his wife, urging Şevket Süreyya to pursue his own life.⁴⁵⁵ He does so, and takes the sister of a Turkish officer-cum-teacher as wife, with whom he was still together as he was writing his memoirs.⁴⁵⁶ I think in his mind Sitare and the *Turan* were linked together, both dwelling in the lands of the imaginary. His later disillusionment with the concept parallels his new companion, who, however loyal, falls short of the aim and remains nameless. Needless to say, Şevket Süreyya picked

⁴⁵² Murat Belge gives the date as 1918 on (<http://kaknus.com.tr/new/index.php?q=en/node/745> as accessed on 24.08.2012), whereas Şevket Süreyya Aydemir dates it back to 1917: Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Suyu Arayan Adam*, (Ankara: Öz Yayınları, 1959), p. 140.

⁴⁵³ Aydemir, pp. 141-142. The theme seems to be a fertile one, for another example, see: *Handan* by Halide Edip.

⁴⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 184.
"Hakiki bir Şark güzeliydi."

⁴⁵⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 233-234.

⁴⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 237.

“Aydemir” as his surname in 1934.

The portion of the population who could not live up to the expectation of saving the homeland was relegated to a lesser level, that of the women. The ideal mother who was revered and the “regular” woman who was eyed with suspicion melt together in the patriarchal pot to the level of “*kari*,” plain woman who leads a lesser existence than men. The term itself is a rude word for a woman and is usually used in a derogatory manner. Enver Bey draws the line very clearly: he either dies like a broad “*kari*” or he will die now in a manly manner, so that people would remember him by his good reputation.⁴⁵⁷ Cemal Savaşkan believes that during the Balkan Wars, the “brave and warrior-like (!) Albanians” failed to serve in the army and “stayed at home like women (*kari*).”⁴⁵⁸

Being a man was immediately equal to being a brave soldier. Such a conclusion on the part of the members of the Committee of Union and Progress is not surprising if we take the military and militaristic education that they went through. Also, one must note the connection between “*er meydanı*” -manly place of wrestling, warfare, etc.- and gender. One example was recorded by Eşref Bey, who was in the process of withdrawing his forces from the Castle of Hayber. He told one of his soldiers: “Tough luck, my friend, this is *erkek meydanı*, so that is all right” meaning that there was no shame in withdrawing after an honest fight. The soldier replied: “Sir, may the nation live long, this is the Castle of Hayber.”⁴⁵⁹ The equivalence between manliness

⁴⁵⁷ Enver Paşa, p. 75.

⁴⁵⁸ Cemal Savaşkan. *Arnavutluk'tan Sakarya'ya Komitacılık: Yüzbaşı Cemal'in Anıları*. (İstanbul: Kebikeç, 1996), p. 25.

⁴⁵⁹ Kuşçubaşı, p. 62.

“Geçmiş olsun arkadaş, bu erkek meydanıdır, ziyarı yok.” “Efendim, millet sağolsun, burası, Hayber

and fighting prowess seems to be a prevailing one, building a shared code between Eşref Kuşçubaşı and the Arab people.⁴⁶⁰ If one failed at war, one would be taken captive and paraded in front of women, which was perceived as absolute humiliation.⁴⁶¹ Being an Ottoman man was perceived as an arduous job and a precarious position, since any failure related to fighting threatened to tip the balance and thus causing the social death of the man. At the same time, it also opened up a new venue for socialization with other soldier or men of different nations or creeds.

The symbolic line between the male and female worlds was, as we have observed, was drawn very strictly. Contradictorily, it was also one porous enough to allow for a “turning,” albeit only as a one-way-street: Arif Cemil suggests that cutting off the beard of a fugitive turned him “into a woman.”⁴⁶² The social connotations attached to this practice are more visibly displayed when we consider the passage in which a Laz woman tries to beat her beardless husband.⁴⁶³ Such a practice was considered by him as a punishment inflicted on those who failed the homeland. The incapable man was pushed out of the boundaries of manliness so that the “normal” order of things could prevail. The frontiers of gender were, however, not versatile enough to allow for a “turning” from being a woman into being a man.

Kalesi.”

⁴⁶⁰ See, especially: Kuşçubaşı, pp. 99-101.

⁴⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 119.

⁴⁶² Arif Cemil. *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*, (İstanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1997), p. 119.

⁴⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 217.

The patriarchal state of mind was not unique to the Unionists. Even though they differed from each other on very important points, the Unionists and Sultan Abdülhamid II shared the same perception when it came to women. Sultan Abdülhamid II counted on the “manliness of our fighters” (“*cengaverlerimizin erkeklığı*”)⁴⁶⁴ and the “... Armenians who were spoilt like women ...”⁴⁶⁵ This time, we are able to catch a glimpse of what is to come: the feminization of what was perceived as the other. The issue becomes one about ethnicity and gender is used as a tool to denigrate the undesired subjects. Sultan Abdülhamid II’s general stance towards women is one of necessity, and not one of special affection.

In Eşref Kuşçubaşı’s imagination, manliness and nationalism -in the sense of betraying the Ottoman nation and working for Arab aims- were intertwined. One particular case would be an Amir Efendi, who switched sides and was known to Eşref Bey as he was held prisoner. Friends of the soldier suggested that his switch was due to the circumstances he suffered as a captive, but Eşref Bey was unimpressed. The same friends told Eşref Bey that Amir Efendi is a very manly man, as his sexual prowess in congress with younger boys would demonstrate. Eşref Bey then thought to himself that one should be glad to be rid of men with such “weak morals.”⁴⁶⁶ What was perceived as a deviant sexual tendency by Kuşçubaşı was frowned upon, and threw a very negative shadow on the overall evaluation of the man’s as well as his immediate circle’s morals, which also included their national

⁴⁶⁴ Sultan Abdül Hamid, pp. 183-184.

⁴⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 84.

“*Ermeniler, ... kadın gibi nazlı ve korkak bir millettir.*”

⁴⁶⁶ Kuşçubaşı, pp. 134-135.

loyalties. His imagination builds a link between the British soldiers who hold him as prisoner of war and women:

Like helpless, captive lions and tigers that got whipped inside and outside of a cage by a theatre girl whose name is woman but is a far cry from female tenderness, we were subject to some bitter actions which crackled like a whip. There they were in pleasure, here we were crying out from our hearts. If these whipping girls would encounter these poor beasts in deserts or in wilderness, would they not wet, I am going to put it bluntly, their pants?⁴⁶⁷

In this example, the soldiers of the other side are imagined as cowardly circus girls, whereas Eşref Bey depicts himself as a brave yet captive lion. The soldier solidarity we mentioned above does not hold in this case, since the British soldiers are treating the captives very badly and are thus breaking the rules of chivalry. Thus pushed out of the space of manliness, they fall into a metaphorical circus where they hold power only temporarily.

Rıza Nur supplies us with the best example of this derogatory way of thinking. We must, however, proceed with caution and not generalize his ideas to pertain to the whole group. From my point of view, he must be considered at least as an extremist. In the passage I am about to present, he is following the line of argumentation to its logical conclusion, which happens to lose its link to commonsense along the way. His train of thought dictated that lust was one of the dangers on earth to which men succumbed to, dragging their state and nation behind. This danger could only be alleviated by removing one's testicles. The idea became an obsession, but then he learned that:

⁴⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 168.

... eunuchs were like women with their high-pitched voice, physique, moral constitution and spirituality; this held me back. My cause was to make an endless fight for the sake of manliness (*erkeklik*), bravery, heroism, right, knowledge, freedom and nation. These were the truest aims of my heart. With the castration, they would totally disappear. I was caught in a dilemma. No way out. Eventually, I decided that the containment and destruction of the acts of lust was to spring from the solid education I was going to give my morals and I gave up the idea of getting castrated.⁴⁶⁸

Earlier, it was demonstrated that the act of “turning” into a woman involved the loss of a particularly male part of the body, i.e. the beard. Here, another part of the male body is threatened with utter eradication without the possibility of a reversal.

Unfortunately, the source of unnecessary desire would not go away easily; since all “manliness,” including bravery and a willingness to fight for the Turkish nation was attached to it. Women or eunuchs were unfit for such a grand cause, so that Rıza Nur decided to remain a man while also putting himself under an austere surveillance.

The close relationship between the matters of the body and of the nation is demonstrated visibly: the mother homeland had the right to demand certain things from her able-bodied, heterosexual sons, including the redirection of emotions such as desire or love.

Here, one must recall Nükhet Sirman’s observations on the making of emotions:

*Love was making the subject by way of adorning it with desires which have to be contained, then was giving the job of curbing of the desires to the subject it has created. Seen from this perspective, the process of definition of the concept “love” is also the process of building the features of inter-sex relationships, sexuality and subjectivity. Such a reading would also show that the process of curbing goes through the milestones of nation / family axis.*⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁸ Nur, Vol. 1, p. 113.

⁴⁶⁹ Sirman, p. 240.

When read in conjunction with the last passage from Rıza Nur, we may suggest safely that one of the many facets that made up Rıza Nur's self-constructed identity was his love for the homeland. Simultaneously, the excess energy brought about by such willpower had to be consumed one way or another: either it was to be annihilated totally with the removal of certain parts of the body or it was to be contained through strict moral discipline. The subject was responsible for maintaining his desires; the proper family he was supposed to nourish under national circumstances was, however, not yet calling for his undivided attention.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, the Committee of Union and Progress was situated historically on an important transition from a “traditional”⁴⁷⁰ frame of mind to a more modern one, where the pains of the transformations became visible in many ways. One of them was the apprehension of the discrepancy between the public and the private life. The women, who constituted the margins of this debate, were thus portrayed in the memoirs as belonging to distinct categories with carefully drawn lines of visibility. Building on an earlier classification of Yuval-Davis and Anthias, I was able to pinpoint five distinctive roles: Mothers, spies from our side, foreign women who sometimes doubled as spies, women as signs of westernization and women who

Emphasis belongs to Nükhet Sirman.

⁴⁷⁰ I am using this term to evade the more teleological “pre-modern.” I am aware that tradition is nowhere a unified body of fixed social practices and is always subject to change.

stand in for the ultimate ideal (*mefkûre*) as well as ultimate degradation.

As the first group, I generalize how mothers were depicted in the memoirs and come to the conclusion that although they were seen fit to take part in a public narrative of one's remembrances, their visibility was severely limited due to their sacrosanct features. Their approval or disapproval of their sons' cause was not uniform, yet they are always depicted as well-intentioned figures. Even if they are coming from a lower-status background, which would trouble their holy image, they are redeemed as the reason of their sons' fight for freedom and betterment of social conditions.

The second group was a more mobile one, since their appearances in the memoirs was directly related to their function in public affairs: the "spies from our side." This group is more "public" than the mothers because their assignments include some minor services which are to be fulfilled in the public sphere, such as the transportation of important documents. Depicted as mainly benevolent, these figures also lose their importance in the narratives when their assignment finishes. It is also clear that they were never supposed to become an equal or indispensable element in these public affairs. Similar to other liberties the Unionists had in mind, there is a pragmatic outlook on their assistance and involvement in political life. Here, I also ponder the odds of a Unionist woman, one that was included in the circle and was familiar with the mechanizations of the Committee. Although I did not find what I looked for, I came across the case of Emine Semiye Hanım, which buttresses my point about pragmatism.

My next point is to understand the ways in which the "other" woman was portrayed in the memoirs. I was able to observe a general increase of distrust: for

European women the reason was their public life and visibility, whereas for Arab women it was due to their “dangerous” social roles they sometimes assumed. The general air of suspicion becomes even clearer when we consider our third group, the spies from the other side who perform bigger-scale, more perilous duties and are able to move about freer. Their involvement in the issues is deeper than “our” spies, which could be adding to their threatening image. I concluded the picture by noting the conspicuous absence of male spies from the memoirs.

From there on, I summarize the relationship between women and Westernization, dwelling especially on the opinions about education and female public appearances, where a cautiously circumscribed “liberty” was seen as appropriate. For the education, the aim was to create qualified mothers; most of the vocational training was in this sense pointless. The veil, pointed out by some as precluding progress, was also supposed to be sensible; too much of it would mean a step away from civilization and look bad whereas too little of it would be considered immodesty, foreshadowing a possible fall from grace into being a victim of modernization. I contextualized these cautious moves as a manifestation of a greater anxiety about the coming of a new age, where the status quo, which the Unionists did so much to maintain, would break down irretrievably.

My last point is about women who stood as signs of a greater concept on the level of ideas. On the one hand, the woman was seen as a sign of the *mefkûre*, paralleling its beauty and unavailability. On the other hand, she was also conceived as an anti-man, whose image in real life was brought down with a certain derogatory use of femininity. As the masculine, soldier-like man was appreciated; the “deviant” individuals were either disapproved of or brought in connection with other

accusations relating even to their national loyalties. The ability to serve the grand cause and to be a proper part of a vaguely defined nation was directly linked to connotations of manhood and virility, where the women were understood to be cowardly, lacking sense and generally inferior to men. It was interesting to note that their perceived hierarchy had also manifested itself on a discourse of “turning”: whereas a “fallen” man could be symbolically seen as a woman, the reverse did not hold.

Returning to our point about the “national family,” I may state the “national circumstances” it needed were, as of then, not entirely in place. These circumstances would be a territory which one could call a homeland and a more or less homogenous population to match. It is to these two relatively new concepts that I now turn my attention to.

CHAPTER IV

HOMELAND AND NATION

So far, we have tried to elaborate on the Unionist representations of their own loyalties to family, locality and the Committee of Union and Progress as well as of women, a crucial lack in their narratives which was circumscribed and filled with stock roles such as mothers, spies or signifiers of larger than life ideas. The “ideal” aspect of these female types is linked to another sort of love, namely, the patriotic. One of the often overlooked prerequisites of a nation state is a different understanding of territory, one that pins down a specific group of people, preferably a homogenous nation, to a bounded territory. Taking the diminishing of the Ottoman Empire’s lands and the “outer” threat that the Unionists felt as tearing the country apart, we might feel justified in asking what this country *exactly* was. In order to grasp how the concept of homeland (*vatan*) found a wider circulation around the turn of the century, we must consider its earlier appearances.

Tobias Heinzelmann draws our attention to the earlier usages around Crimean War, where the word *vatan* was used in conjunction with military duty, in particular, with the duties that fell to the non-Muslim populations. Since the motivation of the typical Ottoman soldier depended on a religious justification, non-Muslims were perceived as a problem, and the word “*vatan*” was used scarcely, generally referring to the Muslim soldiers.⁴⁷¹ Here, one must note that the way of defining different

⁴⁷¹ Tobias Heinzelmann. “Die Konstruktion eines osmanischen Patriotismus und die Entwicklung des Begriffs Vatan in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in: *Aspects of the Political Language in*

communities based on their religious affiliations, shortly the “*millet*” system, was still in effect. Thus, it was not very unusual to refer to the religious differentiations within the soldiers and to look for a solution along the same lines. One speech, given by Ahmet Cevdet Bey in 1865, is eloquent on the concept, remarking on its common connotation as one’s place of birth and on the effort of transforming it into meaning the Ottoman Empire as a whole.⁴⁷² Heinzelmann’s take of this speech suggests that this is a unique text from the first half of the century to dwell on the concept at length.⁴⁷³

While this might be the case, it is worth asking why the concept found a particular relevance within the political context of the 1860’s. The reforms within the Ottoman Empire, commonly referred to as “*Tanzimat*,” proposed an idea of equal citizenship, aiming at demolishing the former system of privileges. On a different note, the reforms also meant that the non-Muslim communities, who so far were exempt from the military duty in exchange for a fee, would be now recruited to the army. This new situation tended to destabilize the ranks of the army ideologically: until then, it was possible to rally the soldiers in the name of Sultan and Islam. Now that the figure of the sultan carried more of a political tone and the corps of the soldiers was not exclusively Muslim, there had to be another point of loyalty which could appeal to all. While Ahmet Cevdet Bey’s speech may be interpreted as a very early attempt at finding a binding element that would hold the Ottoman Empire together, Sezgi Durgun still sees this speech as an attempt towards a particularly

Turkey (19th-20th centuries) edited by Hans Lukas Kieser, (İstanbul: Isis Press, 2002), p. 50.

⁴⁷² *ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

⁴⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 42.

Muslim corps.⁴⁷⁴ Either way, it is clear that the term was used to mean “place of origin” around 1800 in public parlance and around 1860’s, it was laden with a wider meaning to denote the entire territory of the Ottoman Empire, countering the French “*patrie*”.⁴⁷⁵ Later, when the “enlightened” individuals of the Empire started to perceive their current situations as a clear downfall, Ahmet Rıza Bey would press forth with the idea of an Ottoman belonging which would tie all people together, regardless of creed or wealth.⁴⁷⁶ This time, loyalty to the Ottoman Empire is presented clearly as a “supra-nationalism,” a sort of *Reichsnationalismus* which would hopefully save the Empire from going down. That hopeful tenor unfortunately did not last long but before disappearing completely from the political scene, it left some important works of thought.

One must here note “*Vatan yahud Silistre*” (1872) by Namık Kemal,⁴⁷⁷ since the author is noted by many Unionists as an important one,⁴⁷⁸ one that influenced their perception of the concept greatly. The play itself is weak and as admitted by its author, the reason of its success was not its literary merit, but its very plot.⁴⁷⁹ The plot generally revolves around the Castle of Silistre, which was a point of

⁴⁷⁴ Sezgi Durgun. *Memalik-i Şahane'den Vatan'a*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), p. 97.

⁴⁷⁵ Heinzelmann, in passim.

⁴⁷⁶ Odile Moreau. *Reformlar Çağında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu: Askeri "Yeni Düzen" in İnsanları ve Fikirleri: 1826-1914*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2010), p. 159.

⁴⁷⁷ Milli Kütüphane Catalog. *Vatan yahud Silistre*. <http://eyayinlar.mkutup.gov.tr/cgi-bin/WebObjects/EHT.woa/2/wo/7OLnp8LHb5CHcdRcfyuVtw/2.3#>

⁴⁷⁸ Kazım Karabekir. *Hayatım*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2011), p. 97; or Rıza Nur. *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, (İstanbul: Altındağ Yayınevi, 1967), Vol. 1 p. 82 as two of the many examples that list Namık Kemal as an influence.

⁴⁷⁹ Namık Kemal. *Celaleddin Harzemşah*, (İstanbul: Hareket Yayınları, 1969), p. 13.

contestation between the Russian and Ottoman armed forces during the Crimean War. The author tells the story as one of love and sacrifice, through two star-crossed lovers, İslam Bey and Zekiye. Added to that is the even weaker side-plot of Sıtkı Bey, who is the captain of the Ottoman troops. The aim was obviously to make a plea for the sake of homeland and the word “*vatan*” is used repeatedly within the play as a newfound mantra. Also, the theme of the lost-and found father ties into a discussion of the homeland,⁴⁸⁰ which may be interpreted as a subtle way to talk about the sultan. Throughout the play, the father figure, Sıtkı Bey, is shown as fighting a war and regretting the day he left his family; he was inevitably held up by his sense of duty. His daughter and his future son-in-law follow the same calling and the family unites at the end of the play, implying that if everybody stands true to the homeland, all will be well: the sultan will be benevolent towards his worthy, somewhat equal and somewhat freer subjects. After enough fighting and sacrificing, it is declared that the homeland is content, the soldiers cheer for the sultan, the “*Osmanlılar*” and the homeland.⁴⁸¹ Mehmet Ö. Alkan notes that the “authorized” version ends with the celebration of the sultan, whereas the one printed in Egypt has an additional paragraph of good wishes for the peoples and homeland of the empire.⁴⁸²

Still, the relationship between place of origin and wider homeland was not broken: Tunaya states that a similar distinction was “discovered” by Halil Bey

⁴⁸⁰ Namık Kemal. *Vatan yahut Silistre*, (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1988), p. 79.

⁴⁸¹ *ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

⁴⁸² Mehmet Ö. Alkan. “Resmi İdeolojinin Doğuşu ve Evrimi Üzerine Bir Deneme.” in: *Cumhuriyet’e Devreden Düşünce Mirası: Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet’in Birikimi*, edited by Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), p. 386.

(Menteşe) in 1911. This time, the distinction was between “*vatan-ı umumi*” (meaning the general homeland, the Ottoman lands) and an implied “*vatan-ı hususi*” (one’s specific belonging to a community). Tunaya understands the first to be political, whereas the second was based on social and ethnic ties.⁴⁸³ The concept seems to have come full circle; arising from being a mere place of birth to encompass a big mass of land and then being broken into two to embrace both meanings.

Here, a look into Sezgi Durgun’s arguments would prove useful, since he displays the link between the state and its rationalization of a certain territory. When one thinks about the attempts of the state and the sultan to popularize the concept of the homeland and turn it into glue for keeping the unsatisfied citizens together, Durgun’s arguments provide a framework. According to him, in order to complete the abstraction of the lands and resources as a homeland, the state needs to justify its actions; the concept has to correspond to certain experiences and emotions, thus taking root.⁴⁸⁴ “What is drawing our attentions to itself and is curious here, is not that the official narratives were produced [and] reconstructed, but the effect of this discourse upon masses and its echoes.”⁴⁸⁵ Such an affectionate bond is seen by Durgun as the wand that turns a “*vatan*”, as seen by the state, into an “*anavatan*” as perceived by the people.⁴⁸⁶ Our first discussion on place of birth versus Ottoman lands is thus also a discussion that is echoed here from another perspective. The

⁴⁸³ Tarık Zafer Tunaya. *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler*; (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1989), Vol. III, pp. 304-305.

⁴⁸⁴ Durgun, pp. 69-70.

⁴⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 71.

common way to refer to one's place of birth and the attachment felt for this particular locale was important as an emotional resource, which could be seized upon by the state in its struggle for legitimacy. Moreover, Durgun adds that the process varies from place to place.⁴⁸⁷ I understand this not as proximity to the capital as it is, but proximity to the mentality of the capital, i.e. the degree of immersion into the means of the state with which it disseminates its vision such as education, bureaucratic training or military life. While people close to the ruling circles or aspiring to belong there would promote the concept for its perceived benefits, the larger part of the population would probably be more apathetic towards it.

Especially with a contested territory and differing regimes, the story of how a place of birth is "generalized" to encompass a wide stretch of land is bound to be more complex and involve more actors. The relationship between the state, its territory and its peoples on the basis of homeland started to play a role during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. The law, instead of being defined by one's religious community, was now tried to be homogenized.⁴⁸⁸ By that time, homeland, nation (as defined by culture and language) and state were tied to freedom, war and duty in the minds of the Young Ottomans such as Namık Kemal.⁴⁸⁹ The contribution of the members of the Committee of Union and Progress was a military facet that depicted the soldier as the savior of the sacred lands.⁴⁹⁰ The non-Muslims were thus excluded

⁴⁸⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 71-73.

⁴⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 90.

⁴⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 96.

properly.⁴⁹¹ An important example is supplied in Talat Paşa's memoirs. For Talat Paşa, the main fault with the Armenians was that they wished to have a piece of the homeland for themselves, while not engaging in wars and not sharing any of the homeland's troubles.⁴⁹² In his eyes, this lack of participation disqualified the Armenians from claiming any territory and also, from becoming a proper state. Odile Moreau traces the idea of "saving of the homeland by soldiers" back to 1860's.⁴⁹³ The term "*vatan*" entered the official party program of the Unionists with the congress in 1913,⁴⁹⁴ where wars in North Africa and Balkans were challenging the imaginations of territory. Within this transitory phase, where a certain group of people took up the task of saving the homeland onto themselves, we see that the concept of homeland was much laden with feminine features. The whole narrative around the issue was fashioned as a love story, where the girl, fragile, in need of rescue and yet not very well known, was tried to be wooed with various manifestations of love by a bunch of virile men. It was not very well known because its boundaries were vague, its peoples perceived as strangers to one another and the relationship between the people and the land being one of subsistence and not national pride.

Here, I shall first deal with the few examples where the concept is pondered upon as a matter of territory and boundary. Then, keeping in line with my proposition to

⁴⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 98.

⁴⁹² Talat Paşa. *Talât Paşa'nın Hatıraları*, (İstanbul: Güven Yayınevi, 1946), pp. 58-59.

⁴⁹³ Moreau, p. 159. One must state that her argument depends on Şevket Süreyya Aydemir's memoirs, who did not belong to the 1860's generation. Therefore, her words should be taken with a grain of salt.

⁴⁹⁴ Tarık Zafer Tunaya. *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1989), Vol. III, p. 235.

move from the tangible to the ideal, I shall demonstrate the “love” that transformed the soil into a damsel-in-distress who was in dire need of help. After having established the geographical scene and the representations of emotions attached to it, I will move on to tackle the question of nations in late Ottoman context as it seeps through the filter of Unionist memoirists of that time. I am going to discuss the “*millet*” system and its survival into the nation’s era by taking religion as a primary axis of differentiation amongst the peoples. Then, I will try to understand what Ottomanism entailed for our memoirists and how this idea lost its relevance. On a parallel note, I shall concern myself with the appearance of a Turkish identity, Turkist sentiments and their aftermath.

To provide a more detailed picture, I have chosen two other “national” groups which figured more prominently than the others in the memoirs: the Arabs and the Armenians. The encounters between the first group and the Young Turks carried a vague scent of Orientalism, where the Young Turk placed himself in the position of the observer and tried to make sense of his exotic environment. The relationship to the second group was more intense and was built upon a tension of collaboration versus betrayal. Where the role of the benevolent civilization-bringer was easily taken up by the memoirists, the role of the equal co-citizen failed to generate such appeal. The attitude towards building a nation, worthy of that designation, was understood inherently as building a superior *millet*. Having said so much, let us now return to the scene where this nation (or these nations, for a more Ottomanist turn of phrase) was imagined to be living.

Boundaries of the Homeland

The geographical representation of the Ottoman Empire was used for many ends during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Özkan Akpınar, whose thesis delineates the geographical education at that time, states that geography courses were used to draw attention to the central power of the sultan and the unified territory.⁴⁹⁵ It was also a tool in promoting Ottomanism, including love for the *patrie* and loyalty to the sultan.⁴⁹⁶ The homeland, as shown in the maps, was also perceived as the basis for productivity and possible prosperity.⁴⁹⁷ The third aspect is important since it shows that the state's conception of its territories was modern; the soil was not just sultan's boon to its subjects, it was a resource to be controlled, mapped out and used efficiently.

The naming of the homeland was a contested area. Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın claims that they used “*yurt*” instead of “*vatan*” and preferred “*ülke*” to “*memleket*”, since the Hamidian regime considered “*yurt*” and “*ülke*” to be less dangerous than the alternatives.⁴⁹⁸ The Hamidian version could mean the place of origin whereas the “*vatan*” probably called forth a connection with the French *patrie*. Sultan Abdülhamid II, in contrast, states that the love the Europeans feel for their homeland

⁴⁹⁵ Özkan Akpınar. *Geographical Imagination in School Geography during the Late Ottoman Period, 1876-1908*, (İstanbul: Boğaziçi University, unpublished master's thesis, 2010), p. 39.

⁴⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 44.

⁴⁹⁸ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. *Siyasal Anılar*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1976), p. 1.

was felt by the Ottoman people as a love for the religion.⁴⁹⁹ For him, concepts such as “the nation” or “the race” are introduced by the British, whereas the original glue is the religion.⁵⁰⁰ It is clear that the sultan would not wish to disturb a system that enabled him to identify and manipulate his subjects in a reliable manner. The alternative ways of building a new Ottoman nation must have looked very unfeasible to him.

It is; however, not very clear what this homeland might be. Cemal Paşa, for example, seems to think that it comprises of Anatolia and it belongs to the Turks. For him, the true owner of Asia is the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁰¹ Considering that the border between Ottoman Empire and Iran stood the same for four centuries, it is hard to grasp what he means by “Asia.” Rıza Nur’s musings about the first assembly after 1908 also reveal his conception of the Ottoman Empire as a benevolent “Tower of Babylon” where different nations could, at least in theory, co-exist. On the same page, he seems to change his mind and reveal a more subtle perception: “The homeland stretches from İškodra to Basra and Yemen. There are seventy two and a half nations within it. This situation was Turkey’s greatest weakness and the greatest danger which always threatened its life.”⁵⁰² While he supplies the reader with a neutral geographical image, Rıza Nur also undermines this grand picture by supplying the contents to this land mass, thereby making it a political place. The

⁴⁹⁹ Sultan Abdül Hamid. *Siyasi Hatıratım*, (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1975), p. 176.

⁵⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 180.

⁵⁰¹ Cemal Paşa. *Hatıralar*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2008), p. 415.

⁵⁰² Rıza Nur. *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, (İstanbul: Altındağ Yayınevi, 1968), Vol. 2, p. 333.
“Vatan, İškodra’dan Basra’ya ve Yemen’e kadar uzanıyor. İçinde yetmiş iki buçuk millet var. Bu hal Türkiye’nin en büyük zaafı ve hayatını daima tehdit eden en büyük tehlike idi.”

number he gives for the nations is common parlance in Turkish, meaning “many.”

Celal Bayar elaborates on the concept of a shared homeland in a footnote:

“Doctor Abidin was of Albanian origin and was deeply loyal to the shared homeland. [...] he considered it a duty of honor to confront the Albanian politicians who wished to break away from our community.”⁵⁰³ Rauf Orbay, for example, counts Tripoli-Bingazi as part of homeland as he talks about the Italian forces which surrounded the place and cut off its links to the center.⁵⁰⁴ Yahya Kemal would count them as more or less Arab lands; in any case these were less of a homeland than the Balkans. These lands, despite the administrative help sent from the center, never developed much.⁵⁰⁵ Yahya Kemal Bey is standing here ideologically in the center, from where he thinks in accordance with the state apparatus and sees certain places as periphery because of their perceived underdevelopment. Also, the “help” these lands received were perceived not as a redistribution of resources from the capital, but as a favor to bring the less fortunate up to par. Halil Paşa reports a conceptualization of homeland from one his friends, Şevki Bey, who stated that he would die for the Turks but not for lands which will eventually remain with the “*gavur*.”⁵⁰⁶ Here, one must note the concern that manifests itself in this fragile situation. The actors of this scene thought that dying for the homeland was a valid justification. However, if the lands would

⁵⁰³ Celal Bayar. *Ben de Yazdım*, (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1967), Vol. 4, p. 1095 ft.

“*Arnavut aslından olan Doktor Abidin Bey müşterek ana vatana samimiyetle bağlı idi. [...] Topluluğumuzdan ayrılmak isteyen Arnavut siyasetçileri ile uğraşmayı namus borcu bilirdi.*”

⁵⁰⁴ Rauf Orbay. *Cehennem Değirmeni: Siyasi Hatıralarım*, (İstanbul: Emre Yayınları, 1993), Vol. 1, p. 203.

⁵⁰⁵ Yahya Kemal. *Çocukluğum, Gençliğim, Siyâsi ve Edebi Hâtıralarım*, (İstanbul: Yahya Kemal Enstitüsü, 1973), p. 123.

⁵⁰⁶ Halil Paşa. *Bitmeyen Savaş: Anılarım ve Belgelerle*, (İstanbul: 7 Gün Yayınları, 1972), p. 19.

remain with a non-Muslim population as non-Ottoman territory, their sacrifice would fall into the cracks of loyalty and be forgotten. The issue of “*vatan*” was not just a question of geography; it was a matter of accounting for one’s life and death for this case.

A later example comes from Falih Rıfıkı Atay, who also elaborates on the older boundaries that encompassed places like Niş, which seem far away to him: “We thought that the Turkish nation could not live if we surrendered Vardar, Tripoli, Crete or Medine.”⁵⁰⁷ If Medine was to be attacked, he claims, “we would panic as if İstanbul were on the verge of being lost,” and deploy soldiers in a hurry; whereas the people of Medine would idly stand by.⁵⁰⁸ This is another example of the state of mind of the center: Since the periphery would be naturally in need of saving once it had been attacked, the center would be compelled to send help to explain its existence there. The attack on the center, however, would not provoke an aid from the periphery. Again, the issue is articulated dramatically; for Atay, the loss of the said places would cause much grief and the process of losing would give way to excitement. In his mind, the homeland is linked to a range of emotions. One voice from the ranks of opposition would pursue his wish for harmony among the various communities to the point of understanding the whole world as one homeland to be

⁵⁰⁷ Falih Rıfıkı Atay. *Zeytindağı*, (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1943), p. 6.

“*Biz eğer Vardar’ı Trablus’u, Girid’i ve Medine’yi bırakırsak Türk milleti yaşayamaz, zannediyorduk.*”

It is worth noting that Atay does not define who “we” are, we are left to guess between various groups such as soldiers, public servants, Turkish nation or ruling elite.

⁵⁰⁸ Atay, p. 69.

“*İstanbul elden gidiyormuş gibi telâşlanarak [...]*”

shared.⁵⁰⁹ One notes that this sort of humanistic remark is very rare in the memoirs of the Unionists.

The maps played an important role in imagining the frontiers to the homeland. Ahmet İhsan Tokgöz recalls that as he was studying in *Mekteb-i Mülkiye*, there was a big map drawn on the floor, where one could also see the lands that the Ottomans withdrew from. He claims that the director of the school told them to study well, because ignorance was the real reason behind the loss of all this territory.⁵¹⁰ Ahmet İhsan Bey was much impressed and came to articulate his reminiscences:

The vision of the map on the schoolyard and the shapes of the precincts lost were still before me... Since I had recently read Namık Kemal's "*Vatan yahut Silistre*," the map and the enthusiastic words of the great patriot were still on fire in my mind. With these feelings I came home to Küçük Kovacılar. I was looking for someone to talk about my thoughts, but whom?..⁵¹¹

Again, we are able to observe an emotional outburst in relation to the homeland. The language of loss, as articulated by the school director, came to create a synergy with Namık Kemal's weak but fiery play. No matter where his home in Küçük Kovacılar was, the little boy was impressed with the imagery from the center in the form of maps and plays.

Aydemir's recollections about his childhood prove the connection between the state-sponsored images of the Ottoman Empire and the emotions attached to this imagery. There is a scene where school children like him are gathered in front of a

⁵⁰⁹ Mevlânzade Rıfat. *Mevlânzade Rıfat'ın Anıları*, (İstanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1992), p. 57.

⁵¹⁰ Ahmet İhsan. *Matbuat Hatıralarım*, (İstanbul: Ahmet İhsan Matbaası, 1930), Vol. 1, pp. 21-22.

⁵¹¹ *ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 22.

map and look at the great masses of land the Empire encompassed.⁵¹² He directly links the borders shown in this map to homelands; wherever these lines went, there was the homeland and the lines were moved by the army. Thus, “Wherever the army of the empire was, there were the boundaries of the homeland.”⁵¹³ Aydemir’s argument concludes with the assertion of army as the basis of the homeland, thus the task for the child Şevket Süreyya was to become a world-conqueror like the army. As such, the nation or possible nations had no rights whatsoever. They had the duty to obey and pay taxes, and if they failed to do so, they would be shown the right way by the only right-owner, the army.⁵¹⁴ The map, a projection of what the Ottoman Empire is and what it *should* be, as seen from the center, came to play an important role in the shaping of minds. The narrative accompanying this image also emphasized the importance of military forces in maintaining and, if possible, furthering these boundaries. Soon after the Balkan Wars,⁵¹⁵ the homeland was re-conceptualized according to new circumstances; now it was understood as a greater geography: “[...] wherever the Turk lives, no matter under which banner, there is his homeland.”⁵¹⁶ This wider homeland, this time stretching towards east rather than the newly-lost Balkans, was very attractive for a short span of time, but Aydemir lived

⁵¹² Şevket Süreyya Aydemir. *Suyu Arayan Adam*, (Ankara: Öz Yayınları, 1959), pp. 45-46. If one takes Aydemir’s recollections of the map at face value, one must state that the borders were somewhat exaggerated. Nevertheless, it is clear that the map was intended to instill a geographical sense of the empire in the minds of schoolchildren.

⁵¹³ *ibid.*, p. 46.

“İmparatorluğun orduları nerede ise, vatanın sınırları da oradaydı.”

⁵¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 47.

⁵¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 60.

⁵¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 64.

“[...]Türkün yaşadığı her yer, hangi bayrak altında olursa olsun Türkün [sic] vatanıdır.”

long enough to write about the failure of this greater homeland, also called *Turan*, as a concept.⁵¹⁷

Although it occupied the minds and hearts of many a Young Turk at that time, *Turan* was essentially an ideal which derived its appeal from its vagueness and inaccessibility. Since the imagination attached to *Turan* would be another issue altogether, it should suffice here only to mention it. Falih Rıfkı Bey, who served on the Syrian front, declared his feelings as belonging to “this empire without boundaries,”⁵¹⁸ despite the fact that he knew full well that culturally and politically the entity he was dwelling on stood apart from the Ottoman Empire. For Atay, both the “subalternization” and “homelandization” of these lands came into question, yet “we” did not attempt either one, preferring instead inertia.⁵¹⁹ Here, the vague “we”, which could be interpreted to stand for soldiers, Turks, or simply male citizens; allies itself clearly with the point of view of the center. From “their” perspective, the periphery was there to be exploited or integrated into a wider structure; a policy of non-interference which was preferred earlier by the Ottoman administration was now out of the question. New ways of dealing with a territory and population as potential sources of resources demanded that these be taken advantage of properly, it would be a “waste” to let them stand by. Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, on the other hand, defines homeland as a frame of mind. According to him:

Indeed I am a proponent of the right, the truth, the justice, the equality of rights, the

⁵¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 168.

⁵¹⁸ Atay, p. 41. For a sense of a “different place,” see; p. 43 as well.

⁵¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 42.

“*Bu kıt’aları ne müstemlekeleştirmiş, ne vatanlaştırmıştık.*”

freedom, the virtuous mankind, the human civilization, the knowledge and its execution... I would like to see a way of governance that would ensure such “rights” of humanity to me as well as to the nation that I belong to; and only if these are current [values] will I call a country “homeland.”⁵²⁰

Hüseyin Kazım Kadri’s stance is interesting since it displays a peculiar turn of mind: for most of the members, the individual existed for the sake of the state and the reverse did not hold. The explanation of most of their actions rested on this premise, which is generally taken for granted. Here, the author is of the opinion that there were indeed other concerns which he would prioritize over the survival of the state such as justice, equality before law and being able to live with dignity accorded to all human beings. This humanistic discourse, however, is one more time a rare appearance of such ideals.

A multiplicity of homelands was also considered as possible: Falih Rıfki Atay’s recollections of the First World War, as fought in Sinai Desert, leads him to write as follows: “A measure thought of by the highest echelon of the command board to save a couple of homelands, asked the impossible of some of the children of one homeland.”⁵²¹ For Atay, this one *vatan* seems to have been Anatolia, which inspires in him a sense of strangeness and emptiness.⁵²² He feels like a passer-by and guesses that the war had not sunk in to Anatolia.⁵²³ In the deserts of Egypt, he counters the

⁵²⁰ Hüseyin Kazım Kadri. *Meşrutiyetten Cumhuriyete Hatıralarım*, (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2000), p. 223.

⁵²¹ Falih Rıfki Atay. *Ateş ve Güneş*, ([İstanbul]: Pozitif Yayınları, 2009), p. 51.

“Birkaç vatanın kurtulması için en yüksek kumanda heyetinin düşündüğü bir tedbir, bir vatanın bazı çocuklarından imkansız istedi.”

⁵²² *ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁵²³ *ibid.*, p. 20.

alien silence of the desert with the mooing of cows, which, for him, signify
Anatolia.⁵²⁴

The love for the *patrie* was sometimes supported through different means, if one's own testimony was felt to be too underwhelming. An example of this sort comes about when Cemal Paşa incorporated a paragraph by a French author under a pseudonym to demonstrate his own love for the *patrie*.⁵²⁵ Fuat Balkan defines *komitacılık* as springing from excessive love of the *patrie*.⁵²⁶ For Balkan, the case was one of taking the initiative to save face when the state failed to protect its subjects. This may read as an example of the militaristic turn of mind, where the proof of love was in connection with violence. According to Galip Vardar, who was trained as a soldier like Fuat Balkan, the Bab-ı Ali Incident was an act of patriotism because it was motivated by a love for the *patrie*.⁵²⁷ As usual, his point of view is a more soldierly one, where the power in “wrong” hands had to be transferred to the “right” hands by the use of brute force.

Another way of serving the homeland was to become famous, remarks Ahmed Rıza, since one could contribute to the cause by writing articles and the way to publicize one's articles was paved with one's fame.⁵²⁸ The power of mass media in the form of newspaper or magazine articles was well-recognized among the literati

⁵²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 64. Atay seems to quote another soldier, but the sentiment stays the same.

⁵²⁵ Cemal Paşa, p. 129.

⁵²⁶ Fuat Balkan. *İlk Türk Komitacısı Fuat Balkan'ın Hatıraları*, (İstanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1998), p. 10.

⁵²⁷ Galip Vardar / Samih Nafiz Tansu. *İttihad ve Terakki İçinde Dönenler*, (İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1960), p. 106. On page 109, he does admit that it was a job of daydreaming (*hayalperest*[lik]).

⁵²⁸ Ahmed Rıza. *Meclis-i Mebusan ve Ayan Reisi Ahmed Rıza Bey'in Anıları*, (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1988), p. 14.

of the Ottoman Empire, yet today we fail to grasp what it might have meant for the wider, illiterate public. The homeland was also a thing for which one could sacrifice things. Fuat Balkan counts it as one of the reasons of the enthusiastic enrollment in the army.⁵²⁹ When read in conjunction with his earlier remark about brigandage being a form of patriotism, we may safely assume that Balkan's point of view on the homeland was rather a violent and militaristic one. Cemal Paşa, for one, was content to gloss over the differences within the Committee of Union and Progress in order to bring about the union of the group and thus benefit the homeland as a whole.⁵³⁰

To sum up, the frontiers of the imaginary homeland stretched over a wide surface and the feeling of rootedness in there was in the process of being formed. The dissemination of the idea happened through formal ways such as geography education and officially sanctioned maps or informal ways such as works of literature. On an ideal plane, this mass of land was envisioned as a stock character who could legitimately ask for certain sacrifices. The next subchapter is an elaboration of this type.

Damsel in Distress

İbrahim Temo states that the “beloved homeland” (*aziz vatan*)⁵³¹ and patriotism

⁵²⁹ Balkan, p. 31.

⁵³⁰ Cemal Paşa, p. 140.

⁵³¹ İbrahim Temo. *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyetinin Teşekkülü ve Hıdematı Vataniye ve Inkılâbı Millîye Dair Hatıratım*, (Mecidiye: n.p., 1939), p. 16.

(*vatanperver*[lik])⁵³² were key concerns in the founding of the Committee of Union and Progress. When he tries to explain these purposes, he claims to have said: “[...] that the conditions and existence of the homeland is very grave, that we were making a national undertaking to think about the improvement and salvation and were expecting zealous works[...].”⁵³³ Even if he failed to express his sentiments at the time of the actual event, patriotism was seen as legitimate leverage to build a secret group upon. The loyalty to the sultan or to the military profession could now be eclipsed by what was perceived as a more sublime aim: the love for one’s country. Within the context of Temo’s memoirs, this patriotism was not yet colored with a specific nationalism; although a sort of Ottomanism was perhaps at the back of the minds of the founders.

It is clear that the homeland was first and foremost an object that needed to be saved by a specific group of people, sort of a damsel-in-distress. Resneli Niyazi Bey clearly uses this theme in one of the pep talks he gave, stating that if they did their duties accordingly, the homeland would be saved.⁵³⁴ His way of argumentation reminds one vaguely Namık Kemal’s take on patriotism: If everybody would act in accordance with the expectations of society such as answering a call of duty or following the “right” men, all would indeed end well. One of the things Niyazi Bey learned in 1887 was the situation of his homeland where the sultan was surrounded

⁵³² *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵³³ *ibid.*, p. 23.

“*Vatanın hal ve hazırı, [...] pek çok vahim olduğunu, salah ve necat çaresinin düşünmek üzere milli bir teşebbüste bulunduğumuzu ve hamiyetli işler beklediğimizi anlatınca [...]*”

⁵³⁴ Resneli Niyazi. *Hürriyet Kahramanı Resneli Niyazi Hatıratı: Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, (İstanbul: Örgün Yayınevi, 2003), p. 343.

by traitors.⁵³⁵ This was an older discourse, where the benevolence of the sultan could not be questioned and his entourage was instead to blame. In addition to this, there were new values with which the students of military schools were confronted with: Niyazi Bey recalls ideas such as progress, humanity and patriotism, particularly the French and Turkish versions, were talked about in the school.⁵³⁶

The rescuing aside, for many people the concept carried a sentimental value. *Vatan* was something to be always protected, something fragile. Referring back to Durgun's argument, it was turning into the "*anavatan*", but was not called so yet. Mehmet Reşid Bey's point of view is that this homeland has enemies both inside and outside which have to be defeated. As he was held in Taşkışla in 1897, he learned that accusations against him included being a spy for the Greek side. He defended himself by saying that whereas the regular soldiers fought against the external enemies, he fought against the internal ones, i.e. the palace who exploited the peasant.⁵³⁷ He does not elaborate on the identities of the enemies, but assumes that his audience can deduce for itself. In the last passage of his memoirs, Mevlânzade Rıfat Bey calls out to the "the East" and states that there are many of her children who would contribute to her salvation by fighting on the battlefield.⁵³⁸ The war, in the minds of both the Committee of Union and Progress members and the opposition to them, would be fought on both intellectual and physical levels. Fuat Balkan also

⁵³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 133.

⁵³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 134.

⁵³⁷ Mehmed Reşid. *Dr. Mehmed Reşid Şahingiray'ın Hayatı ve Hâtıraları: İttihâd ve Terakki Dönemi ve Ermeni Meselesi*, (İzmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1997), p. 60.

⁵³⁸ Mevlânzade Rıfat, p. 97. I preferred to call the homeland "her" for this instance, because I think the context suggests a female parent.

elaborates on the theme:

But, although I am sure that the youth that we care for so much as the adults of tomorrow knows well; I am recording this to remind [them] that when one runs to the rescue of the homeland in danger there is never such a thing as the boundaries of duty and every individual, while counting himself as equal to the ones countering the enemy on the front lines, with the same feeling of faith and altruism, without thinking of himself, should heedlessly strive and in doing so, our generation too has succeeded thank God in saving this beloved country from the most savage, hitherto unparalleled catastrophes.⁵³⁹

It is such an exalted thing that Birgen does not hesitate to write “There is no creature that is more miserable than the man who has no homeland. In the histories [*sic*] we were people whose homeland was literally in danger. Whereas a man without a homeland is like a tree sewn in an arid desert. It fades quickly and it falls down quickly.”⁵⁴⁰ Here, Muhittin Bey is generalizing the issue to the whole extent of humanity and pins down the homeland as a prerequisite for a solid existence. This is a very modern way of thinking, since it is an instance of a geographical preoccupation in establishing the frame of human existence. As for the fragility, Ahmed Rıza Bey takes up the same theme and says that since he lived abroad, he was not aware of the real situation of the nation, he and his friends approached it gingerly, like they would approach a lady; refraining from hurting or offending her.⁵⁴¹

Vatan was also bound to call forth ideals of duty and different ways in which to

⁵³⁹ Balkan, p.113.

⁵⁴⁰ Muhittin Birgen. *İttihat ve Terakki'de On Sene*, (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2006), Vol. 2, p. 851. “*Vatanı olmayan insan kadar bedbaht mahluk yoktur. Tarihlerde biz de vatani tam manasıyla tehlikede olan insanlardık. Halbuki vatani olmayan insan, çorak bir çöle dikilen ağaca benzer. Çabuk sararır ve çabuk yıkılır.*”

⁵⁴¹ Ahmed Rıza, p. 42.

display the alleged love. The love for the *patrie* could justify emotional outbursts, which would otherwise be interpreted as weakness or womanly behavior. Eşref Bey, for one, recalls the day he was assigned another duty in Arab lands by Enver Paşa, whose eyes were “filled with tears because of a feeling for the homeland.”⁵⁴²

One of the ways in which one could declare his love was surely to sing about it. Ali Fuat Türkgeldi notes the opening lines to a song which seems to be very popular: “*Ey vatan, ey ümm-i müşfik, şad ü handan ol bugün.*”⁵⁴³ while Halide Edib Adıvar gives the song’s translation to her foreign audience as: “Country, o mother, be thou happy and joyful today.”⁵⁴⁴ This hymn seems to be one among many others, in which the advent of the Second Constitutional Period was celebrated and commemorated. Kazım Nami Duru notes that the event was for many an emotional one, so that Doktor Rifat set out to write an anthem, to which Udi Ahmet supplied the music. “Today we made a revolution which is rarely paralleled in the world / We vanquished the traitors, the cruel ones and the cowards.”⁵⁴⁵ He also notes other anthems by Namık Kemal such as “Here is enemy before you, arms ready / For the love of homeland, valiants march! / March! The liberation belongs to us / For the

⁵⁴² Eşref Kuşçubaşı. *Hayber’de Türk Cengi*, (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1997), p. 22. “*Vatan duygusuyla sulanan bu gözleri [...]*”

⁵⁴³ Ali Fuat Türkgeldi. *Görüp İştiklerim*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1949), p. 25.

⁵⁴⁴ Halide Edip Adıvar. *Memoirs of Halide Edib*, (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2004), p. 271. The song is Rifat Bey’s Nihavend Hürriyet Marşı, as referenced in Bedri Mermutlu. *Marşlar ya da Musikinin Siyasi Tarihle Akordu*. http://www.tbdd.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=205%3Amarlar-ya-da-musknn-syas-tarhle-akordu&catid=36&Itemid=48

⁵⁴⁵ Kazım Nami Duru. “*İttihat ve Terakki*” *Hatıralarım*, (İstanbul: Sucuoğlu Matbaası, 1957), p. 31. “*Dünyada emsali adim yaptık bugün bir inkılap / Hainleri, alçakları, zalimleri ettik harap.*”

love of homeland, valiants march!”⁵⁴⁶ With this march, the idea of the salvation of homeland is established yet in another form. Namık Kemal had contributed to another anthem: “Our aim, our idea is the good fortune of the homeland / Our stronghold, our castle is our poor bodies / Our jewelry is the bloody shroud / Our entertainment is to die in this fight / We the Ottomans, we give our lives and get a reputation.”⁵⁴⁷ The battle-like quality of the fight for freedom is unmistakable in this last example. Bahaeddin Şakir Bey confirms that this was indeed sung during the heydays of 1908.⁵⁴⁸ There seem to have been another Anthem of Freedom (*Hürriyet Marşı*) with lyrics by Kazım Karabekir. Two stanzas would represent the rest of the anthem fairly well: “We, all the Ottoman people / We want freedom now. / Enough with the bloody tears / Absolute freedom now. / Easy to get if you don’t supply / since we gathered from wide and far / the inauspicious be chased away / the representatives shall stay.”⁵⁴⁹ Here, the additional emphasis is on Ottomanism which would bind all nationalities together in the Assembly against the “inauspicious.” The hopeful and brave tenor of these compositions was soon brought down. Ahmet Refik Bey notes that even the most joyful song of 10 July 1908 such as “Our army swore

⁵⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 32.

“İşte adu karşıda hazır silâh! Arş yiğitler vatan imdadına! / Arş! ileri arş bizimdir felâh / Arş yiğitler vatan imdadına”

⁵⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 32.

“Amâlimiz, efkârımız ikbali vatandır; / Serhad bize, kal’a bize hâki bedendir; / Osmanlıyız zinetimiz kanlı kefendir. / Kavgada şehadetle bütün kâm alırsız biz / Osmanlılarız can veririz, nam alırsız biz.”

⁵⁴⁸ Bahaeddin Şakir. *Bahaeddin Şakir Bey’in Bıraktığı Vesikalara Göre İttihat ve Terakki*, (Ankara: Alternatif Yayınları, 2004), p. 524.

⁵⁴⁹ Kazım Karabekir. *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti Neden Kuruldu? Nasıl Kuruldu? Nasıl İdare Olundu?*, (İstanbul: n.p., 1982), p. 217.

“Hürriyet Marşı : Biz hep bütün Osmanlılar / Artık hürriyet isteriz / Yeter kanlı yaşlarımız / Mutlak hürriyet isteriz.// Vermezseniz almak kolay / Biz birleştik alay alay / Dağıtılmalı menhusları / Toplamalı mebusları [...]”

an oath” acquired later (especially after the Incident of 31 March) a more sorrowful tone, bringing to mind the aftermath. “If only our army would not swear such an oath, if only the homeland would not lose her honor and dignity of 600 years because of that inauspicious oath!”⁵⁵⁰ The popular sentiment, which rose with songs, also falls down with the elaboration on the songs as being somewhat misleading and over-the-top.

This somber way of employing music can be traced through other occasions. While the army was withdrawing from Caucasia, one of Aydemir’s soldiers started to sing a sorrowful song: “The black flag has been raised over Algeria / The backs of poor mothers has been bent / The valiant men have left Algeria / The streets are decked with marmor in Algeria / The beautiful girls braid their hair in Algeria, hey!”⁵⁵¹ The singing soldier was a product of the Empire, he was withdrawing from Caucasia, which was probably far away from his home, and he was singing about Algeria, which formerly belonged to the Ottoman state but was now lost. With one symbolic gesture, he was sweeping over a vast territory as well as a span of time that included past and present. The emotion attached to this gesture was for him one of sorrow.

The *Şeref Vapuru* incident is, again, one of a more sorrowful nature, where 81 people who were suspicious in the eyes of Sultan Abdülhamid II were exiled to

⁵⁵⁰ Ahmet Refik Altınay. *İki Komite İki Kıtıl: Kafkas Yollarında*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2010), pp. 55-56.

“Ordumuz keşke yemin etmese idi, keşke vatan o uğursuz yemin yüzünden altı yüz senelik şeref ve namusunu kaybetmese idi. “

⁵⁵¹ Aydemir, p. 151.

“Cezayire kara bayrak çekildi / Garip anaların beli büküldü / Koç yiğitler Cezayirden çekildi / Sokakları mermer taşlı [sic, the context and the rhythm suggest “taşlı”] / Güzelleri sırma saçlı Cezayir hey!”

Tripoli and Fizan. They sang a song as they were leaving İstanbul: “Woes and sorrows all around / Mercy and compassion nowhere to be found.”⁵⁵² Zülüflü Paşa, who was supervising the ship, was enraged to hear the anthem so the prisoners skipped to another song within the same “*makam*”: “It is because of your musky locks of hair (*zülüf*) that I am in love,”⁵⁵³ presumably sending the *paşa* into fits of rage because of the subtle tease. As the case illustrates, music served as a tool of expressing not only love or grief, but also disobedience.

Even Sultan Abdülhamid II seemed to be taking up the idea of a homeland which required defensive obligations. In one particular case, the dethroned sultan is reported to have stood up to the foreign military presence in Selanik during the Balkan Wars in a patriotic manner:

Selanik is the key to İstanbul. How can one give it to the enemy? I will not be moved anywhere. Give me a rifle too. Together, we shall defend it until our last breath. In fact, where did our 2nd and 3rd armies go? Who are the commanders conducting this war? Come what may. I will not be going away. So that you know.⁵⁵⁴

We have one more episode which may shed a light on how the reigning sultan looked at these newly fledged ideas. Through Atıf Hüseyin Bey, who was the doctor assigned to the sultan after his dethronement; we learn that he and the former sultan

⁵⁵² Mehmed Reşid, p. 63.

“*Her tarafta âh ü zâr rahm ü şefkat nâbedid.*”

⁵⁵³ Ahmet Cevat Emre. *İki Neslin Tarihi: Mustafa Kemal Neler Yaptı*, (İstanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, 1960), p. 52.

“*Anberin zülfiün getirdi başıma sevdaları.*”

⁵⁵⁴ Ayşe Osmanoğlu. *Babam Sultan Abdülhamid (Hâtıralarım)*, (Ankara: Selçuk Yayınları, 1994), p. 217.

came to discuss the issue of death and “dying for the homeland” one day. Reportedly, Sultan Abdülhamid II said that he did not grasp the concept. For him, there was a reason for the soldier in wishing to become a martyr but the men of science had no motivation. Atıf Hüseyin, being a Unionist, replied that they were doing it out of love for the homeland. Sultan Abdülhamid II seems to have looked down on “homeland” and stated that homeland is where one puts his feet, there would be not need to die for it. Atıf Bey played his “doctor” card and closed the issue by replying that war, from the point of view of humanity, was a bad thing and as long as the states defended their boundaries vigorously, there was a danger of being overcome by an enemy, which would put the national honor in danger.⁵⁵⁵ The picture is not in entire accordance with the picture of the sultan which was earlier provided by his own daughter, but nevertheless the idea of a homeland was present enough to draw comment from a variety of different actors. I speculate that the pragmatic mind of the sultan failed to see its relevance to the educated part of the population, but he closed the gap quickly. Sultan Abdülhamid II was, however, not entirely insensitive to the pains of soldiers who undertook difficult tasks in the name of the homeland. Atıf Hüseyin reports that as he was dwelling in the Beylerbeyi Palace, the sultan could hear the departing soldiers sing “the homeland is our life!” (“*Vatan bizim canımız!*”) and he was deeply touched by this sad farewell.⁵⁵⁶

Şadiye Osmanoğlu, from another perspective, claims that her father Sultan

⁵⁵⁵ Âtıf Hüseyin. *Sultan II. Abdülhamid'in Sürgün Günleri (1909-1918): Hususi Doktoru Âtıf Hüseyin Bey'in Hatıratı*, (İstanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 2003), pp. 120-121.

⁵⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 252.

Abdülhamid II taught his children the love for the homeland from an early age.⁵⁵⁷ She claims his death was the result of desperation, caused by seeing his beloved *patrie* perish.⁵⁵⁸ Even if the cause of his death was not desperation, the daughter of the sultan was able to articulate the patriotic love as a sublime and worthy sort of emotion.

From a passage from Şerif Bey's recollections, we understand that he feels obliged only to the *patrie* and his reward for paying his dues would be to be buried there.⁵⁵⁹ This is one of the rare instances where a direct reciprocity between the homeland and the individual was imagined. The duties one felt compelled to fulfill also differed. Mizancı Murat Bey's appreciation of the homeland required him to stay away from Ottoman lands and separating himself from the "official" Ottomanism, while writing for the Ottoman generations to come.⁵⁶⁰ One could read it from another perspective, of course: now it became relevant for an intellectual to claim that his aspirations to fame had an altruistic motive which ultimately aimed at rescuing the country. He was not an idle member of the society, especially compared to the directly active soldier-figure; he had a relevance to the political scene and could potentially take up the role of the enlightened guide in this new setting.

Returning to the sense of "duty," Ali İhsan Sabis believed that the duty to the *patrie*

⁵⁵⁷ Şadiye Osmanoğlu. *Babam Abdülhamid*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2011), p. 42.

⁵⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 66.

⁵⁵⁹ Şerif Paşa. *Bir Muhalifin Hatıraları: İttihat ve Terakkiye Muhalefet*, (İstanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 1990), p. 87.

⁵⁶⁰ Mizancı Mehmed Murad. *Meskenet Mazeret Teşkil Eder mi?* (İstanbul: Şehir Yayınları, 2005), p. 13.

was to derive lessons from the past and not let these occur again.⁵⁶¹ His perspective, as well as Mizancı Murat Bey's, may be seen as an affirmation of the battle that was fought on intellectual and real levels. By reflecting on the past intelligently, one could avoid current impasses and guide the homeland into a better future. When one recalls that Sabis saw the 1908 Revolution along with the First World War and was writing from within the Second World War, his preoccupation with the lessons of the past makes more sense.

The shared concept of the homeland looked like the idea that could hold the Ottoman state together. Halil Menteşe's point of view was that once the enemy arrives, the homeland shall be rescued no matter what, but the schisms within the community made this impossible.⁵⁶² This is one of the rare observations where the author elaborates on possible reasons of the "failure" of this rescue mission. Also, it is a typical continuation of "internal and external enemies" motive, whose first part was exemplified through Mehmet Reşit Bey's memoirs earlier. For Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, the homeland was the only concept that could possibly bring together diverse lands, races and creeds. Even in a relatively unified land such as France, there were a lot of inner struggle until the revolution, which solved these problems by establishing the homeland as the entity that all Frenchmen owed allegiance to.⁵⁶³ Again, the perceived "fissures" in the society were to blame for the downfall of the rescue plans.

⁵⁶¹ Ali İhsan Sabis. *Harp Hatıralarım: Birinci Cihan Harbi*, (İstanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 1990), Vol. 1, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁶² Halil Menteşe. *Osmanlı Mebusan Meclisi Reisi Halil Menteşe'nin Anıları*, (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1986), p. 145.

⁵⁶³ Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil. *Saray ve Ötesi*, (İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1981), p. 159.

Homeland was a concept that allowed various discussions in relation to itself. Most curiously, a very rare appearance of the concept of race crops up within such a debate. Over the question of whether important services may be delegated to non-Turk persons, Celal Bayar states that the important thing for him was the service one rendered for the homeland regardless of race, while others seemed to disagree.⁵⁶⁴ Again, this may be interpreted as a remnant of Ottomanism into later times, which overwrote ethnical or “racial” concerns.

Some people are pointed out as “real patriots” in this respect. Hüsametdin Ertürk, a member of *Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa*, singles out Eşref Kuşçubaşı as the true one.⁵⁶⁵ Galip Vardar, another member of the organization, singles out Yakup Cemil Bey: “He was a patriot, even too much so, indeed everything that has happened to him happened because of that.”⁵⁶⁶ It is worthwhile to recall that Vardar is the one who coined Bab-ı Ali Incident as an act of patriotism. For him, this love is able to legitimize some otherwise inexcusable actions. An excess springing from there can simply not go wrong. Celal Bayar’s candidate would be Ahmet Rıza Bey; who, despite his shortcomings as a revolutionary, loved his *patrie*, was a symbol of self-denial and turned away from the favors of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Bayar also states that in this respect “[i]t would be unfair to expect from people to exceed their

⁵⁶⁴ Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım*. (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1966), Vol. 3, p. 759 ft. Celal Bayar is developing a counterargument to Hikmet Bayur, who sides with the Turkist line. Please note that the debate occurs later than the period concerned.

⁵⁶⁵ Hüsametdin Ertürk / Samih Nafiz Tansu. *İki Devrin Perde Arkası*, (İstanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, 1957), p. 189.

⁵⁶⁶ Vardar / Tansu, p. 301.
“Vatanperverdi, hem de ifrat derecede, esasen başına ne gelmişse, bu yüzden gelmişti.”

capacities.”⁵⁶⁷ One more time, the intention behind the action is what makes it reasonable and excusable, also presenting a classic example of a defensive argument.

Who, then, is the anti-patriot? We can only deduce from the sparse clues the memoirs supply us with. One is led to believe that the “*ekalliyet*” (minorities) were understood by Talat Paşa as potential trouble-makers, but now the particular problem lost its importance; Anadolu was made into a national country. Muhittin Birgen who reports us Talat Paşa’s take on the issue, says that he countered his argument by pointing out to Sultan Mehmed VI, whose stance was perceived as both anti-Committee of Union and Progress and anti-patriotic.⁵⁶⁸

A New Ranking of Priorities

Kazım Nami Duru points to a possible point of origin here when he states that “the love of the *patrie*” began with Namık Kemal. Duru had started reading Namık Kemal’s *Celaleddin Harezmsah* from an early age on.⁵⁶⁹ The play was of a didactic nature and because of the long monologues it contained, a hard one to play as well. Its purpose, much like *Vatan yahud Silistre*, seems to have been to guide the audience towards a rethinking of its relationship with the wider society, homeland and religion. Similarly, as Enver Bey was struggling for his ideals, he came to designate the auxiliary troops and the military students as people who work for the

⁵⁶⁷ Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım*, (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1965), Vol. 1, p. 182.
“*İnsanlardan kabiliyetlerinden fazlasını beklemek adaletsizlik olur.*”

⁵⁶⁸ Muhittin Birgen. *İttihat ve Terakki’de On Sene*, (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2006), Vol. 1, p. 460. It is worth noting that Talat Paşa does not specify exactly how the “*ekalliyet*” ceased to be a problem.

⁵⁶⁹ Duru, p. 6.

“salvation of the homeland,” “*vatanın necâtü.*”⁵⁷⁰ In his list of priorities, homeland ranks as number one, followed by the nation and, standing as a sign of heterogeneity, the religion.⁵⁷¹ Around 1908, when he penned his recollections about the newly executed Revolution, Enver Bey seems to have felt that the welfare of the Ottoman lands and society could spring from such a list of priorities. Towards the end of his life, his list would display some important changes towards an emphasis on Pan-Turkism or Islam; although his sense of responsibility would stay the same. He seems to have really meant “the love for the *patrie*,” since he interprets the assassination of his brother-in-law, Nazım Paşa, as being “for the benefit of the homeland and for the sake of constitutionalism.”⁵⁷² Again, this love was seen as enough to justify loss of lives and a serious disturbance in one’s domestic affairs.

In Rıza Nur’s memoirs, we encounter a communication between Rıza Nur and Prince Sabahattin, where Rıza Nur states: “What is life when the homeland is lost?”⁵⁷³ pointing to an emotional investment in this abstract yet obviously crucial concept. Arif Cemil Bey’s take on Bahaeddin Şakir Bey is very similar, he states that for Bahaeddin, the homeland preceded familial and financial concerns.⁵⁷⁴ Eşref Kuşçubaşı remembers that the love of his duties has driven out the familial concerns

⁵⁷⁰ Enver Paşa. *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları. 1881-1908*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), p. 9.

⁵⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵⁷² *ibid.*, p. 54.

“[...]vatanın selametini temin meşrutiyet uğruna [...]”

⁵⁷³ Rıza Nur. *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, (İstanbul: Altındağ Yayınevi, 1968), Vol. 2, p. 481.
“Vatan gittikten sonra hayat ne imiş?”

⁵⁷⁴ Arif Cemil. *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*, (İstanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1997), p. 139.

he left behind.⁵⁷⁵ Borrowing the story arch provided by Namık Kemal in his *Vatan yahud Silistre*, there had to be a very good reason why the father of a family would abandon it. Since family was ranking already high on the list of loyalties, the reason had to be solid enough to surpass that concern. The sense of duty, which stood in close relationship with the “demands” of the homeland, was a viable justification of the absence as well as the activities contained within that period. The preparatory stages of conjugal love could also fall victim to this call. Hüsametdin Ertürk’s quotation of Galip Vardar in stealing the heart of the Sadrazam Damat Ferit Paşa’s private secretary’s daughter is used by the former to display that the love for the homeland is more important than the heart of a young girl.⁵⁷⁶

Sometimes, the professional loyalties could merge with the love for the homeland in the perceptions of the members. In the case of the soldiers, the merger was less of a surprise since their professional rhetoric already started to include elements such as homeland, nation, and above all protection. Resneli Niyazi Bey linked his military duties to the laws which provided the welfare of the homeland.⁵⁷⁷

Through the memoirs, we catch some glimpses of what the homeland may have meant for “laymen.” There was a sick, elderly woman in a house where İhsan Aksoley took refuge. She wished him well with these words: “May God grant you back to the homeland!”⁵⁷⁸ It is hard to fathom what the concept may have meant to

⁵⁷⁵ Kuşçubaşı, p. 70.

⁵⁷⁶ Ertürk / Tansu, p.397.

⁵⁷⁷ Resneli Niyazi, p. 139. He was disappointed to see that the tradition, instead of the law, was being followed in practice.

⁵⁷⁸ İhsan Aksoley. *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa’dan Kuva-yı Milliye’ye*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2009), p. 178.

her, but the word seems to have been in common parlance. Ahmet Cevat Emre utilizes the love of the *patrie* as a way to decrease the amount of parasitical existence within the economy.⁵⁷⁹ This is one of very rare instances where the idea of the homeland was discussed within an economical frame. The rarity is not due to a lack of deliberation on the part of the members on financial matters, since we are familiar with the work of Tekin Alp (Moiz Cohen) and Ziya Gökalp on the subject. From my perspective, the lack is due to the personal nature of the memoirs, where the genre was not seen to be fit to elaborate on “scholarly” points such as a national economy.

A passage in Tahsin Uzer’s memoirs draws our attention to the possible universality of the concept: patriotism. When the Greek army captured Florina, the pictures of Tahsin Bey were torn down, and the Rum population of the vicinity commented that since Tahsin Bey was “a patriotic person,” every nation would esteem him or, it.⁵⁸⁰ In some very rare cases, a person from the ranks of opposition could also be called a patriot. Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın once thought that the ardent Lütfü Fikri Bey was a patriot despite his opposition to Committee of Union and Progress.⁵⁸¹

To recapitulate, the love for the *patrie* was established as a legitimate reason for a wide variety of activities and ideas in the minds of the memoirists. One may believe that they simply loved their nation, or one may think that retrospectively, they found it convenient to claim that their actions were caused by an excess of

“Allah sizi vatana bağışlasın [...]”

⁵⁷⁹ Emre, p. 190.

⁵⁸⁰ Uzer, pp. 210-211.

⁵⁸¹ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. *Tanıdıklarım*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001), p. 105.

patriotic love. Either way, one must admit that this was the time when such logic was becoming relevant, even to the remote observers of this political circle such as Sultan Abdülhamid II or his daughters. Another discourse, which was as fluid and as relevant, was the peoples who populated these contested lands. I now turn my attention to the various groups who tried to come to terms with the idea of a “nation.”

Making of a Nation

On a par with any other empire of the day, the Ottoman Empire also hosted groups of people who we would today anachronistically call a nation. For the governing mentality, the world was operating in two different spheres: those who paid taxes and those who gathered the taxes. The claim to be a nation was only important if it caused an interruption in tax-collecting schemes or armed and widespread insurrection. Perhaps not very surprisingly, these serious interruptions were in turn caused by grave sufferings in not being able to meet the fiscal requirements or being over-exploited by the *mültezims*. An article by Donald Quataert suggests that one of the reasons why the soldiers pressed for the Re-declaration of the Constitution in 1908 was that their wages were delayed, putting them into financial difficulties.⁵⁸² İsmet İnönü would probably agree, since he also notes the delays of monthly payments. His claim is that those who had good connections within the Yıldız Palace

⁵⁸² Donald Quataert. “The Economic Climate of the “Young Turk Revolution” in 1908,” in: *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (September 1979), pp. D 1147-D1161.

would get their paychecks rather sooner than the rest of the soldiers.⁵⁸³

Having noted the economic component as such, we can now return to different meanings attached to the word “nation.” Through Benjamin Braude’s article, we learn that the term “*millet*” was used to denote generally Muslims. In few cases, where it was used to denote other groups, these were either foreign Christian peoples to be impressed or non-Muslim subjects of the sultan from whom he wished to curry a favor.⁵⁸⁴ For Braude, the illusion of the *millet* system was a lexicographical “misunderstanding,”⁵⁸⁵ since the system slowly emerged after 1820.⁵⁸⁶ Bruce Masters notes that for example the Jewish population of the Ottoman Empire did not have a hierarchical religious structure; they followed their local *hahams* until 1835 when the state asked them to name a *haham* as *hahambaşı* over others.⁵⁸⁷ The rest of Braude’s article is dedicated to debunking foundational myths concerning the Greeks, the Jews and the Armenians. It seems that Vangelis Kechriotis would agree to the existence of a supra-*millet* elite group that found its interests to be at odds with the state and thus sought a way out:

The structuring of Ottoman society on the basis of ethno-religious communities allowed certain non-Muslim elite groups, which might have had diverse cultural

⁵⁸³ İsmet İnönü. *Hatıralarım: Genç Subaylık Yılları (1884-1918)*. (İstanbul: Burçak Yayınları, 1969), pp. 33-34.

⁵⁸⁴ Benjamin Braude. “Foundation Myths of the Ottoman Millet System.” in: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, edited by Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, (New York and London Holmes and Meier 1982), Vol. 1, pp. 69-71.

⁵⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 72.

⁵⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 73.

⁵⁸⁷ Bruce Masters. “Millet” in: *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, (New York: Facts On File Inc, 2009), p. 384.

affiliations, to collectively identify with the Ottoman state. However, although the members of the elite groups that flourished in the course of the Tanzimat participated in the administration and shared the power of their Muslim colleagues, the community institutions (religious courts, schools, charitable foundations) would always provide a vehicle of social and political participation for the broader strata of the population as well. Thus the efforts of the Ottoman administration to modernize the empire, by curtailing the power of the elite groups that administer their communities, were perceived by the bulk of the population as a violation of their autonomy. The reactions can partly be attributed to the failure of the Ottoman state to impose and disseminate its own self-image, but also to the process of secularization, which transformed these communities from religious to national ones.⁵⁸⁸

Seen from this point of view, Kechriotis argues, the process of modernization seems to have made various actors' religious identities collapse into a national one so that the interests could be articulated better. Once the constitution was re-declared in 1908, the religious dignitaries of non-Muslim communities had to leave their places of *milletbaşı* to laymen, thus making the relationship between the state and the community more secular. These "middle-class groups" would, in turn, be politicized by playing the go-between.⁵⁸⁹ The process took different turns within different communities, therefore it is useful to pay attention to Bernard Heyberger's proposal, in which he states that today's studies of non-Muslims of the Middle East should go beyond scrutinizing the concepts of *dhimmi* or *millet* and take up individual communities within their "historical processes."⁵⁹⁰

Just as the homeland, at its best, was a flexible concept; the nation followed suit

⁵⁸⁸ Vangelis Kechriotis. "The modernization of the empire and the community 'privileges': Greek orthodox responses to the young Turk policies," in: *The State and the Subaltern: Modernization, Society and the State in Turkey and Iran*, edited by Touraj Atabeki, (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), p. 54.

⁵⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 59.

⁵⁹⁰ Bernard Heyberger. "Eastern Christians, Islam and the West: a Connected History," in: *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3, (2010), p. 476.

in versatility. In relation to each other, the importance attached to these concepts also varied over time. Aydemir's memoirs are important in that he draws our attention to a shift in time, where the emphasis on the "*patrie*" moved to the nation.⁵⁹¹ For Aydemir, the turning point was the catastrophe that followed the Balkan Wars.⁵⁹² This is a feasible explanation, since the Balkan Wars were also the point in time where many of the "places of birth" of the soldiers was left beyond the boundaries of the empire. Also, the Muslim population of the Balkans started to migrate into the Ottoman Empire, deserting the lands which had been its own for a very long time. The homeland itself was shifting, the peoples living within its borders were becoming more homogenized.

A definition of the concept "nation" was unattainable, though the sources brimmed with passing references to it. Yahya Kemal's take on the seemingly complicated business of politics could be illuminating in this respect; for him it is simple, since "[t]he national fate is felt by every citizen as it passes [...]"⁵⁹³ This is a more divinely ordered version of a nation, one that would prioritize common experience in defining the nation as well as a common future, hereby appearing as destiny. Parallel to this effort of introducing the sublime into the nation, Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu's conception of the nation holds it equal to the state, and is

⁵⁹¹ Aydemir, p. 61.

⁵⁹² Aydemir, p. 60.

⁵⁹³ Yahya Kemal, p. 128.

"[...] *milli mukadderât geçerken, her vatandaş tarafından hiss olunur [...]*"

nourished by a reverence of God and the ancestors.⁵⁹⁴ The idea of one deity is perhaps the novelty here, whereas the reference to the common past is more or less shared.

The nation, as one word, could mean a number of things. Around 1908, it was used to mean being a citizen of the Ottoman state. Also, one of Enver Bey's prayers may be an example: "Lord! Preserve the Ottoman nation! Make it so that I, too, will be able to serve my nation!"⁵⁹⁵ Having penned his memoirs immediately after the events of 1908, Enver Bey presents the Ottoman nation as a viable choice in line with the spirit of the times. The second usage would depend on the *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire and thus denote belonging to the flock of Jesus, Moses or Muhammed.

In some of the narratives, there is an attempt to pin down the moment when the existing nations turned against each other, thereby undermining the viability of an "Ottoman" nation. Ahmet İhsan Tokgöz tries to provide an answer through his recollections. According to him, it started out in Crimean War and it "slept" until 1880's. Its burning point was the 1896-1897 Armenian Incidents. His conclusion was that this was the point in time when "[o]ne should not do business with the enemy" became an adage. He also blames the Armenians for turning into enemies of the

⁵⁹⁴ Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu. *Hariciye Hizmetinde 30 Sene, 1892-1922: Mutlakiyet, Meşrutiyet ve Millî Mücadele Yıllarında Şahidi veya Amili Olduğum Hâdiselere Ait Vesikalar*, (İstanbul: Maarif Basımevi, 1949-1955), Vol. 1, p. 8.

⁵⁹⁵ Enver Paşa, p. 14.

"[...]“*Ya Rab! Sen bu millet-i Osmaniyye'yi muhafaza et! Benim de milletime iyi hizmet edebilmemi nasip eyle*[...]"

The nation could be served by going abroad to study as well, see; Esat Sagay. "Hocam": *Maarif Vekili Esat Sagay'ın Hatıraları*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2012), p. 33.

Turks first.⁵⁹⁶

I shall not go into the details of the process which made enemies out of neighbors, nor the process of the “who started it?” discourse here. The point is that the incidents of 1896-1897, albeit smaller in scale, were perceived by some members as a true breaking point concerning the co-habitation of the communities within the Ottoman Empire. Enver Bey seems to blame the enmity between Muslims and non-Muslims on European intervention.⁵⁹⁷ When one considers the fact that one of the reasons for the establishment of the Committee of Union and Progress was the Reval talks, one could see how this meeting and similar others may have contributed to the suspicious state of mind of the members. This idea of foreign fingers in Balkan business seems to prevail, since Talat Paşa implies a similar connection with the groups who get richer with each war.⁵⁹⁸

There were also more political understandings of what being a nation entails. Celal Bayar’s understanding relates to the will of a nation, which should have the right to determine the declaration of war or the making of a treaty. If such decisions were up to individuals, they would often miss opportunities or act under the influence of their immediate environs. For him, the constitution did not represent this will well enough, so the decisions were catastrophic.⁵⁹⁹ His idea of a nation would thus be characterized as one bound by a social contract and the will to self-determine. Even if not elaborated in such detail, the nation could also be imagined as

⁵⁹⁶ Ahmet İhsan. *Matbuat Hatıralarım*, (İstanbul: Ahmet İhsan Matbaası, 1931), Vol. 2, p. 110.

⁵⁹⁷ Enver Paşa, p. 23.

⁵⁹⁸ Talat Paşa, p. 34.

⁵⁹⁹ Bayar, Vol. 4, pp. 1342-1343.

a group of people united against oppression. One of the reasons why Enver Bey believes the movement will succeed is the trust he places in the nation who, according to him, is fed up with the cruelty.⁶⁰⁰ A similar state of mind is displayed by Kazım Karabekir, who reminisces about the way he was, when he graduated from the military school. He remembers that there was no lack in the solidness of his faith, and his national feelings were much improved. He was longing to live as “a free and modern nation,” meaning away from tyranny and unfairness.⁶⁰¹ Possibly, he was hinting at the status of nation-states, which, surrounding the empire slowly but surely, were imposing their ordering of the society as the normative one. After the constitution was declared to be back in power, Enver Bey’s aim was to lead the free nation (Muslims and non-Muslims alike) and homeland to improvement.⁶⁰²

Such romantic perceptions characterized the nation as a victim of limitations; the adage was that once removed from its shackles, the vaguely-defined nation would be able to progress on its own since it already had the energy for the undertaking. The nature of the “improvements” mentioned earlier is very murky; it was taken for granted that the progress would follow automatically. For Resneli Niyazi Bey, the Turkish nation was successful in that it managed to build a vast empire. On the other hand, it was a victim of its ambitions since the empire proved to be too spacious to handle and the reforms (mainly the integration of other groups into a Turkish framework) to manage it better had failed. His general tenor is however optimistic,

⁶⁰⁰ Enver Paşa, pp. 64-65.

⁶⁰¹ Kazım Karabekir. *Hayatım*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2011), p. 177.

⁶⁰² Enver Paşa, p. 94.

he believes there is much to be salvaged.⁶⁰³ Writing immediately after 1908, it is clear that Niyazi Bey would entertain high hopes. His insistence on the historical greatness of the Turkish nation is also in line with his assumption that one of the requisite reforms in this respect was a policy of assimilation.

Above all, the empty concept of “nation” signified a potential, the possibility of taking another path and leaving the aged empire behind. This potential was of course to be channeled into activities which were deemed proper by the members of the Committee of Union and Progress. Rıza Tevfik’s conception of the nation is that it was too much of a power to be left on its own. It has to be awakened, not with humiliation but with giving it a soul. The wise men should be followed.⁶⁰⁴ His way of talking about the nation resonates with Ahmet Rıza Bey’s comments on approaching the nation very gently, also pointing at the fragility of the imagined situation. Once fulfilled, the potential would be permanent and gain a stronghold in the minds of the people. If the “consciousness” (*şuur*) of being a nation was established, Ziya Gökalp once thought, the war and the occupation that followed could not amount to much.⁶⁰⁵ The imagined political entity would then be able to preserve its strength. Durability was a watchword for the nation. Once again, we must note that the hopes and predictions were attached to an empty container, there is almost no elaboration on the fall of the empire, coming of the nation state or making of a brand new nation.

⁶⁰³ Resneli Niyazi, p. 123-124.

⁶⁰⁴ Rıza Tevfik. *Biraz da Ben Konuşayım*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), p. 316.

⁶⁰⁵ Birgen, Vol. 1, p. 498.

Religion as an Axis of Differentiation

As stated before, in the Ottoman Empire, religion was an earlier axis of differentiation, one that merged into nationalism within a certain historical path. It would not be very illuminating to attempt a surgery on the concept of nationalism to purge the aspect of religious ordering of the Ottoman society. What could shed light on the issue is to look at some representations of religious difference in the memoirs. One must also recall that religion was an almost insurmountable wall within the Ottoman society; one could go to a military school and thus change his social status, one could read and write in non-Arabic scripts, one could speak many languages, but one did not change one's religion. The idea of turning is laden with many negative social connotations and the stigma of it was heavy. Even the suspected simultaneous maintenance of two rites, as in the case of the *dönmes*, was a source of chariness. This axis, however, was subject to the same rule of flexibility as every other concept so far.

İbrahim Temo shows us this way of differentiating between Ottoman peoples when he states that there was a Turkish / Muslim demonstration against the Armenian assault to Bab-ı Ali.⁶⁰⁶ Allegedly, İbrahim Temo's main aim in Romenia was to assist the Muslim population there.⁶⁰⁷ It is interesting to note that being aware of this axis did not prevent Temo from taking part in the proceedings of Red Cross or

⁶⁰⁶ Temo, p. 47.

⁶⁰⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

including a photo of himself wearing the Red Cross armband.⁶⁰⁸ Since many of the doctors of the era had a positivistic way of approaching the world, serving under the Red Cross instead of the Red Crescent may have meant a very little change for him. The methods employed to complain about grievances cuts across this axis as well; Enver Bey is the one who notes the existence of Muslim brigandage.⁶⁰⁹ It should not be seen as a surprise that an unsatisfied community should take up arms; it was a very popular way of showing discontent and there was many a disorder to be unhappy about. Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın approaches the issue from the perspective of performing the religious duties while serving in the army. He is against the position of Enver Paşa, who, according to Yalçın, saw religion (conflictingly Islam as well as Christianity) as the glue of the Ottoman army. Yalçın states that if indeed religion should play such a prominent role, the grounds on which one would pin the Christian soldiers of the Ottoman army against other Christians would get lost. For him, equality before law should be emphasized instead.⁶¹⁰ His ideas were obviously informed by the Western experience with drafting and citizenship, but it did not gain currency when it was first proposed. Religion continued to be a question within the army.

Religion seems to be an axis of differentiation within the Committee of Union and Progress as well. Karabekir states that the Selanik branch of the Committee wished its members to be exclusively Muslim, even the *Dönmes* (a Jewish community who later accepted Islam) were regarded with a degree of suspicion, and

⁶⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 262.

⁶⁰⁹ Enver Paşa, p. 28.

⁶¹⁰ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. *Siyasal Anılar*, p. 206.

were not allowed in.⁶¹¹ Cemal Savaşkan states that Ohri branch fared not otherwise; non-Muslims were excluded along with alcoholics and apostates (*dönekler*).⁶¹² The social stigma attached to abandoning one's religion and taking up another one is seen at work here. The situation of the *dönme* was marginal; they were not really part of the Jewish community and the Muslims always eyed them with a certain degree of mistrust. They had their own community in Selanik where they were seen as the locals of the city. But, apart from that, they stood at the margins of both communities. Their precarious state and the possible employments of their ambiguous situation were displayed from another perspective in the subchapter "Marriage Politics."

Religion is also seen as an obstacle on the way of unification; Karabekir is the one who stated that the Christian element, although more progressed than the Muslim one, was not unified properly and thus the *status quo* would remain feasible for a little longer. The only reason why Macedonia was still Ottoman was that the Russians lost the 1904-1905 War against the Japanese.⁶¹³ The discontent within the Christian population and the rivalry between churches was not entirely a foreign element in the members' minds. Another opinion on Rumeli comes from Mehmet Ali Ayni. He believes that Rumeli had been divided into Muslim and non-Muslim earlier, its differentiation into various *millet*s was the reason of its doom.⁶¹⁴ His point

⁶¹¹ Kazım Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti Neden Kuruldu? Nasıl Kuruldu? Nasıl İdare Olundu?*, p. 176.

⁶¹² Cemal Savaşkan, *Arnavutluk'tan Sakarya'ya Komitacılık: Yüzbaşı Cemal'in Anıları*, (İstanbul: Kebikeç, 1996), p. 13.

⁶¹³ Karabekir, *Hayatım*, p. 162.

⁶¹⁴ *Canlı Tarihler*, (İstanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1944), Vol. 2, Mehmet Ali Aynî. p. 19.

of view could also be read in conjuncture with the appearance of national churches in the Balkans, which is sometimes pinned as the starting point of various nationalisms.

Cemal Paşa seems to offer religion as an axis of unification when he debates the possibility of an Islamic union against foreign powers.⁶¹⁵ Under this banner, he feels that the Turkish and Arabic nationalisms could at least cohabit.⁶¹⁶ His opinions make sense, since if such a merger should come about, he would be hailed as its instigator. Also, the lands he was most in connection with and could see united were of course Anatolia and parts of Syria. For Resneli Niyazi Bey too, the first and foremost aim would be to gather the Muslims together, the others could join later.⁶¹⁷ These points of view may also be understood more pragmatically: the most accessible wider demographic group that the Committee of Union and Progress could call upon, were the Ottoman Muslims. Especially in the Balkans, where many of these Muslims spoke a different vernacular than Turkish, it would be difficult to appeal to them by using the rhetoric of the nation. Religion was the second best choice, but it was one of the very few that they had.

In some instances, religion was promoted to the level of cement to hold to crumbling empire together. The glue was not entirely invented out of thin air, Mizancı Murat Bey once stated that his motivation for coming to İstanbul was to see

⁶¹⁵ Cemal Paşa, p. 235.

⁶¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 245.

⁶¹⁷ Resneli Niyazi, p. 247.

the seat of the Khalifat.⁶¹⁸ The political leader in the person of the sultan, the charms of the capital as a cosmopolitan city or other factors of “pull” were not as important as seeing the Caliph, shadow of God on earth. The pan-Islamist call had some very obvious uses, especially if it was directed for defensive purposes. Sultan Abdülhamid II was far from being the only one who wished to employ it to appeal to a wider public. Arif Cemil Bey, from the ranks of *Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa*, had another agenda in mind; by appealing to the Muslim populations of Caucasia, a defense against Russians would be built up.⁶¹⁹ The resources that the government could harness or send there were scarce; a “grassroots” movement would be easier and cheaper to build. The shortcut for doing so involved, in Arif Cemil Bey’s opinion, a call to arms in terms of religion. Celal Bayar’s understanding of Ziya Gökalp seems to underline the linguistic aspect as the first that makes a nation, but Islam follows quite closely: “The “auspicious İlhan” of the Turanic state would be the caliph of all the Muslims around the world, and would work towards the freedom, independence and maturation of religious civilization of the Turkish nation as well as any other Muslim nation.”⁶²⁰ These pan- Islamist ideals were put forth to spread the Unionist message to a wider public and possibly to harness more support, but both of them failed to generate an enthusiastic public response.

Mehmed Reşid Bey is a case in point: as he was visiting Ayvalık, he was also keeping track of the situation of the small town. His observation was that it leaned

⁶¹⁸ Mizancı Mehmed Murad, p. 25.

⁶¹⁹ Arif Cemil, pp. 32-34.

⁶²⁰ Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım*, (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1966), Vol. 2, p. 448. “*Turan devletinin “muazzam ilhanı” bütün dünyadaki müslümanların da halifesi olacak, Türk milleti gibi her müslüman milletin hürriyet ve istiklâline, ve dinî medeniyetinin tekâmülüne çalışacaktır.*”

towards supporting the Greeks, since the majority of the population was Rum. He considered it a good measure if some Muslim villages would move there and the rest of the lands would be populated with merchants, men of high status.⁶²¹ One notes that as a prime example of how the Unionist mind worked, what a Unionist would look at in a small town and what he would aspire to change drastically. For him, the demographic make-up of a town was something that could and should be manipulated to achieve a more desirable population. His plans tend to “gentrify” the town and its implication is that it would naturally support the Unionist point of view in the matters of the Ottoman Empire.

Sometimes the differentiation comes almost unintentionally and retrospectively, implying that the differentiation on the basis of religion was something noted in early childhood. Rıza Nur recalls the stone fights between Muslim and Christian youth.⁶²² Ahmed Bedevi Kuran remembers the Rum children who used to don their Efzun dresses and cheered when the Greeks captured Dömeke.⁶²³ This is probably the very first instance in his life, where he was acutely aware of a differentiation between “us” and “them.” Along a similar line, Şerafeddin Mağmumi notes the difference between Muslim kids who could not write their own name and the more educated Christian kids.⁶²⁴ Here, he presents the difference as one that springs from the respective qualities of education both parties receive. From an early age on, the

⁶²¹ Mehmed Reşid, p. 69.

⁶²² Rıza Nur, Vol. 1, p. 69.

⁶²³ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Harbiye Mektebi'nde Hürriyet Mücadelesi*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2009), p. 3.

⁶²⁴ Şerafeddin Mağmumi. *Bir Osmanlı Doktorunun Anıları: Yüzyıl Önce Anadolu ve Suriye*, (İstanbul: Boyut Kitapları, 2008), pp. 90-91.

children's paths seemed to diverge. The diversity of the communities was reflected on the different schools they sent their children to.

Sultan Abdülhamid II had a clear picture in mind when it came to migration and population. His point of view dictated that the people who wished to migrate into Ottoman lands should be of the same "nation" as "us" and of the same religion.⁶²⁵ It is clear from the context that he is against Jewish migration to Palestine, but the exact nature of "our nation" remains unknown.

Being an Ottoman

Selçuk Akşin Somel, in his article on the idea of Ottomanism, states that the current began around 1830 from Bab-ı Ali in the form of centralization, dragging on until 1875. Second phase played out from 1868 to 1878 and included Constitutionalism along with oppositional ideas of Young Turks. Third current of Ottomanism developed against Sultan Abdülhamid II's oppressive regime and the last variation was related to the Re-declaration of the Constitution.⁶²⁶ Somel proposes three possible pillars for the burgeoning current: one was to claim the holiness of the ruler, the second was to press for patriotic love, and the third would propagate a new nation.⁶²⁷ Out of these options, the second was widely utilized by both the Young

⁶²⁵ Sultan Abdül Hamid, p. 73.

⁶²⁶ Selçuk Akşin Somel. "Osmanlı Reform Çağında Osmanlılık Düşüncesi (1839-1913)," in: *Cumhuriyet'e Devreden Düşünce Mirası: Tanzimat ve Cumhuriyet'in Birikimi*, edited by Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekin, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), p. 88.

⁶²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 91.

Ottomans and the Young Turks, while the third was virtually pushed into oblivion.⁶²⁸ From the point of view of the Young Turks, it would simply not do to pledge alliance to the “tyrant” Sultan Abdülhamid II, or any of his possible successors since they may also succumb to the charms of absolute power. The “holiness of the ruler” argument was thus deemed worthless within the borders of the Empire. We know the sultan tried to reinforce the idea to gain support abroad, albeit with a questionable degree of success. The patriotic love must have looked more promising, since it would cut across the religious and linguistic barriers of the Ottoman Empire, while also connecting it to a Western framework of political life. The love for one’s *patrie*, as elaborated by many of the French authors they were familiar with, could also be used in the arguments against European governments in legitimizing the Ottoman Empire from a point of view which would be more accessible to the Western observer. Somel states that Party for Freedom and Accord took up the idea enthusiastically.⁶²⁹ For Somel, the reasons for the failure of the ideology were that it was never really rooted in a popular base and it had no “romantic” discourse.⁶³⁰ The attempts at building a folkloric repertoire or collecting the music of the homeland had to wait until the advent of the Turkish Republic, the intellectuals of the Ottoman Empire felt that they had more pressing concerns on their plates.

According to Masami Arai, the idea was debated around 1910, when Ahmet Ferit Bey defended it against Yusuf Akçura’s more Turkist standpoint.⁶³¹ The debate was

⁶²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 92.

⁶²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 111.

⁶³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 115.

⁶³¹ Masami Arai. *Jön Türk Dönemi Türk Milliyetçiliği*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), p. 19.

still in existence around 1914 between Ali Kemal and Yusuf Akçura as well as Ahmet Ağaoğlu and Süleyman Nazif.⁶³² Needless to say, the idea lost its appeal along the way and the Turkist wing prevailed, furthering its influence into Republican times. Here, our focus is not on its fall but on the moments which made such a grand project look like something worth fighting for.

Kazım Nami Duru uses the word “nation” to mean multiple groups of people dwelling within the Ottoman lands when he writes that after the Declaration of Constitution, the “*millet*” cause was dropped for a while.⁶³³ For a brief moment in 1908, Ottomanism was seen as a feasible project, complete with the promise of a fraternal nation. According to the Constitution, men held the franchise to select representatives to the Assembly, which would be a place for the opinions to come forth. It would also be a tribute to *Meşveret*, an Islamic tradition of counseling which was re-popularized by the Committee of Union and Progress. The status of being a citizen would solve the differentiation-related problems of the Ottoman Empire without further ado. As we elaborated in the second chapter, women were not part of this picture; if they would be granted the citizenship status, it would be because of the “foreign concerns” of men.

İbrahim Temo’s take on the issue was one of Ottomanism. He claimed that the ranks of the Committee were open to all Ottoman peoples.⁶³⁴ Yet, he is aware of the fact that these Ottoman peoples are no unified body, Temo refers to himself and to the Committee in general as “Us Turks, like all Ottomans [...]” (“*Biz türklerde* [sic]

⁶³² *ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

⁶³³ Duru, p. 34.

⁶³⁴ Temo, p. 20.

umum osmanlılar gibi”[...])⁶³⁵ Precisely this heterogeneity is what makes, for example, Talat Paşa worry about the future of the empire. If rights, which were demanded by Armenians would be granted to them; all communities would demand such rights and ultimately, the Ottoman Empire would collapse.⁶³⁶ This is, of course, also one of the classical examples where the argument of “inner and outer enemies” is articulated. Mehmed Reşid Bey also thinks that being a Circassian from the Bzedog tribe and the Hanah family does not prevent him from being an Ottoman.⁶³⁷ Here, we are unable to discern if he means the Ottoman nation, or if he uses the term in an older meaning that denotes the ruling people. Ahmed Rıza Bey states explicitly that he is against any movement that would divide the Ottoman population; such a movement would also be against law. What he would support is the help that the Turks should get, because they had been neglected so far.⁶³⁸ Cemal Paşa declares himself first and foremost an Ottoman and then a Turk. He also states that the Ottoman Empire is “essentially” Turkish and the people who are pressing forward with the Ottomanism (and not with Turkism) are the Turks of Western Turkey.⁶³⁹ This is an interesting twist, since it is a rare example of deliberation on the “nationality” of the Empire.

The definition of an “*Osmanlı*” is, at its best, circumstantial. The debates about the new style of education in the assembly, as conducted by Rum representatives,

⁶³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 48.

⁶³⁶ Talat Paşa, p. 49.

⁶³⁷ Mehmed Reşid, p. 163.

⁶³⁸ Ahmed Rıza, p. 78.

⁶³⁹ Cemal Paşa, pp. 374-375.

revealed that the Ottoman nation was something of an umbrella term: while various ethnic groups such as themselves would be left in peace, the political entity would continue to be the Ottoman state. Thus, novel ways out of new dilemmas could be imagined, such as keeping both Greek and Ottoman as languages of education.⁶⁴⁰

Enver Bey seems to think that the true Ottoman was the one who rallied around the Declaration of Constitution in 1908.⁶⁴¹ Such people made him feel the “grandeur of being an Ottoman” (*Osmanlılığın azameti*).⁶⁴² Around World War I, Eşref Kuşçubaşı stated that he was first and foremost an Ottoman, then a Muslim, then a soldier.⁶⁴³ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, writing later than the Empire’s collapse, states that around 1908 everybody was an Ottoman. His discourse on the issue is worth quoting at length, since it elaborates on some of the questions that have been troubling the Young Turks for a long time:

This [being an Ottoman] was a relative and fake expression that had no meaning and no relation to the reality. But it was this fake word which was the only cement and tie that bound the empire, encompassing many religions and genealogical lines, during the constitutional regime! In the Ottoman Empire, the principal races and communities were these: Turk, Arab, Albanian, Kurd, Circassian, Rum, Armenian, Bulgar and Jew. All individuals of various races and religions were becoming equal citizens from the perspective of rights with the coming of the constitutional regime. But how could these individuals, who did not understand each other’s tongue, who were foreign to each others’ traditions, religion, code of morals and customs and to top it all that were enemies to each other; be brought around an ideal, a homeland and be brothers?⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴⁰ Kechriotis, pp. 65-68.

⁶⁴¹ Enver Paşa, p. 69.

⁶⁴² Enver Paşa, p. 87.

⁶⁴³ Kuşçubaşı, pp. 149-150.

⁶⁴⁴ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. *Siyasal Anılar*, p. 39.

Ahmed Rıza Bey uses the word in another meaning when he tells Yusuf İzzettin, heir apparent, that he, as a member of the royal family, should be riding the horse more or less proficiently in Europe, since the “Ottomanness” and good reputation in riding were at stake.⁶⁴⁵ This refers to an older usage of the word where it was used to denote people of the ruling class, who belonged in theory to the *kapu* of the ruling family.

Resneli Niyazi Bey had a more geographical picture in mind; he quotes a document of the Committee of Union and Progress which stated that Macedonia is Ottoman and the aim was to save the homelands from tyranny in order to achieve progress. Within this context, European intervention was not very welcome.⁶⁴⁶ Again, the exact nature of this progress is left blank, except the refutation of European involvement. Celal Bayar includes in his memoirs a statement of the Committee concerning the Bab-ı Ali Coup; which stated that “Ottoman nation could no longer tolerate a government which dared to attack the nation’s main rights, did not hesitate to give up Rumeli easily and was afraid of calling the national forces to preserve the country since six or seven months.”⁶⁴⁷

A word which Celal Bayar used in defining the Committee of Union and Progress is used by Ahmed Bedevi Kuran to define the Ottoman Empire: *halite* (mixture). His understanding is that while mixing with each other, the people had let

⁶⁴⁵ Ahmed Rıza, p. 51.

⁶⁴⁶ Resneli Niyazi, p. 198.

⁶⁴⁷ Bayar, Vol. 4, p. 1106.

“Osmanlı milleti altı, yedi aydır, ana haklarına saldırmaya cesaret eden, Rumeli’yi pervasızca teslim etmekten çekinmeyen, memleketi müdafaa için milli kuvvetleri hizmete alıp çalıştırmaktan korkan bir hükümete daha uzun zaman katlanamazdı.”

go of their Ottoman features and the “dominating race,” i.e. the Turks lost their superiority.⁶⁴⁸ This is one of the rare instances where a memoirist makes an explicit reference to the concept of race, I would suggest that Ahmet Bedevi Kuran shows here an influence from the post-Republican times where the hierarchy of the races was much commented upon. Hasan Amca supplies us with yet another example of the Ottomanist way of thinking: the 27 July memorandum by the Committee of Union and Progress stated that there was a good reputation in being an Ottoman, and it should be preserved by keeping to, among others, “*hamiyet*”. Such was the wishes of the homeland.⁶⁴⁹

Although many of the members, who were involved in the Committee of Union and Progress around 1908, try to come to terms with Ottomanism as a turning point that failed to turn, there is at least one earlier example who claims that the whole project was doomed from its beginning. Halil Halid states in his memoirs that Ottomanism is not feasible, since the Eastern Christians would not be inspired by its patriotism.⁶⁵⁰ For him, the Turkish army was keeping the Ottoman Empire together and introduction of non-Muslim elements into the army would seriously compromise its integrity.⁶⁵¹ Here, he is following a familiar line of argumentation to prove the necessity of one single religion within the army. The Ottoman people have always

⁶⁴⁸ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde İnkılap Hareketleri*, p. 768.

⁶⁴⁹ Hasan Amca. *Doğmayan Hürriyet: Bir Devrin İçyüzü 1908 -1918*, (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1989), p. 28.

⁶⁵⁰ Halil Halid. *The Diary of a Turk*, (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1903), p. 116.

⁶⁵¹ *ibid.*, pp. 113-115.

accepted their existence, but these groups were never happy and never patriotic.⁶⁵² It is interesting to see that even as early as 1902-1903, there were intellectuals who imagined separate ways for separate ethno-religious groups.

Ahmet Refik Altınay, writing immediately after his tour of Anatolia, has an Ottomanist way of explaining the situation of the country. He believes that if the Turks pursued Ottoman Turkishness, they could act with the Rum and the Armenians, bringing about the improvement for the Ottoman lands.⁶⁵³ Again, there is not much clarification on the issue of improvement but the suggestion of collaboration is intriguing enough to note.

Being a Turk

When the context required so, the members of the Committee did not refrain from defining themselves as a Turk. Talat Paşa, for example, feels himself compelled to provide his readers with his ethnic pedigree. He claims to be a “[...] true Turk son of a Turk and totally Muslim.”⁶⁵⁴ Cemal Paşa takes a similar stance in explaining who the commanders of the Ottoman army are: Turks sons of Turks, pride of the Turkishness.⁶⁵⁵ Muhittin Birgen claims that the works of Committee of Union and Progress were directed at Turkifying the trade, which eventually took the shape of

⁶⁵² *ibid.*, p. 124. It is an interesting twist of argument, since a specific group is pinned down as tolerating the others' existence rather than equal members of the same neighborhood.

⁶⁵³ Altınay, p. 22.

⁶⁵⁴ Talat Paşa, p. 27.
“[...] *hakikî Türk oğlu Türk ve tamamile müslüman* [...]”

⁶⁵⁵ Cemal Paşa, p. 233.

war profiteering.⁶⁵⁶ The attempt at breaking down the ethnic division of labor took a different turn and caused thus much chagrin. The “nationalization” of anything and everything, including trade, was a trend that would continue into the Republican times. According to Birgen, the state of mind prevailing in his childhood was that every other nation than the Turk was upheld as something special: “The Arabs were noble because they were the nation to which the Prophet was sent, [...] when one talked about the Circassian, one thought about people who rode a beautiful horse and showing off their virile bodies, were doing heroic deeds: even the Rum had a talent: being a ‘semi-European’ who stood for the ancient civilizations. One would call them Monsieur [...]. Even the Armenian: Brigand!”⁶⁵⁷ Only the Turk lacked such a popular appeal and featured lower in what was perceived as a hierarchical ladder of nationalities. He then explains the ideas of Ziya Gökalp in relation to the specific features of Turkism.⁶⁵⁸

Ayşe Osmanoğlu’s description of the debate around his father’s ethnic roots reflects another point on ethnicity. When she says that people were trying to slander Sultan Abdülhamid II by stating that he was born of an Armenian mother, she understands the aim of this slander to make the Sultan less noble than otherwise possible.⁶⁵⁹ Why was having an Armenian mother understood as an insult at that

⁶⁵⁶ Birgen, Vol. 1, p. 308.

⁶⁵⁷ Birgen, Vol. 1, p. 358.

“Halbuki Arap, peygamberin içinden çıktığı bir kavim, [...], Çerkes denildiği zaman da sülün gibi atlar üzerinde levent vücutlarını göstere göstere kahramanlıklar yapan insanlar hatıra gelirdi: hattâ Rumun meziyeti vardı: Eski medeniyetlerin mümessili olan bir yarım Avrupalı olmak. Onlara Mösyö [...] denilirdi. Hattâ Ermeniler bile: Komiteci!”

⁶⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 362.

⁶⁵⁹ Ayşe Osmanoğlu, p. 15.

point of time? The hierarchy in Ayşe Hanım’s mind dictated that his father belonged to the elated line of Turkish sultans, an Armenian mother had no place in this picture. The examples cited above should demonstrate to some degree the shadow of suspicion that fell over persons whose “roots” were perceived as questionable and possible alien.

The Committee of Union and Progress started out by promoting Ottomanism as a possible way out of what they perceived as imminent threats. The shift from this deliberately vague proposition of patriotism and supranationalism to an exclusivist, rigid nationalism occurred over a period of time, and it is hard to pin down the exact turning points. Selçuk Akşin Somel, for example, pinpoints the time span around the Balkan Wars as the time when Ottomanism was perceived to have come to an end.⁶⁶⁰ The lands that remained within Ottoman holdings and the population therein was to be re-conceptualized, and Turkism was a viable option for many members of the Committee. Kazım Karabekir sums the fears and expectations of many members when he says that if Macedonia should be lost, the only aim left would be the Turkist one.⁶⁶¹

So, it is not surprising that a latecomer to the debate, Şevket Süreyya Aydemir states that the “birth” of Turkism and even Turanism can also to be traced to the same point in time.⁶⁶² In his attempt to explain his concepts better, he vaguely defines the Turan Turks as the Turks who live between the Yellow Sea and

⁶⁶⁰ Somel, p. 112.

⁶⁶¹ Kazım Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti Neden Kuruldu? Nasıl Kuruldu? Nasıl İdare Olundu?*, p. 102.

⁶⁶² Aydemir, pp. 61-64. Time is set on p. 58 as the end of Balkan Wars.

Danube.⁶⁶³ In today's terms, it would stretch from the east of China to Central Europe and would most certainly exceed the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. For Aydemir, the word "nation" also rings a romantic bell; in one of his characteristically articulate passages he describes the same group as "nation of caravan" (*kervan millet*) and "eternal travelers" (*ebedi yolcular*).⁶⁶⁴ The people who inhabited this immense landscape were imagined as a mobile group of people. The reference is also a historical one, pointing to the nomadic roots of Turkish tribes. On a more down-to-earth level, Aydemir states that around World War I, one could ask the soldiers if they were Turks and they would reply with an "*Estağfurullah*," linking Turkishness exclusively to being a *Kızılbaş*, which was not defined very clearly in their minds but carried bad connotations nevertheless.⁶⁶⁵ I think we can safely conclude that as one of the proponents of the nation-making, Aydemir was acutely aware that the concept had only a very fleeting hold on reality and was ready to be bent to the advantage of the power holders.

There are of course less ornate and more individual definitions of the people who constitute the Turkish nation. Fuat Balkan defines the Turks in the Balkans as a group that lived freely until the Balkan Wars.⁶⁶⁶ Although the modern mind would see it as a conundrum, Balkan is of the opinion that one could carry another nationality but still be counted as a real Turk.⁶⁶⁷ Halit Ziya Bey's recollections

⁶⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 147.

⁶⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 148.

⁶⁶⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 111-113.

⁶⁶⁶ Balkan, pp. 26-27.

⁶⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 47.

include a more “sophisticated” version of Turkishness, since it comes from a different source than himself. An Italian classmate once said to Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil that the Turks were “the owners of the country” (*memleketin sahibi*).⁶⁶⁸ The fact that Uşaklıgil found it worth recording shows us that it was important for his notion of nation, also carrying echoes of the hierarchical ranking of the nations in the minds of the members, epitomized usually as “*millet-i hâkime*” (the ruling nation.) Halil Paşa would probably agree, the Turkish nation would emerge as the “*hakim millet*” after the grip of the palace on the issues of politics was broken. The idea of citizenship would then be enough to hold Rumeli together.⁶⁶⁹

Kazım Karabekir believes that around 1906 “[w]e are in the age of nationhood” so that the Turk should appear as a nation as well. The age of the empires was felt to be over, as the Young Turks could see from the revolutions in surrounding countries such as Russia, and the nation-state was asserting its form of governance as the standard of the day. His reasoning led him to compose the music to Mehmed Emin’s widely known poem which went as follows: “I am a Turk, my religion, my kind is sublime / My chest, my soul is filled with fire.”⁶⁷⁰ The song, as Karabekir recounts it, was a source of consolation through the hard circumstances.⁶⁷¹

This sort of a hymn is elementary in training a group of people to become a nation, since it would serve as a shortcut in imagining a nation which comprised of

⁶⁶⁸ Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil. *Kırk Yıl*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaacılık ve Neşriyat, 1936), Vol. 1, p. 150.

⁶⁶⁹ Halil Paşa. *Bitmeyen Savaş: Anılarım ve Belgelerle*, (İstanbul: 7 Gün Yayınları, 1972), p. 31.

⁶⁷⁰ Kazım Karabekir. *Hayatım*, pp. 218-219.
“*Milliyet asrındayız.*” “*Ben bir Türküm, dinim, cinsim uludur / Sinem özüm ateş ile doludur.*”

⁶⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 220.

individuals who likewise sought solace from their hardships in the same musical piece, albeit many miles apart. The assignment of certain anthems to certain nation-states was by then an established practice, along with the use of flags, both of which proved to be a challenge in the international representations of the Ottoman Empire. Lütfü Simavi, who was *başmabeyinci* to Sultan Reşad, recalls that the reigning Sultan had accepted a very unfavorable piece as the national anthem of the Ottoman Empire and could not be swayed from his choice. Then, Saint-Saens was charged with the assignment to compose a new one, which he did not fulfill.⁶⁷²

The established practice of the Ottoman Empire dictated that every new Sultan should have an anthem dedicated to him, but the European custom was to keep one anthem constant amongst a variety of kings and queens. As Lütfü Bey summarizes for us: “The rulers die, but the nations do not.”⁶⁷³ This discrepancy between the focus of loyalty between the European and Ottoman states caused sometimes diplomatically awkward moments. Simavi reports that once in a diplomatic setting, the British hosts’ band played *Hamidiye Marşı*, thinking that it was *the* Ottoman anthem. Since Sultan Mehmed Reşad V was on the throne and Sultan Abdülhamid II had long been dethroned, the Ottoman party found it useful to remain silent.⁶⁷⁴

Karabekir also notes that “the Turk” was much too late in recognizing its status as a nation; while others were fighting for more room in Macedonia, the Turk was

⁶⁷² Lütfü Simavi. *Osmanlı Sarayı'nın Son Günleri*. (İstanbul: Hürriyet Yayınları, [197-?]), pp. 57-58.

⁶⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 382.

“*Hükümdarlar ölürler ama, milletler ölmezler.*”

⁶⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 72.

fighting to keep its existence as a nation.⁶⁷⁵ This form of argument in favor of a nation building may be called recognition through juxtaposition. It may seem a feeble concept at first, but we have to keep in mind that many of the members of the Committee of Union and Progress grew up in the Balkans; an ethnically, religiously, ideologically and linguistically diverse territory that was nevertheless the seedbed of a common culture of daily life. Their recognition of themselves as belonging to a specific nation mainly depended on their neighbor's association with a different nation.

According to the members, there were many ways to delineate a nation apart from those counted above. Resneli Niyazi Bey counts the things a Turk depends on for happiness. Formerly, they looked up to the sultan and his grand vizier to provide for their happiness, but now they pursued it energetically.⁶⁷⁶ This is a relatively new conceptualization of the nation as a group which pursues its own happiness. Eşref Kuşçubaşı recalls that even during the First World War, it was possible to hail from Aleppo and call himself Turk,⁶⁷⁷ since a child born to Turkish parents would be considered Turkish and in Aleppo, there were still Ottoman officials and other people who identified with Turkishness.

Ziya Gökalp, as told by Zekeriya Sertel, played of course a very important role in defining the Turk. His narrative gives us glimpses of Gökalp's Turkism; which started out as a linguistic movement that aimed at removing the elements which made Turk an alien to his own language. The language of the people should be

⁶⁷⁵ Karabekir, *Hayatım*, p. 264.

⁶⁷⁶ Resneli Niyazi, p. 124.

⁶⁷⁷ Kuşçubaşı, pp. 125-126.

recaptured.⁶⁷⁸ The second stop would be the establishment of “a sort of national bourgeoisie,” removing trade from the sphere of influence of foreign powers.⁶⁷⁹ This concern about the “owners” of the trade and by extension, of the economy, influenced the policies of the Unionists to a large extent, although we cannot trace that succinctly through the memoirs. Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın points out the connection between the fate of Gökalp and the fate of Turkishness in general.⁶⁸⁰ Indeed, there were a couple of intellectuals who contributed to the debate around these concepts and later, they found it beneficial to popularize the issue through various means. Ziya Gökalp was one of the influential figures, along with Yusuf Akçura and Ahmet Ağaoğlu. The Turkist argument was also meant to be a point of criticism against the rule of the Committee of Union and Progress. Kuran states that main problem of the Committee of Union and Progress consisted of having reduced the Ottoman Empire to one sole element; that of the Turk.⁶⁸¹

Turkishness was also envisaged as a “thing” that can be proven, mainly through blood or violence. According to Arif Cemil Bey, a certain Codoroğlu Hamit proved his point of Turkishness by diving into the ranks of Russian Cossaks, killing and claiming the head of one of them.⁶⁸² Rıza Nur calls himself “a pure Turk”, whose

⁶⁷⁸ Zekeriya Sertel. *Hatırladıklarım*, (İstanbul: Yayıncılık Matbaası, 1968), p. 12.

⁶⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 13.
“Bir nevi milli burjuvazi[...].”

⁶⁸⁰ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. *Tanıdıklarım*, p. 59.

⁶⁸¹ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde İnkılap Hareketleri*, (İstanbul: Çeltüt Matbaası, 1959), p. 520.

⁶⁸² Arif Cemil, pp. 153-154.

“[...] blood is unmixed with foreign blood. I am proud of that.”⁶⁸³ Although an outlier within Unionist circles, his point suggests a feature that might be a potential measurement in defining a new nation: namely, blood. At that time, the idea seems to have been not very popular, since this anecdote remains unique in pointing out blood as a component of nationality amongst the memoirists.

Apart from the Turkishness of persons, the Turkishness of certain non-human entities was also subject to scrutiny. The “proofs” of these cases could be blatantly fragmentary, yet nevertheless legitimate for the author. Rıza Nur goes on stating that there was a “national” game called “*Dilden*” that they used to play as kids. His justification of its being national is that the holes used for the game were very old.⁶⁸⁴ Read from another point of view, he may have tried to imply that the Turkish nation was a very ancient one. From his perspective, bridge is also a Turkish game with some improvements brought about by the French. His witness this time is a book he claims to have seen in France, where the author stated that the game was Turkish.⁶⁸⁵ Apart from proving the Turkishness of these games, Rıza Nur is trying to compile a list which would prove that the Turks have indeed contributed to the civilization.

Just as the Turkishness of certain games was questioned, the Turkishness of certain places could also be a point of doubt. Abdullah Bedevi Kuran states that the *Cadde-i Kebir*, the Grande Rue de Pera, displayed then no visible signs of

⁶⁸³ Rıza Nur, Vol. 1, p. 55.

“[...] ve halis Türktür. Demek benim kanıma ecnebi kanı karışmamıştır. Halis Türk kanıdır. Ben bununla iftihar ederim.”

⁶⁸⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 64.

⁶⁸⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 74. The name of the book or the author is not cited.

Turkishness.⁶⁸⁶ For the same street, Ahmet İhsan Bey declares the same sentiment; saying that even the governor (*mutasarrıflık*) was residing in a rented building.⁶⁸⁷ Although it was true that Pera was perceived as the pinnacle of foreign influence in the Ottoman Empire, it is also true that it was situated within the capital city and was part of it since the fifteenth century. The nationalist feelings, which arose out of events irrelevant to Pera, now understood it to be an alien, non-Turk place.

Kazım Karabekir's take on Selanik is somewhat similar: "Selanik is a very beautiful city. It is newer and more graceful than any other city I have seen in Anatolia and Arabia. [...] But is it us who owns this place? There is not one creature to represent Turkishness save for a few *dönme* with Turkish names and manners."⁶⁸⁸ Now we must keep in mind that his words were recorded after the fall of Selanik in 1912, so that what seeps through his sentiments is perhaps a late, "It never was ours" sort of consolation. At the turn of the century, Selanik was very much integrated into the port city network of the Empire and it was renowned as a cosmopolitan city for a long time. What changed now is the perception of diversity: It was no longer seen as a welcoming aspect of the Ottoman Empire, but an obstacle in the way of becoming a "proper" nation state. We must also note the suspicious portrayal of the *dönme*, who were perceived as covering something under the "Turkish names and manners." Their presence in the city was not enough to make the city Turkish of its own accord,

⁶⁸⁶ Kuran, *Harbiye Mektebi'nde Hürriyet Mücadelesi*, p. 53.

⁶⁸⁷ Ahmet İhsan, Vol. 2, p. 146.

⁶⁸⁸ Kazım Karabekir. *Hayatım*, p. 163.

"Selanik çok güzel şehir. Bütün Anadolu ve Arabistan'da gördüğüm bütün şehirlerden daha latif ve yeni... [...] Fakat buraların sahibi acaba biz miyiz? Birkaç Türk isimli ve Türk şekilli dönmeler de olmasa Türkü temsil edecek bir varlık yok!..."

since they were judged to be not enough Turkish for the endeavor.

The definition of Turkishness very obviously depended on people who were non-Turks, since the start of identification with a certain nation was usually seeing it in contrast with other nationalities. Ahmet İhsan Bey recalls that Mikail Portakal Paşa and Sakızlı Ohanis Efendi, both teachers in his school, *Mülkiye*, were well-liked despite not being Turks.⁶⁸⁹ We could deduce that the default mode of non-Turkish existence was not being liked by the Turks, but these teachers managed to impress their audiences. For Ahmet Bedevî Kuran, every nation but the Turk had its own national trade, only the Turk remained without one and even though the Yıldız Palace looked down upon it, the Turk was a noble man.⁶⁹⁰ We may see that urban ethnic division of labor contributed to the emerging gap between the Turks and the non-Turks in the minds of the memoirists, as exemplified by Ahmet İhsan Tokgöz, who states that in the Yıldız Palace, all the important positions were held by non-Turks: the head spy was Circassian, for example, and the head architect was Rum.⁶⁹¹

We have formerly seen that the hierarchy of nations, as it existed in the minds of the memoirists during the last years of the Ottoman Empire, placed many other nationalities above the Turks. “The ethnic division of labor” and the perceived low status of the Turks within it constitute a further dimension of the identity question. Again, being a Turk was being held equal to being unemployed or, indeed, unemployable for a number of high positions. Ali İhsan Sabis adds the issue of

⁶⁸⁹ Ahmet İhsan, Vol. 1, p. 29.

⁶⁹⁰ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde İnkılap Hareketleri*, p. 394.

⁶⁹¹ Ahmet İhsan, Vol. 1, p. 137. The prominent architectural family of the time, the Balyans, were of course Armenian and not Rum.

“foreign intervention” into the discussion of national identity when he says that he was first a Turk and could not surely be a friend of the Germans before that.⁶⁹²

All tangible aspects aside, there is one more entity that could be described as Turkish: the spirit. For example, Muhittin Birgen links the survival of the Turkish spirit to *tekkes* which prevailed against the mosque and the *medrese*, both provided for by the Sultan. From his point of view, against the nobility of the Kureyş, the Iranians and Turks depended on Caliph Ali for the preservation of their “democratic” feelings. The Turks would feel more attached to their *tekkes* than to any Osmanoğlu.⁶⁹³ His argument is actually twofold: he takes the nation out of its obvious *reâyâ* status to a more citizen-like one, while also shifting the religious emphasis from the “Arabic” interpretation of Islam that would put the Sultan as the caliph, to the Shi’ite one. Retrospectively, he imagines a group of people that were more independent in their choices and bowed not to the sultan but to a different authority so that the Republic he lived to see being established, could appeal to these supposedly ancient egalitarian sensibilities of the simple folk. Rıza Nur’s contribution to the characteristics of the Turkish spirit would be commonsense,⁶⁹⁴ which also falls in line with the ideal of the simple folk. This ideal, at least in Nur’s memoirs, cuts two ways: According to him, Turks are also known for their “savage” customs such as kidnapping a youth to the mountains, also known as “*puşt[luk]*.”⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹² Ali İhsan Sabis. *Harp Hatıralarım: Birinci Cihan Harbi*, (İstanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 1990), Vol. 1, p. 86.

⁶⁹³ Birgen, Vol. 2, p. 685.

⁶⁹⁴ Rıza Nur, Vol. 2, p. 536.

⁶⁹⁵ Rıza Nur, Vol. 1, p. 84.

The simple folk of the nationalist imagination was all goodness, but I think Rıza Nur made a different sense of the human condition and saw it fair to add a dark side to the picture. Elsewhere, he compares the Turkish ways of living with the European ones, taking the sports to be an indicator. He states that formerly the Turks had their own competitive games, but then these games were overshadowed by a wish to Europeanize them, which did not succeed in gaining a hold in culture. Thus, there were no proper European sports and no proper Turkish sports either.⁶⁹⁶ Halide Edib Adivar's memoirs directed to a non-Ottoman, possibly American audience provide us with clues of her perception of Turkishness. She recalls the ceremony at the start of her school days as follows: "All ceremonies in Turkey, even marriages and Bairams, tend to take a sad and solemn tone, [...] What makes other people happy makes the Turk sad."⁶⁹⁷ The passage is interesting since it may be read as an attempt to look at the nation more romantically, instead of the more usual militaristic-mechanic way.

The Turkishness also lent itself to a very different argument when it was used within a defensive discourse. Ali Münif Yeğena once stated that "We were Turks. If we committed a crime, we committed it in Turkey. We would account for this crime before Turkish judges."⁶⁹⁸ The quotation serves to deny the legitimacy of a foreign court which would possibly charge them for the crimes committed against Armenians.

⁶⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 65.

⁶⁹⁷ Adivar, p. 88.

⁶⁹⁸ Ali Münif [Yeğenağa]. *Ali Münif Bey'in Hatıraları*, (İstanbul: İsis, 1996), p. 98. "Biz Türktük. Bir suç işlemişsek Türkiye'de işlemiştik. Bu suçtan dolayı Türk hakimlerinin huzurunda hesap verirdik."

Halide Edib Hanım tried to sketch the evolution of the Turkish nationalism for the benefit of her readers. Her version started around 1910-1912 with a simplification in language and involved names such as Ziya Gökalp and Yusuf Akçura.⁶⁹⁹ Here I shall not recapture her whole argument, but I will highlight that she differs from other narratives of the “birth of nationalism” in following the idea to its logical conclusion. She claims that after having seen Armenian victims of deportations such as Gomidas and Turkish victims of wars she understood that nationalism inevitably leads to massacres.⁷⁰⁰ This “making of the nation” was not a peaceful process, and euphemisms accorded to it were far from concealing the ugly truth. Ahmet Refik Bey claims that in the name of humanity, he is suffering for the Armenian people as much as he suffers for the Turkish people.⁷⁰¹

A Case Study: Young Turks Meet the Arabs

From the occasional glimpses provided to us by the memoirs, it is possible to see how the members situated themselves *vis-à-vis* the Arab population of the Ottoman Empire. Cemal Paşa, for example, who was in charge of the Syrian affairs between 1915 and 1917, looks at the place through the eyes of a ruler and a potential colonizer. Apart from the sundry secondary sources⁷⁰² which would prove the point,

⁶⁹⁹ Adivar, p. 312.

⁷⁰⁰ Adivar, p. 375.

⁷⁰¹ Altınay, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁰² The most prominent is Selim Deringil’s “They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April, 2003), pp. 311-342.

some of the contemporary accounts also touch on the subject such as the memoirs of Cemal Paşa, Hüseyin Kazım Kadri and Emir Şekip Arslan. Birgen states explicitly that the Ottoman policy around 1914 was one of colonization for the Arab lands.⁷⁰³ A dignitary of the palace, Tahsin Paşa also notes that the Arabian policies of Sultan Abdülhamid II “could be called colony politics.”⁷⁰⁴ Hüseyin Kazım Kadri would have agreed, since in his memoirs he is of the opinion that “[...] Turks did nothing else to Syria than to rob it.”⁷⁰⁵

One cannot help but note here the agreeing opinions coming from widely different quarters of political life: the partisan of Committee of Union and Progress, classic official of the Palace and the dissenter to the Committee of Union and Progress all seem to think that the policies concerning the province of Syria were not the most suitable ones. The provinces which were situated to the south of Anatolia were seen as sources of revenue and manpower, with no intention of reinvesting the revenues into these lands. Although there existed brief spells of contemplating a more or less equal congregation of citizens under the banner of Islam, the project was dropped by 1915. On the other hand, the Arab intellectuals and politicians were acutely aware of their secondary status and tried to reverse this situation by demanding their rights, sometimes through the medium of congresses, as the Arab Congress of 1913 in Paris would display.

⁷⁰³ Birgen, Vol.1 p. 268.

“*Müstemleke siyaseti güdüyorduk.*” In the passage around the title, it becomes clear that Cemal Paşa was the instigator of this project.

⁷⁰⁴ Tahsin Paşa. *Abdülhamit Yıldız Hatıraları*, (İstanbul: Muallim Ahmet Halit Kitaphanesi, 1931), p. 150.

“*[...] müstemleke siyaseti denilebilirdi.*”

⁷⁰⁵ Hüseyin Kâzım Kadri, p. 101.

“*[...] Türkler Suriye’yi soymaktan başka bir şey yapmamışlardı.*”

After noting briefly that the members of the Committee of Union and Progress were never all-powerful in dealing with the Syrian part of the Ottoman lands, let me now return to the subject at hand. Here, I shall not go into the details of Cemal Paşa's reign in Syria *per se*, but only how it was perceived by himself and some other memoirists. The main discourse Cemal Paşa is acting from is the Turks and the Arabs being two siblings, bound by religion, torn apart by the betrayal of Şerif Hüseyin.⁷⁰⁶ An implication of Arabs and Turks being siblings is that one of them, Turks, are the bigger brother; also falling in line with the idea of the stratified ordering of nations. The argument enables him to reduce some of the Arab demands to mere derivatives of the "original," that is their Turkish equivalents. For him, Turkish youth has found the true path, Arab youth should be following it as well.⁷⁰⁷

This hierarchical ranking of the nationalities suggest that the Ottomanism, which proposed equal rights to the male part of the society was no longer seen as feasible; a lopsided pan-Islamism, favoring the Turks, would perhaps fit the bill better. The idea echoes again when he talks about the Turks who are then ruled by Mustafa Kemal and the parallel path for the Muslim population of Arabs, whose news of independence would be welcome.⁷⁰⁸ The way he talks about the nationalistic motivations of Aziz Ali is also dependant on the favors he receives (or fails to receive) from the Turks.⁷⁰⁹ The "path" for the Arabs, as Cemal Paşa sees it, has been laid out for them beneficially by the Turks; so that all they had to do was to derive

⁷⁰⁶ Cemal Paşa, p. 166.

⁷⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 245.

⁷⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 330.

⁷⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 77.

the necessary lessons to bring about the completion of the project. This derivative option, which is seen by Cemal Paşa as the only logical one, seeps also to his appreciation of Arab nationalism, making it reliant on the sovereign's point of view.

Cemal Paşa also does not hesitate to stereotype the Arab "folk," for example the important figures of Arabs were, in his opinion, jealous of each other.⁷¹⁰ The examples may be multiplied, but his observations parallel closely the ethnographers' of the era. He felt he was in the midst of an "alien" culture and society, who spoke a different language, had almost indecipherable customs and were rarely friends of the Ottoman government. By generalizing what he could see, Cemal Paşa was trying to build a theory of the Arab society, which was doomed from the beginning; the uneven distribution of power in this context made his misunderstandings even larger. Although he calls Syria, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula "the most exquisite pearls of the Ottoman reign" and laments their break-up with the homeland,⁷¹¹ after the rebellion, Dürzis and Arabs become in his eyes suspicious figures.⁷¹²

Cemal Paşa's perception of the Arab society never allowed him to make solid alliances, therefore it is no wonder he would pin down certain groups as particularly anti-Ottoman. That he viewed Arabs with a degree of scorn was no secret; Muhittin Birgen wrote that despite the fact that Cemal Paşa hanged some of the *eşrâf* (which, according to him, was not a great loss, since their lifestyle would not change if they

⁷¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 262.

⁷¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 415.

"*Osmanlı saltanatının en seçkin incileri olan Suriye ve Irak ile Arap Yarımadası [...]*"

⁷¹² *ibid.*, p. 201.

gave victims once in a while)⁷¹³ they still attempted at entertaining and praising him, so that he would favor them on certain issues.⁷¹⁴ Not everybody was so favorably inclined, Hüseyin Kadri Kazım explained the Syrian question with a lack of tact on Cemal Paşa's side.⁷¹⁵ The outlook of the colonizer was not unique to Cemal Paşa either. Esat Sagay's memoirs give us his impressions about the Beirutian scene around 1896, where he notes the educational efforts of the Americans in Lebanon and finds the Ottoman educational efforts lacking.⁷¹⁶ It is interesting to note that the American efforts were directed at "educating the native" and a teacher from the Ottoman system should find these attempts worthy of emulating.

Others, who were not burdened by the state to get results, such as Cami Baykurt who was exiled to Tripoli or Kazım Karabekir, who spent part of his childhood there, take up the role of what we would today call an ethnographer. Their points of view are not marred by immediate concerns and they do not feel especially alien to the Arab culture. In this respect, Selim Sırrı Tarcan exemplifies a "bad" ethnographer, since he fails to appreciate the differing ways to knowledge. Cami Bey calls Trablus "savage and lovely," he has generally a favorable opinion of the place.⁷¹⁷ A more colorful one is the negotiation process as he observed it: while the elder men of a tribe were discussing an issue, they would build little pyramids out of rocks in front

⁷¹³ Birgen, Vol. 1, p. 263.

⁷¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 264-265.

⁷¹⁵ Hüseyin Kâzım Kadri, pp. 142-143.

⁷¹⁶ Sagay, p. 32.

⁷¹⁷ Cami Baykurt. *Son Osmanlı Afrikası 'nda Hayat*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2009), p. 11.

of them. If their point of view was accepted, the pyramid would stay. If no agreement was reached, everyone would destroy their pyramid and go away.⁷¹⁸ The love for stories, as professed by the Bedevi, is also to be noted.⁷¹⁹ Being the intelligent observer, Cami Baykurt tries to capture the good along with the bad. He believes for example that the Bedevi lacks a sense of time and (to make up for it, perhaps) has developed an incredible sense of direction.⁷²⁰ Also, he also acknowledges the accumulation of knowledge when it comes to the genealogy of an Arab; one could not possibly know it better than the person concerned,⁷²¹ pointing to a desirable aspect of the society. On the other hand, his toleration is also limited, he takes pity with the “poor Bedevi” who cannot compute big numbers and is thus doomed to stay ignorant.⁷²² Reading into these two examples may also reveal that Cami Bey appreciated certain mechanisms of negotiation such as pyramid-building and accumulation of knowledge such as genealogy as existent and valuable within the Arab society. When it came to more “modern” sorts of knowledge such as keeping time or counting, his positivistic education gets the better of him, revealing his belief in the universal necessity for such feats.

There is only one vague trace of Orientalism in his memoirs; when Cami Bey describes the tents built in the desert as having not undergone any change since forty

⁷¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 62.

⁷¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 71.

⁷²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 123.

⁷²¹ *ibid.*, p. 108.

⁷²² *ibid.*, p. 60.

centuries.⁷²³ When considering an earlier passage of his observations, one sees that Cami Bey tells of tents which were built on rifles,⁷²⁴ so something definitely did change within 40 centuries. This timelessness can also be interpreted as backwardness, and coupled with some of the earlier examples such as the Bedevi with a lack of ability in counting, they constitute the dark side of Cami Baykurt's narrative. Nevertheless, his sensibility makes him a better candidate in interpreting his new environment correctly.

Kazım Karabekir recalls that his first lessons in Arabic were a number of insults, which the people used frequently.⁷²⁵ From his childhood perspective, Arabs appear as a loud folk who fight loudly and mourn their dead loudly.⁷²⁶ If one considers the text as a whole, the Arabs do not cut a very alien figure in Karabekir's narrative. Although the cited examples show that there is the usual tendency to stereotype, the Arab is not inevitably bad, stupid or backward. The "bad" ethnographer, Selim Sırrı Tarcan, who was for a while a teacher at the *Aşiret Mektebi*, states that the hierarchy of the tribe would continue in the school as well. He calls the pupils there "ignorant," who used their eyes instead of their brain to comprehend something.⁷²⁷ Whereas Cami Bey could recognize different branches of knowledge as legitimate and generally held a favorable opinion of the Arabs, Selim Sırrı Bey seems to have been sure that there was only one way, and that way was his.

⁷²³ *ibid.*, p. 66.

⁷²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 65.

⁷²⁵ Karabekir. *Hayatım*, p. 55.

⁷²⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 74 -75.

⁷²⁷ *Canlı Tarihler*, (İstanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1946), Vol. 4, Selim Sırrı Tarcan, p. 28.

The third generic role was that of the soldier, who fought side by side and later against the Arabs, gaining a very different perspective of the people. Here I must stress that the ties that bind soldiers together seems to be a transnational one. I believe Eşref Kuşçubaşı and to some degree Halil Paşa could understand the fighting population better than any other group. Halil Paşa, who fought in Tripoli against the Italians, states that he loved the warlike Arab folk with their “adorable” (*sevimli*) aspects. The reason why they took to the mountains and deserts was the bad circumstances.⁷²⁸ Eşref Bey remarks on their way of fighting, for him the Bedevi only gives up under heavy fire from a close distance and once the spirit is weighing down, the Bedevi find it hard to recuperate from the situation.⁷²⁹

Another Case Study: Young Turks *versus* the Armenians

The relationship between the members of the Committee of Union and Progress and the Armenians was more complicated than their relationship with the Arabs. They could easily distance themselves from the Arabs, who were exotically different and position themselves as observers, building a hierarchy. With the Armenians, this could not be the case since the circles they moved in were similar; although historical arguments were tried to be made to wipe out the Armenian presence in Anatolia or elsewhere,⁷³⁰ they were perceived as standing on equal footing. In an

⁷²⁸ Halil Paşa, p. 102.

⁷²⁹ Kuşçubaşı, p. 58.

⁷³⁰ Cemal Paşa, p. 380; and, İsmail Kemal. *İsmail Kemal Bey'in Hatıratı*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2009), p. 181; as well as Aydemir, p. 134.

earlier phase, one could stress the importance of a new order that would solve many problems, including the Armenian one; this was an argument of Mizancı Murat Bey.⁷³¹

Later, as the euphoria surrounding the Revolution of 1908 slowly dissolved, the members of the Committee of Union and Progress were caught in a dilemma: On the one hand, the Armenians were perceived as potential collaborators to a better regime; in some rare cases they were even shown as role models. Temo seems to stress the similar positions of the Turkish and Armenian opposition *vis-a-vis* Sultan Abdülhamid II. In one of the “manifest”s of the Committee of Union and Progress, which Temo co-wrote, it was suggested that instead of trying to suppress the Armenians, the two groups shall collaborate to bring about the end of tyranny.⁷³² Precisely this collaboration is elaborated upon by an anonymous member of the Committee of Union and Progress who wrote to Temo in 1897 and stated that he was so ashamed that he could not talk to his Armenian acquaintances, “[...] we have perished and embarrassed ourselves [...]” he says; since for him the chance to get rid of the tyranny was no more.⁷³³ According to Bahaeddin Şakir Bey, the 1907 Young Turk Congress saw a very vivid call-to-arms to all of the nations of the Empire:

The certain wish of the Congress, which pertains to the wish of the entire nation, is that. [Sultan’s rule should fall and a constitutional regime shall be established instead.] The Ottomans who cultivate the same soil and suffer the same, have resolved to procure their share of happiness and freedom with a unified

⁷³¹ Mizancı Mehmed Murad, p. 88.

⁷³² İbrahim Temo, p. 49.

⁷³³ *ibid.*, p. 78.

“ [...] *hem mahvolduk hem de rezil olduk.* ”

movement. As we come together for a common cause, each organization will retain its independence. We come together in friendship and brotherhood and prepare for the fight. [...] We appeal to everybody to aid us in this hard yet honored endeavor. [...] The common opinion issuing forth from the Congress is that all oppositional [against Sultan Abdülhamid II] groups must resort to revolutionary measures from now on. [...]The results of the revolutionary movements executed usually in Anatolia by Turkish and Armenian groups prove this. [...]Long live the union of the nations which were not unified until now! Long live the union of revolutionary forces!⁷³⁴

Another point worth noting is that Talat Paşa tries to present the passing of the Law on Forced Deportation as one which pinned the army and the civilian wing of the Committee of Union and Progress against each other. Talat Bey, so the story goes, wanted to prevent it from passing.⁷³⁵ Reportedly, he even tried to rescue his friend, Vartkes Serengülyan, who was at that time a representative in the Assembly.⁷³⁶ Obviously, this is another means of evading his responsibilities and also a factor contributing to his defense if he should ever be judged for such crimes. Yet, it is also true that he knew Vartkes Efendi from older days. Hüseyin Cahit Bey states that Talat Paşa was indeed personal friends with Vartkes Efendi and he appreciated his “*komitacı*” and plainspoken ways.⁷³⁷

Seen from another perspective, both Armenian and Turkish *komitacı*s belonged to a similar milieu: They both belonged to a committee which highly valued secrecy, efficiency and whose aim was ultimately to make Ottoman Empire a better place to

⁷³⁴ Bahaeddin Şakir, pp. 422-423.

⁷³⁵ Talat Paşa, p. 64.

⁷³⁶ Talat Paşa, pp. 73-74. See also Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. *Tanıdıklarım*, p. 50, for a similar story. This, however, does not make up for the fact that the law passed and Vartkes Efendi as well as Krikor Efendi were killed during the deportations.

⁷³⁷ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. *Siyasal Anılar*, p. 234.

live. Yalçın also speaks favorably of Hallacyan Efendi, who was *Nafia Nazırı* in the Committee of Union and Progress government.⁷³⁸ The Armenian representatives of the Assembly were acquaintances of the Committee of Union and Progress circles and occupied posts, so that they were more in contact with them than for instance the Arab representatives. As for the role models, Armenian youth is presented by İbrahim Temo on some occasions as role models to the Turkish students in Europe,⁷³⁹ which means he was at least in a vague contact with the Armenian youth movements abroad. Ahmet Bedevî Kuran states that the Armenians acted as examples to Turkish youth when they broke into Bab-ı Ali,⁷⁴⁰ also pointing at another instance where these two groups found their interests to be intertwined.

On the other hand, the Armenians had their own organizations to pursue different agendas and, according to some members, were also backed up by European powers; so they constituted a strong threat to what the members had in mind. The role of the political committees within the Armenian community is elaborated by Celal Bayar, who believes that the National Assembly, which was founded in 1863 in accordance with the Armenian Constitution, fell later into the hands of the Tashnaks and was used as instruments of the English or the Russian. The Armenian National Assembly was discontinued in 1916.⁷⁴¹

In Şahingiray's memoirs, the Armenians appear as outright deceitful figures who

⁷³⁸ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. *Tanıdıklarım*, pp. 155-157.

⁷³⁹ İbrahim Temo, pp. 180-182.

⁷⁴⁰ Ahmet Bedevî Kuran. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde İnkılap Hareketleri*, pp. 158-159.

⁷⁴¹ Bayar, Vol. 3, pp. 911-912.

engaged in secret organizations, acquiring arms and otherwise making preparations to eradicate the Muslims.⁷⁴² Eyüp Sabri Akgöl recollects a similar story where returning Armenians had to be resettled by removing the Muslim *muhacirs* who settled in their place.⁷⁴³ He also adds horrifying personal stories of Armenian eye doctors who intentionally blinded Turkish soldiers.⁷⁴⁴ Kazım Karabekir is more “original” in this respect; since he claims that the 31 March Incident was to be blamed on the Armenians, who dressed as soldiers and stirred up trouble.⁷⁴⁵ Ali Münif Yeğena blames the Armenians almost of “social engineering” when he states that some of the Armenian brigands were trying to install an Armenian population into Çukurova. The opening of an agricultural school by an Armenian priest is interpreted along the same line by Ali Münif Yeğena.⁷⁴⁶

This “collaborator *versus* betrayer” theme could play out simultaneously, as Bahaeddin Şakir’s memoirs demonstrate. He says that there was a hypocrite way of dealing with the Armenians: the official line pressed for unity whereas the unofficial one tried to prevent the Armenian demands in order to chase possible foreign intervention away. In a letter which was presumably sent from Parisian headquarters of the Committee of Union and Progress to other branches, it is stated that the collaboration with the Droşaks would prevent the Armenians from attracting foreign

⁷⁴² Mehmed Reşid, p. 96.

⁷⁴³ Eyüp Sabri. *Esâret Hatıraları*, (İstanbul: Tercüman Yayınları, 1978), p. 20. The question would be how the Muslim refugees got to be settled there in the first place.

⁷⁴⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 69-71.

⁷⁴⁵ Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti Neden Kuruldu? Nasıl Kuruldu? Nasıl İdare Olundu?*, p. 453.

⁷⁴⁶ Ali Münif [Yeğenağa], p. 47.

intervention and the Christian power could be of use in getting rid of the Hamidian regime. Moreover,

After that [the gathering of the Assembly], each party would be free in the execution of its own program. Once we crush the government and open the Assembly, it would only be natural that thanks to our national dominating power, we will not be afraid of a handful of Armenians, nor of the European governments that threaten the government of Abdülhamid.⁷⁴⁷

To their members in Caucasia, they sent another letter stating that they aligned themselves with the Armenians to prevent them from killing the Caucasian Muslim population. The Committee of Union and Progress urged the members to recall that the immediate aim was to demolish the Hamidian regime and after that, they would fear no power.⁷⁴⁸

Most interestingly, a debate around the famous Armenian musician, Gomidas *Vartabed*, captures the ambiguity in its essence. As narrated by Kazım Nami Duru, Gomidas *Vartabed*, a prominent Armenian musician of the time, came to *Türk Ocağı* and gave a piano recital there.⁷⁴⁹ Halide Edib Hanım calls Gomidas “the embodiment of Anatolian folk-lore and music.” She also claims that “unconsciously” he was a Turk. The songs he was collecting, according to Halide Edib, were originally Turkish songs to which Gomidas supplied Armenian words. She did not mind, but reports

⁷⁴⁷ Bahaeddin Şakir, p. 425.

⁷⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 426.

⁷⁴⁹ Kazım Nami Duru. "*İttihat ve Terakki" Hatıralarım*, p. 74. While there are additional information on other characters such as date of death, Gomidas is mentioned only so far. Kazım Nami Bey either did not know that he was forcibly deported and suffered the consequences for the rest of his life, or he simply prefers to keep silent about it.

that Yusuf Akçura's opinion of Gomidas is that he was pilfering Turkish popular culture.⁷⁵⁰ The debate around Gomidas reveals a lot: his musical talent was not to be denied, but his ethnicity proved to be a real problem for the Unionists. Halide Edib tried to circumvent it by inventing an "unconscious" Turkishness, Yusuf Akçura cast him in the role of the thief, and Kazım Nami Bey preferred to duly note his existence as a favor granted to him.

The Armenians were understood to be a part of the Ottoman puzzle which would not fit into the new frame of the nation state. The extent of horror included in this process of making a nation-state may be exemplified through two testaments. One is supplied by Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, who glorifies the idea of *tehcir* (forced deportation) as being for the benefit of the Turks, even though it necessitated the suppressing of the most basic form of common sense:

The ones who made the Armenian *tehcir* occur rose over their personal grudge, hate and ideas of revenge, showed an amazing perseverance and will to silence the feelings of their hearts and worshipped only the ideal of Turkish survival. This is what cleanses them, holds them up and takes out of masses of people.⁷⁵¹

Yalçın, in stating that these unknown persons had to overcome certain obstacles springing from a guilty consciousness, is also saying that there was an objection from a very commonsensical humanitarian point of view. The idealization falls short of concealing the ugly reality behind, of which Yalçın claims that its "situation and makers" remained behind a veil of silence built upon the premise that it was not

⁷⁵⁰ Adivar, p. 372.

⁷⁵¹ Yalçın, *Tanıdıklarım*, p. 47.

mürettep (done with a secret agenda).⁷⁵² The second example shows that the discourse about the atrocities was, at least by 1919, part of a particular brand of common sense. Halil Menteşe notes in his memoirs that as he was held captive in Bekirağa, Colonel (*Miralay*) Sadık Bey came to talk to him. Halil Bey's claim was that many members of the Committee of Union and Progress were held prisoner despite the fact that they had nothing to do with the "war decisions." He goes on stating that "there is rarely a Turk in Anatolia who was not involved in this *tehcir* business. By provoking [them] in this manner, many people will take to the mountains, in these extreme conditions the country may be protected only through standing together."⁷⁵³

The casual noting of the involvement of "the Turks" as well as the glorification in the legitimization of this argument should sufficiently bear witness to a shift in the roles. It is impossible to pin down an exact turning point, but it should be clear that somewhere between 1908 and 1915, the Unionists took up the role of the "problem solvers" against who they perceived as "problems," including the Armenians. Around 1919, when all was said and done, the requirement of being a nation, it was argued, depended on forgetting the crimes and preserving the unity and health of the country.

⁷⁵² *ibid.*, p. 47.

⁷⁵³ Menteşe, p. 239.

"*Bu tehcir işiyle alâkadar olmayan Türk Anadolu'da pek azdır. Bu suretle tethiş ederek bir sürü halkı dağlara çıkaracaksınız, bu müthiş vaziyette ancak birlik ve beraberlikle memleket korunabilir.*"

Conclusion

To conclude, I try to recapture the connotations of the homeland and the nation as they appeared in the memoirs of the Unionists and some other figures, such as Sultan Abdülhamid II. I start out by drawing the attention of the earlier usages and meanings of the word *vatan*, as it referred to a place of birth and then was pushed to include all of the Ottoman lands. Then, I investigate the popularization and diffusion of the concept by following Namık Kemal's theatrical pieces, as he was one of the authors that the memoirists referred to often. My attempt is to pin down the exact boundaries to which this emotional investment was directed, however, the diversity of answers leads me to conclude that the definition of the homeland depended on the context. Therefore, it could include Medine for defensive purposes but also feel that it was underdeveloped and not properly part of the Ottoman Empire. The memoirists' position in determining the context and the meaning can be read parallel to their embeddedness in the mindset of the center, i.e. the capital city and the new types of knowledge it propagated.

While the imagination painted it as a vague concept, there was a solid effort from the center to establish a geographical picture of the Ottoman Empire in the minds of school children through school maps, which were sometimes used as the basis for an oral narrative of the necessity to claim the lost lands back. For many, the homeland and the love felt towards it was a legitimizing discourse of their actions. One would not hesitate to sing about it, to enroll in the army because of it, or to strive towards becoming a famed author so that his praises would find a wider audience. It was also seen as enough leverage to mutiny against the perceived oppression of the Sultan as

well as foreign and domestic perils. The mission to save these beautiful lands, therefore, was felt to rest on the shoulders of a certain group. The discourse was so pervasive that it found some echoes with Sultan Abdülhamid II and his family as well. Then, I try to locate these patriotic feelings amongst the list of loyalties that the members of the Committee of Union and Progress sometimes readily supplied. Again, it was seen as enough explanation to a temporary desertion of family duties.

The territory was elaborated on as such, but the communities populating it were subjects of a rather different sort of emotional investment. I attempt to sketch the debates around the older *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire, also hinting at the later politicization and nationalization processes of non-Muslim communities. Very broadly put, the post-*Tanzimat* modernizing attempts alienated a non-clerical but influential stratum of these communities, who found it more beneficial to aid a nationalist cause. As with the homeland, there was no direct definition of the nation within the memoirs, so I tried to capture the more mundane uses of the word; mainly as an empty signifier that stood for potential, improvement and better days to come.

I take religion as a border that set groups apart in explaining various appearances of difference, since it was more elaborated upon than other possible dividers such as language or ethnicity. This particular axis was a solid one, those who crossed it were frowned upon. I also point out some examples in which Islam was presented as a glue to hold the Ottoman Empire together. My emphasis on the short-lived hope of Ottomanism should suggest that there were other ways which the members imagined to be feasible. Being an Ottoman would entail assigning to a sort of *Reichsnationalismus*, as an umbrella term to bind potential citizens together. I then focus on the making of Turkishness, since the great number of the memoirists would

define themselves as Turks and have written about the day-to-day experience of their “illumination” about their nationality, which, they claimed, was seen as an inferior one in the ranking of various nationalities within the Ottoman Empire. This new framework gave the memoirists a novel way of classification; not only people but also games, streets, etc. were now pigeonholed in accordance with their Turkishness. Apart from that, the Turk was assigned a vast territory to live in and a status as the domineering nation amongst others, also a very short discussion of the birth of Turkism took place in the memoirs.

To carry my point to another level, I scrutinize the encounters of this newly fledgling group with Arabs and Armenians in two different case studies. For the Arabs, the roles taken up were the colonizer, the ethnographer and the fellow soldier; whereas the Armenians presented a difficulty in the hierarchical order of the nations that some memoirists entertained. They could be viewed as allies or betrayers, sometimes as both simultaneously. I think the impressions gained from the memoirs could be employed to understand the political situation of the last years of the Ottoman Empire, as well as the transition from the imperial structure to the nation-state.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

An often quoted definition of the modern condition can be found in the Ottoman translation of Marx & Engels' *Communist Manifesto*. In the words of Şefik Hüsnü Bey, whose translation of the text appeared in 1923:

O zamana kadar, pasları ve yosunları içinde donmuş gibi lâyettegayyer duran içtimaî rabitalar, atîk ve şayan-ı hürmet fikir ve itikad, mevkibleriyle beraber inkıtaa uğruyor; yeni teşkilâtın rabitaları, salâbet peyda edemedi yıraniyor. Zadeğânlığın, istikrarın ruhunu teşkil eden her şey toz ve dumana karışıyor. Mukaddes olan her şey hürmetsizliğe mâruz oluyor. Nihayetünnihaye, beşeriyetin mevcudiyetini ve beşeri münasebetleri, insanların hayale kapılmayan apaçık bir gözle tetkik etmeleri icab ediyor.⁷⁵⁴

Although the debate about the place of the Ottoman Empire in the Marxist frame of reference is still continuing today, my suggestion is that the literati would find the above quoted passage highly relevant to their own lives. The modernity they were experiencing was not just an imposition from above, it was something in which they also took part as proud actors. The perceived nepotism was slowly giving way to meritocracy and the tools of social mobility looked more available than ever. In other words, one did not have to belong to a certain family-like network in order to

⁷⁵⁴ Karl Marx ve Friedrich Engels. *Komünist Manifesto ve Hakkında Yazılanlar*. (İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2010), p. 87. Şefik Hüsnü Bey's text is titled *Komünist Beyannamesi* and appeared as part of *Aydınlık*. The transcription used above is Şeyda Oğuz's.

All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.

English version retrieved from <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#007>

carve a good place in society. The conceptual coming-of-age of the individual was close at hand, despite the fact that the “older” ways of making a good reputation still lingered. Thanks to their mainly military education, they were able to imagine a better future as sons of middling families, albeit the older ways social climbing such as a profitable marriage also had a hold of their imagination. Moreover, they were able to imagine themselves as political actors who could influence the destiny of an entire empire. From their point of view, it would seem that their “*istikrarın ruhu*” (essence of stability) was crumbling down and the rhetoric of saving the damsel in distress was enough to legitimize a number of acts such as the establishment of an underground political group, the re-declaration of the Constitution, the opaque involvement in governmental affairs and later, a project towards a more or less homogenous nation state.

The overtake of power by a non-royal political actor is not entirely a new occurrence for the Ottoman Empire if one recalls the Janissaries’ involvement in making and breaking Ottoman sultans. That the power continued to remain with this tightly-knit yet flexible group is, on the other hand, most certainly new. In making themselves historical victors with a white man’s burden to supply documentation for future historians, they wrote their memoirs; which is in itself a genuine modern performance.

Taking a number of these texts as my database, I attempt to take a closer look at the prevailing mindset. By seeing the era as one of a transition from a communitarian to an individualizing state of mind, I note some of the characteristic traits that the individuals perceived in themselves. My conclusion is that personal versatility was

valued and there was a tendency to adapt some Western concepts in defining one's self such as "optimist." From there on, I move onto the nicknames, which were an overlap between the personal and the social. Apart from the obvious points of locality, perceived ethnic origins and reputations; the nicknames were also reflecting the translational quality of naming, where a Western protagonist was taken up and interpreted differently.

After the deliberations on naming, I move on to the immediate social circle of the Young Turks as they appear in their memoirs. The family was first and foremost depicted as a source trust, confidence and support. In some rare instances, it was portrayed as a victim to the chaotic times and as leverage to further violence. It was sometimes perceived as a step in the political socialization but it lost its prominent place in the hierarchy of loyalties to the "new" all-important concept: homeland. My second point is about education and profession. Since many of the founders of the Committee of Union and Progress were alumni of the *Tibbiye*, I start from there. The doctors in question were perceived as being in touch with science and people, which meant that they had a useful method and the experience to match. For the doctors, their occupations ranked high among other loyalties, but sometimes lower than their national role. My next group is the soldiers, whose training was perceived to be in direct connection with the matters of the state. The *Tanzimat* reforms dictated that soldiers should have only one point of allegiance, but the loyalty felt towards the Committee of Union and Progress was sometimes felt to be at odds with this project. Moreover, there was a generational gap within the army alongside the fissure that separated the "layman" from the soldier. Just as the involvement of soldiers in

politics was debated at length, the militarization of civilian population was starting to be felt. The government, which saw a need to balance the military and non-military pressures, was also engaging in more flexible, double-layered operations.

My next point of interest is the role of the “savior” in this context. The intellectual, as seen through the lens of the memoirists, was someone who professed that the state needed to be rescued. The political enlightenment would start with the educated people and spread to countryside, be anti-Hamidian and would preferably include a teaching of the (still vague) national identity. The role of the civilian was debated within politics-inertia dilemma, but the intellectual endeavor was found to be potentially useful.

From there on, I start a discussion of a number of concepts which the movement was implementing to further its cause. One of them is *hamiyet*, a sort of national zeal which would be the fuel behind this project of enlightenment. The other is a certain hope, product of a self-confidence that dictated fighting against the odds. My next point is the idea of *komitacılık*, a sort of brigandage that carried different connotations. It was used to refer to a one-track-mind, to a preference of action over deliberation, to a lack of harmony amongst the group of Unionists, to hasty passing of some temporary laws, and to a tendency towards secrecy. I then ponder the last two items in detail. The first, the haphazard lawmaking, was from my point of view a negotiation between the ideal way of processing laws and the less than ideal requirements of complicated situations. The second item is a certain silence that surrounded some Committee business. Since it started out as an underground movement, it was hardly surprising that the members of the Committee of Union and

Progress would wish to keep a tight lid on their workings. Their habit of doing so was later applied in different contexts, and was a prototype for the sort of collective forgetting that is important in nation-making.

After delineating the emotional input attributed to this movement, my attempt is to pin down the important features of the Committee of Union and Progress. The Committee was a way of political socialization and had a revolutionary aspect in its foundations. Put very roughly, it consisted of people who wished for a drastic change in a short amount of time without much concern for further implications. After 1908, it tended to favor the *status quo*, and resorted to use almost conflicting visions to rally support. The post-1908 period saw the popularity of some concepts rise. Liberty would be the first; it was used in a way to expand the influence of the Committee, since the members saw themselves as the authority that would prescribe its boundaries. The second would be the continuum of the state, which the memoirists felt to maintain. Their revolution was not meant to demolish the whole structure, just tweak it in their favor. The members of the Committee of Union and Progress imagined themselves as historical victors, whose words would become history one day. Taking up their self-assigned role of the ameliorator, they married into the royal family and encouraged marriages between two educated persons. The additional feature of a rapprochement between two communities was greeted enthusiastically.

Moving on from the theme of marriage, I start scrutinizing the place of women as they appear through the memoirs. The most visible group of women was the mothers, who were always depicted on a pedestal. Their support was acknowledged,

while in some cases their disagreement with their sons' cause was explained away. They were even pointed out as the motivation behind their sons' fight. The second group was "spies from our side" who performed minor tasks in Committee business. However, they were not an indispensable feature and were never understood to be as full members. The generally more "dangerous" women of Europe or Arab lands were also debated along with their possibly spying activities. The Muslim women of the Ottoman Empire were also depicted as signs of Westernization and modern life. They also stood in for the ultimate degradation of a proper man, that of "turning" into a woman, and the unavailability of the ideal state, as expressed with the word "*mefkûre*".

My last chapter is dedicated to the new notions of homeland (*vatan*) and nation (*millet*). The former concept was, above all, an emotional investment for many of the memoirists. The legitimization of the modern state was also depending on that sort of feeling, so that an argument for an indigenous modernity could be made. On the more tangible levels, I try to pin down the boundaries of this homeland, and find that these definitions depended on the context of the narrative. The image of a geographical entity was disseminated by the state through maps, which were duly noted by the memoirists. The feelings attached to this mass of land varied from joy to disappointment, and could be expressed by singing about it. According to the members of the Committee of Union, the love for the homeland could be used in explaining some of the overzealous action of fellow members, whereas the anti-Committean political actors such as the "minorities" or the Sultan were charged with

being anti-patriotic. My conclusion is that the concept became popular enough to gain currency as an excuse for a number of otherwise inexplicable situations.

My next question is about the people who belonged to these lands. “*Millet*,” as understood in pre-Tanzimatian times, would denote a religious group. During my era of interest, the context was shifting so that the modern nations, as I understand today, were slowly starting to fight for international recognition. There is no solid theorization of nation in the memoirs, but it was apparent that religion was still perceived to be playing an important role. My conclusion is that it was seen as a possible back-up way to rally support in case other options failed. Ottomanism was seen as a likely candidate that could bring a variety of peoples together under citizenship around 1908, but the movement was perceived to be unfeasible quickly. The next attempt was about creating a “Turk.” Depending on the context, this new entity was defined as group of people who responded emotionally to same stimuli, who wished an equal place for himself amongst other nations or who spoke the same language. It was also depicted as a “fact” in dealing with the nationality of places and objects. Its violent ways were noted down as well.

Keeping in line with my hypothesis that the recognition of a certain group of people constituting a “nation” would depend on the juxtaposition with another “nation”, I look at two different instances: the Arabs and the Armenians. My conclusion is that the exotic outlook concerning Arabs was connected with the role of the colonizer and ethnographer, which denoted a hierarchical ranking of the nations. The role of the soldier, which was also taken up, was in this respect more egalitarian. With the Armenians, the process was more complex, since they were

publicly declared to be worthy collaborators around 1908 but secretly suspected of other agenda. They were perceived to be on the same social level with the Young Turks. This perception of a “possible betrayer” solidified later with shifts of context and the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire came to be depicted as a “problem” to be solved.

This is by no means an exhaustive conclusion which may be drawn from my preferred source of information; a number of questions may be raised for further study. The situation of the non-Muslim Unionist, as was the case of Moiz Cohen (Tekin Alp), would be interesting in this respect. The full publication of his diaries would shed a light on the relationships within the Committee of Union and Progress, as well as on the place of a politically heterodox Jewish individual within the Jewish community of the Ottoman Empire. Also, the memoirs of Nicolae Constantin Batzaria, a Vlah by ethnicity and a Unionist of Selanik,⁷⁵⁵ would be useful to gain more insight into the Balkanic range of the issue. Moreover, one could take a different corpus and ask similar questions, the memoirs of the Arabic-speaking population would not fail to elaborate on themes like homeland, loyalty or the legitimization of a new state. The published memoirs of Selim Ali Selam, Emir Şekip Arslan, King Abdullah or Muhammed Kürd Ali would be useful in determining the role the Arabs took up against the dominating role taken up by the Turks.

⁷⁵⁵ Kemal H. Karpat. “The Memoirs of N. Batzaria: The Young Turks and Nationalism.” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, No. 6, (July 1975), pp. 276-299.

One could also delve into the fiction of the era and try to elucidate some answers from that type of text. I am sure that the women writers of the era would challenge every scholar about the question of agency in imagining a new future. Müfide Tek's *Aydemir*⁷⁵⁶ and Halide Edib Adıvar's *Yeni Turan*⁷⁵⁷, among other works of fiction, would yield rather interesting illuminations about the social imagination of the era and the short spring of Turanism.

Moreover, the same phenomenon could be read within different communities comparatively. The situation of the Jewish bourgeois in comparison to the Armenian *amira* class would surely be interesting, as well as the roles taken up by the Kurdish nobility of the times.

On a different note, the day-to-day repercussions of this novel way of seeing the world, called nationalism, is in need of more understanding. From this study at hand, we get only a few ideas how the idea was lived out: What were the works of fiction associated with being an Ottoman, a Turk or a Bulgarian? What sort of songs was sung? What were the events which were “nationally” respected, and which were conveniently forgotten? Who was the biggest hero of Greeks, of Pomaks or of Jews? How did a typical day in an elementary school start? Who was the prominent publisher or the important author of a particular community?

⁷⁵⁶ Müfide Ferid. *Aydemir*. (İstanbul: Hukuk Matbaası Türk Kadını Neşriyatı, 1918.) as retrieved from Milli Kütüphane Catalog <http://eyayinlar.mkutup.gov.tr/cgi-bin/WebObjects/EHT.woa/3/wo/KmYX62bhmGGDwpDuYPjcFg/3.3#>

⁷⁵⁷ Halide Edip. *Yeni Turan*. (İstanbul: Tanin Matbaası, 1913.) as retrieved from Milli Kütüphane Catalog <http://eyayinlar.mkutup.gov.tr/cgi-bin/WebObjects/EHT.woa/3/wo/KmYX62bhmGGDwpDuYPjcFg/8.3#>

The era of investigation for my study is intriguing, since it was a time for negotiation of these nowadays mundane processes. If one recalls the need for a “national anthem” during the World Fair and the tight spot the Ottoman representatives felt themselves in, one could agree that the making of a nation was indeed executed through day-to-day experiences. This process is thus not presented only a top-to-bottom conspiracy of the educated elite to replace the outdated educated elite, an imposition on the unsuspecting public. It is obvious that its success depended on the public appeal and the participation of the “layman.” Although there was a certain degree of involvement in political life by “plain” individuals after the 1908 Revolution, the real story of success was only possible under the Republican circumstances, which fall outside of the scope of this study. From my point of view, nation-making is an ongoing project, and will stay so for a long time to come so understanding it thoroughly is relevant to the ambitions of contemporary academe.

I hope my study will occupy a minor place in the intellectual effort to understand the discreet charm of the first person plural along with the making of the third person plural. I shall conclude by leaving the word to two vastly different contemporaries of the Unionists. The first happens to be Marc Bloch, who was born in 1886 and fell victim to the Gestapo due to his role in French Resistance in 1944. His book “The Historian’s Craft” was written during his captivity. His words on the ideal state of historical research are worth quoting at length:

When all is said and done, a single word, “understanding,” is the beacon light of our studies. Let us not say that the true historian is a stranger to emotion: he has that, at all events. “Understanding,” in all honesty, is a word pregnant with difficulties, but also with hope. [...] We are never sufficiently understanding. Whoever differs from us -a foreigner or a political adversary- is almost

inevitably considered evil. A little more understanding of people would be necessary merely for guidance, in the conflicts which are unavoidable; all the more to prevent them while there is yet time. If history would only renounce its false archangelic airs, it would help us cure this weakness. It includes a vast experience of human diversities, a continuous contact with men. Life, like science, has everything to gain from it, if only these contacts be friendly.⁷⁵⁸

The other is Constantine Cavafy, who published his magnificent poem “Waiting for the Barbarians” in 1904, where he paints one of the most anti-climactic pictures of “us” versus “them” with these words:

Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come.
And some who have just returned from the border say
there are no barbarians any longer.

And now, what’s going to happen to us without barbarians?
They were, those people, a kind of solution.⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁸ Marc Bloch. *The Historian’s Craft*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1953), pp. 143-144.

⁷⁵⁹ Constantine Cavafy. *Waiting for the Barbarians*.
<http://www.cavafy.com/poems/content.asp?id=119&cat=1>

APPENDIX A

Ft. 37: “*Ve hakikaten, hayât-ı içtimaiye hakkında hâsıl ettiğim malûmat-ı tecrübiyeyi felsefe kitaplarından ziyade mahalle köşelerinde iktisab etmiş olduğumu anlatır [...] Ondan mâada benim büyük bir kuvvet-i mâneviyem var ki her felâkete karşı muvâzene-i fikriye ve vicdâniyemi temin eden esbâbdan biridir: Ben her vak’ayı keyfime hoş görünen cihetinden telâkki ederim. Yani “optimist” bir adamım.*”

Ft. 102: “*Mektep o derece oteldi ki, meselâ Manakyan’da güzel bir piyes filân oldu mu, talebe hep birden -Celâl Muhtar müstesna- mektepten çıkar, tiyatroya giderdi. Bütün tiyatro âdeta bizim talebe ile dolardı. Tiyatrodan çıkılınca aynı kalabalıkla mektebe gelinir, kapı zorla açtırılır, içeriye girilirdi. İsteddiğimiz zaman derse girer, istemediğimiz zaman girmezdik.*”

Ft. 178: “*Biz bunları gördük, bu hallere sebep olanları öğrendik, bu fenalıkları ortadan kaldırmak, çalışan köylülerimizi doyurmak, sefâletten kurtarmak için o müstebitlere, o sefihlere, o vatan düşmanlarına ilân-ı harb ettik. Galib geleceğimize eminiz. [...] Ma’mafih biz meyus olmayız, er geç galebe edeceğimizden, milleti, vatani bu haydud çetesinden kurtaracağımızdan, mâtem içinde bulunan memleketimizde şenlikler, bayramlar yapacağımızdan eminiz. Biz eminiz ki, bir çok üstünüzdeki sıkıntıların nereden geldiğini siz de anlayacak, evlerinizi yıkan, kazandıklarınızı kapan, kanınızı kurutan zâlimlere karşı bizimle beraber isyan edersiniz.*”

Ft. 206: “*İnkılâbı hazırlamak isteyen bir dernek, türdeş kişiler aramaz; yönetimle ilgili görüşlerini belirlemeye ve teferruata dökmeye gerek görmez; ancak ayaklanacağı yönetimi yıkmaya olan kararlılığına bakar. Bundan dolayı grubuna katacağı kişilerin fikir ve inancını incelemek yerine, bu kişileri “dereceler” ve “rütbelere” altında toplayarak körü körüne amaç ve kararını yerine getirme yolunda kullanır. Yönetimle ilgili fikirler daimen inkılâblardan sonra tartışılmaya başlanır, uygulanır.*”

Ft. 207: “*Bazen 400 çadır halkından bir devlet kuran şanlı bir millet ile övünüyor fakat bazı zaman da dünkü yenilmiş olan, bugünkü Avrupalıların maddi üstünlüklerine bakarak ırki kabiliyetimizden, Doğu’nun kadim medeniyetinden şüpheye düşüyorduk. İslahat politikasını iki yüzlü bir bıçak gibi kullanarak, memleketimizi parçalayan Avrupa emperyalizmine direnmek için büyük bir İslam birliği yaratmak yolunda ümitsiz hayallere kapılırken, Avrupalı’ya benzemek gayretiyle Levanten güruhun yoz Frenkliği taklide çalışıyorduk. Bize Tanzimat devrinden miras kalan bu zihniyet, Avrupa’nın maddi heybetini, gerçek nedenleri bile aramaya lüzum görmeden doğunun gerileme sebebini, ancak Avrupalıların ırki üstünlüğü ile izah etmekten ibaret bir sadeliğe varmıştı.*”

Ft. 209: “*Galiba Meclis-i Mebusan’ı lüzumsuz bir makine, boşa döner bir çark gibi telakki ediyordu. Bazı düşüncelerinin kamuna uymadığından bahsedildiği*

zaman, sakın bir istihfafla “Kanun yokmuş! Yap kanun, var kanun!” derdi.”

Ft. 213: “Yağmacılıkla geçinmek zorunda olan bu kürt[sic] aşiretleri içinde eskidenberi tanıdığım ŞEYH MAHMUT adında zeki ve liderlik vasfına sahip bir ağa vardı... Yapacağım şey de O’na tam istiklâl vermek olacaktı. Yaşadığı topraklar Osmanlı toprakları olduğuna göre ve halen Osmanlı ülkesi sayıldığına göre ben de O’na istiklâlini verebilirdim...”

Ft. 285: “Talât hayata veda ettiği gün İttihat ve Terakki de son nefesini vermiş oldu. Sonradan onun dirildiğini iddia edenler boş bir kuruntuya düşmüşlerdir. Talât bu tarihi firkanın düşünen beyni, gören gözü ve işleyen makinesi idi. O, ortadan kaybolunca ne beyin düşünür, ne göz görür, ne de makine işleyebilirdi.”

Ft. 305: “İhtiyaç yüzünden hor görülmeye katlanmayan, dünya büyükleri önünde boyun eğmeyen Bedevi’den daha hür adam var mıdır? En şevketli sultanların merhametsizliğinden yılmaz. Sahra çocukları arasında günlerce ve günlerce aç kalarak karnı üzerine taş bağlayan Bedeviler gördüm; kuduz köpek gibi içinden kendisini ısırıp midenin üzerine taş basabildikten sonra insan kime minnet eder? Bir Bedevi’yi ararken, “Filan nerede?” diye sorarsanız; “Has fi’l halâ” (boşluğa girdi) der. Gerçekten insan boşluğa girdikten sonra hür olur. Çölün boşluğu da ölüm boşluğu kadar derin.”

Ft. 325: “Tarih yazmak bir tahili ve terkip yapmak demektir. Tahlil, hâdiselerin kaynağını araştırmak yâni şahadet adı altında toplanan rivayetler, âbideler, vesikalar üzerinde objektif görüşle tenkidler yapmak, bunların kıymetini tesbit etmektir. Terkip veya inşa da tahlil sayesinde toplanan bütün şahadetleri bir araya getirerek tarihin bünyesini kurmaktır.”

Ft. 450: “Şu kadının mazisi ve hali bir kadının erkeklerle temasa gelmesi yüzünden bir gün baştan çıktığına güzel bir misaldir. Bu hal, tabii bir haldir. İptidasını biliyorum. Erkek yüzüne bakamayan bir kadındı. **İşte bugünkü alafranga hayat İstanbul’da böyle yüzlerce binlerce kurbanlar yapmaktadır.**”

Ft. 467: “İsmi kadın, lakin kadınlık nezaketinden pek uzak bir tiyatro kızının biçare mahpusu arslan ve kaplanlara demir parmaklık içinde ve haricinde şaklattığı kırbaçlar gibi biz de bir takım acı şaklayan muamelata duçar oluyorduk. Onlar orada zevkte bizler burada kalbi feryad ediyorduk. Acaba çöl ve sahralarda bu kırbaç atan kızlar bu zavallı hayvanlara bir rast gelse, kaba söyleyeceğim, baldırlarını ıslatır mı ıslatmaz mı?”

Ft. 468: “... hadımların seslerinin inceliği, fizik, ahlak ve maneviyatça kadın gibi olduklarını öğrendim; bu beni tuttu. Benimse devam erkeklik, mertlik, kahramanlık, hak, ilim, hürriyet ve millet adına nihayetsiz bir cidal yapmak. Gönlümün en has emeli bunlardı. Halbuki hadımlık ile bunlar kamilen gidiyordu. Bir çıkmaz içinde kaldım. Çare yok. Nihayet ahlakımavereceğim [sic] metin terbiye ile şehvet iğfalatını zabt ve imha lazım olduğu kanaatine vardım ve hadım olmak fikrinden vazgeçtim.”

Ft. 469: “Aşk özneyi, gemlenmesi gereken arzularla donatmak suretiyle yaratmakta, ardından bu arzuları gemleme görevini yine yarattığı özneye yüklemektedir. Bu şekilde bakıldığında sevgi kavramının tanımlanma süreci aynı zamanda cinslerarası bağın niteliğinin, cinselliğin ve özneliğin de kurulma süreci olarak okunabilir. Böyle bir okuma, gemleme sürecinin önemli kilometre taşlarınının millet / aile ekseninden geçtiğini de göstermektedir.”

Ft. 511: “Bahçedeki harita ve harita üzerinde gördüğüm kaybolalan [sic] vilayetlerin şekilleri gözümün önünde idi... Namık Kemal'in Vatan Silistre piyesini yeni okumuş olduğum için harita ile büyük vatanperverin eserindeki coşkun kelimeler dimağimde ateş saçıyordu. Bu hislerle Küçük Kovacılar'daki evimize geldim. Düşündüklerimi anlatacak adam arıyordum; fakat kime?...”

Ft. 520: “Hakikat- ı halde ben, hakkın, hakikatın, adaletin, müsavat-ı hukukun, hürriyetin, beşeriyet-i fazılanın, medeniyet-i insaniyenin, ilm u marifetin... taraftarıyım. İnsanlığın bütün bu “hak”larını bana ve mensup olduğum millete temin eden bir tarz-ı idareyi görmek isterim; ve ancak bunların cari olduğu bir memleketi “vatan” bilirim.”

Ft. 539: “Fakat, yarınımızın büyükleri olarak üzerlerine titrediğimiz gençlerimizin, pek iyi bildiklerinden emin olmakla beraber; tehlikeye düşen vatani kurtarmaya koşulduğu zaman vazife denen şeyin asla sınırının olmadığı ve her ferdin, kendini cephede düşman karşısında boğuşanlarla bir sayarak, aynı iman ve fedakarlık hissi ile, kendini düşünmeden, pervasızca gayret göstermesi gerektiğini ve bizim kuşağın da böyle yaparak, bu aziz yurdu. Allaha şükür felaketlerin misli görülmemiş derecedeki en müthişinden kurtarmağa muvaffak olduğunu bir kere daha hatırlatmak için kaydediyorum.”

Ft. 554: “Selanik İstanbul'un anahtarıdır. Düşmana verilir mi? Şuradan şuraya gitmem. Bana da bir tüfek veriniz. Birlikte son nefesimize kadar müdafaa edelim. Hem bizim İkinci ve Üçüncü Ordularımız nereye gitti? Bu harbi idare eden kumandanlar kimlerdir? Ne olursa olsun. Bir yere gidecek değilim. Bunu bilmiş olunuz.”

Ft. 644: “Bu [Osmanlılık]; hiç anlamı, gerçekte ilişkisi olmayan, yapma, görelî bir deyimdi. Ama meşrutiyette, çeşitli soyları ve dinleri içine almış imparatorluğun biricik bağı ve çimentosu bu yapma sözcüktü işte! Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda başlıca şu ırklar ve kavimler vardı: Türk, Arap, Arnavut, Kürt, Çerkes, Rum, Ermeni, Bulgar ve Yahudi. Çeşitli ırk ve dinlere bağlı bütün bireyler meşrutiyetin gelişiyile haklar bakımından eşit birer yurttaş durumuna geliyorlardı. Ama birbirlerinin dilinden anlamaz, birbirlerine gelenek, din, ahlâk ve âdetler bakımından yabancı, üstelik düşman bu bireyler; hangi ilke, hangi yurt çevresinde birleşecekler ve kardeş olacaklardı?”

Ft. 734: “Bütün milletin arzusuna istinat eden Kongre'nin kat'i arzusu budur. Aynı toprakta eken ve biçen, aynı ıstırapları çeken Osmanlılar kendi hisselerine isabet eden saadet-i hali ve hürriyeti müttehit bir hareketle istihsale azm

eylemişlerdir. Biz müşterek bir mücadele için birleşirken her teşkilat kendi istiklalini muhafaza edecektir. Biz dostça, kardeşçe birleşiyoruz ve mücadeleye hazırlanıyoruz. [...] Bu çetin fakat şerefli işte bize yardım edilmesi için herkese müracaat ediyoruz. [...] Kongre'de hasıl olan umumi kanaat şudur ki bütün muhalif gruplar bundan böyle ihtilalkarane vasıtalara müracaata mecburdurlar. [...] Türk ve Ermeni grupları tarafından Anadolu vilayetlerinde umumiyetle yapılan ihtilal hareketlerinden hasıl olan neticeler bunu ispat eder. [...] Şimdiye kadar birleşik olmayan milletlerin ittihadı yaşasın! Yaşasın ihtilal kuvvetleri ittihadı!”

Ft. 747: “Ondan sonra her fırka kendi programının tatbikinde serbest kalacaktı. Biz bir kere hükûmeti yıkıp Mebusan Meclisi'ni açtıktan sonra milli hakim kuvvetimiz sayesinde ne bir avuç Ermeni'den, ne de Abdülhamid hükûmetinin tehdit eden Avrupa hükûmetlerinden korkumuz kalmayacağı tabiidir.”

Ft. 751: “Ermeni tehcirini yapanlar her türlü şahsî kin, nefret, intikam mülâhazalarının üstüne yükselmişler, kalplerinden gelen insanî hisleri bile susturacak kadar müthiş bir azim ve irade kuvveti göstermişler ve yalnız Türk'ün yaşaması idealine tapmışlardı. Onları temizleyen, yükselten, insan selleri içinden sıyırıp çıkaran işte budur.”

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