

KEMALIST, ONCE UPON A TIME:  
FALİH RIFKI ATAY AND HIS UNCONVENTIONAL APPROACH TO THE EARLY  
REPUBLICAN PERIOD

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An abstract of the thesis of Seçkin Büyücek for the degree of Master of Arts from the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History to be taken September 2015.

Title: “Kemalist, Once Upon a Time: Falih Rıfkı Atay and His Unconventional Approach to the Early Republican Period”

Focusing on the selected travel books and memoirs of the early Republican intellectual Falih Rıfkı Atay, this study illustrates an unconventional approach to the early Republican period. The travel books and memoirs in question have at least two types of importance in the scope of the study. Firstly, while Falih Rıfkı Atay operationalized travel books on behalf of finding the most appropriate model for Turkey’s development, he also struggled to seek the ways in which “Turkish identity” can be defined. This argument questions the early claims that associated the author with being the sole, passive disseminator of fixed, pre-given Kemalist ideology. The memoirs and collected essays of the author, on the other hand, indicated the different interpretations and perceptions towards the republican regime in the eyes of ordinary people of the time. Secondly, his critique and unconventional thoughts on controversial issues like religion and women present a fertile area of study allowing for the rethinking of the established roles that the early Republican intellectuals have been affiliated with until recently.

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Başlık: “Evvel Zaman İçinde Bir Kemalist: Falih Rıfkı Atay ve Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemine Gelenek Dışı Bir Yaklaşım”

Falih Rıfkı Atay'ın seçilmiş seyahatnameleri ve anı kitaplarını merkeze alan bu çalışma, erken Cumhuriyet Dönemine alışılmadık bir içeriden yaklaşımı resmeder. Falih Rıfkı'nın külliyatı bu çalışmanın kapsamı açısından en az iki öneme sahip. İlk olarak Falih Rıfkı seyahatnamelerinde Türkiye için uygulanabilecek gelişme modelleri aramak suretiyle onları araştırdığı aynı zamanda Türk kimliğinin nasıl tanımlanabileceğinin de arayışı içinde olmuştur. Bu sav daha önce Falih Rıfkı için öne sürülen; onun verili, sınırları belirlenmiş bir Kemalist ideolojinin pasif bir aktarıcısı olduğu görüşünü sorgulamaktadır. İkinci olarak, Falih Rıfkı Atay'ın erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde özel olarak din ve kadın meselelerine getirdiği öneri ve eleştiriler bize, erken cumhuriyet entelektüellerine izafe edilen düşünce kalıplarının yeniden tartışılacağı verimli bir çalışma alanının işaretlerini sunuyor.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In the years following World War II, Turkey was described as a successful example of the modernization model, once praised universally by social scientists.<sup>1</sup>

The modernization process and history the Ottoman state experienced and the republican regime later inherited seemed to fulfill the expectations of modernization literature. Bozdoğan and Kasaba described this early phase of the approach to modernization as follows:

In these and similar writings, Turkey's apparently successful adoption of Western norms, styles, and institutions, most conspicuously in education, law, social life, clothing, music, architecture, and the arts, was portrayed as testimony to the viability of project of modernity even in an overwhelmingly Muslim country. As such the Turkish case has also informed and inspired many independence movements in Muslim "Third World" countries such as Pakistan and Indonesia.<sup>2</sup>

When the paradigm of nation state was eroding its own foundations, it was impossible for the Kemalist regime to be exempt from this process.<sup>3</sup> The Kemalist modernization of the early twentieth century, pursued by the westernized elite cadres,

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<sup>1</sup> Bozdoğan, Sibel, ve Reşat Kasaba. «Giriş.» in *Türkiye'de Modernleşme ve Ulusal Kimlik*, Sibel Bozdoğan ve Reşat Kasaba (eds.), 1-11. İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> (Bozdoğan ve Kasaba, 4)

<sup>3</sup> Eisenstadt, S. (1981). The Kemalist Revolution in Comparative Perspective. in *Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State*, A. Kazancıgil, & E. Özbudun (eds.), (p. 127-142). London: Hurst; Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Thetford: Thetford Press; Göle, N. (1991). *Modern Mahrem*. İstanbul: Metis Yayınları; Bulaç, A. (1991). *Din ve Modernizm*. İstanbul: Endülüs Yayınları; Thompson, G., & Hirst, P. (1995). Globalization and the Future of the Nation State. *Economy and Society*, 24(3), p. 408-442; Eisenstadt, S. N. (2000, winter). Multiple Modernities. *Daedalus*, 1(129), 1-29; Adanır, F. (2001). Kemalist Authoritarianism and Fascist Trends in Turkey during the Inter-War Period., in *Fascism outside Europe. The European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*, S. U. Larsen (ed.), (p. 313-361). Col.: Boulder; Nişanyan, S. (2008). *Yanlış Cumhuriyet Atatürk ve Kemalizm Üzerine 51 Soru*. İstanbul: Kırmızı Yayınları.

perhaps more than its counterparts in Europe, has been accused of imposing a social engineering mechanism and “revolution from above”.

A number of studies have criticized the early Republican reforms, drawing attention to the excessively nationalist and authoritarian character of laws and regulations, the disconnect between the ordinary people and the Kemalist cadres, the intolerance of the regime towards minority groups and ethnic diversity, the massive disengagement from the Ottoman tradition and Islamic past to such a degree that it has created an insurmountable crisis of identity for the next generations.<sup>4</sup> A considerable number of critics argued that the modernization project of the Kemalists was one way or another monolithic, inflexible, intolerant and believed to be omnipotent until recently.

This was undoubtedly a salutary and most of the time necessary process for a nation state to face in an age of globalization. The “democratic premises” underlying such criticisms are undeniable. These criticisms, promising to deal with the lasting problems of the modern Republic of Turkey, were seen as the precursors of a much better, democratic and liberal society.

However, there is always the risk of oversimplification facing any Turkish student of modernization. A simplistic and mono-causal analysis of the early Republican scenario runs the risk of overlooking the instances where the Kemalist principles of the regime were challenged, re-interpreted, questioned and negotiated by the Kemalist elites themselves. While studying the works of Falih Rıfkı Atay, I realized that the Turkish modernization experience and its elites like Atay, have been perceived in terms of over generalizations and simplifications.

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<sup>4</sup> Keyder, Ç. (1995). Kimlik Bunalımı, Aydınlar ve Devlet. S. Şen(ed.), in *Türk Aydını ve Kimlik Sorunu* (p. 151-156). İstanbul: Bağlam; Zürcher, E. (2004). *Turkey: A Modern History*. London: I.B. Tauris; Nişanyan, 2008)



Bozdoğan and Kasaba argue that independent of how you describe modernity, the modernization process in the country brought about some important material improvements, like improved life longevity, a decreased rate of child mortality; and thanks to national campaign for primary education, higher rate of literacy; and the increasing utilization of modern communication tools and transportation facilities.<sup>5</sup> However, overall, the paradigm that dominates Turkish studies is an oversimplified narrative of the Kemalist modernization project.

When the Kemalist modernization process is criticized for its top down reforms, the status and ideological positions of almost all early Republican intellectuals are too evaluated with the same, monolithic perspective of Kemalism. Just like the Kemalist reforms and ideas that prepared their background, the intellectuals and their roles in this project are also understood as products of the grand and infallible masterpiece of the new-born state. That is why they are perceived as absolute Kemalists pioneers and *true believers* of the regime. In this picture, these intellectuals are generally depicted as the unquestioning and passive transmitters of the new ideas and reforms to society. Their writings and speeches are studied and cited to back this embracing approach.<sup>6</sup>

This study essentially questioned this monolithic approach drawing attention to a single individual, Falih Rıfki Atay. Rather than putting everyone into the same bundle and labeling them either Kemalist or not, the present study points out that intellectuals of the early Republican period have had different individual experiences with both the transition from imperial past to the Republican period and Kemalism, with which they have been automatically identified, regardless of their peculiarities.

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<sup>5</sup> (Bozdoğan ve Kasaba, 1-11)

<sup>6</sup> As Funda Selçuk Şirin nicely exemplified in her study, Falih Rıfki was one of the early Republican intellectuals whose essays and books had effectively been used for this cause for years. Şirin, F. (2014). *İmparatorluk'tan Cumhuriyete Bir Aydın: Falih Rıfki Atay*. İstanbul: Tarihçi Kitabevi

It provides a closer look into the mind of the intellectual to reveal the discrepancies, ambiguities and criticisms of the Kemalist reforms. Accordingly it hopes to offer a fresh perspective to the study area which has taken Kemalism as the sole invariable in its narratives until recently.

This is the early Republican intellectual, journalist, member of parliament, and the author of the memoir *Çankaya*, Falih Rıfkı Atay (1894-1971). It should be noted that his books and essays are still addressed and criticized in many academic works and popular texts as an example of the ideal Kemalist figure. In the only detailed academic study about the author, Şirin notes that in most of these works the partial selection of a few sentences from half a century old newspapers in which Falih Rıfkı Atay once wrote, cannot inform but can only manipulate the reader in certain political directions.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the present study argues that most of the earlier works on Atay have either been too descriptive or too reductionist, simply identifying him with a typical intellectual of the Kemalist regime.

Being aware of its own limits, the present study does not claim to be a comprehensive analysis of an existing subject. It rather hopes to reveal the range of interpretations/re-interpretations of Kemalism that are possible and to examine how the ideas of a certain man of letters from within the so-called Kemalist intelligentsia can be re-interpreted from new perspectives.

Falih Rıfkı Atay witnessed both the downfall of the Ottoman Empire, and the rise of the Republic of Turkey. As a frontrunner in the media pillar of the revolutionary elite, he played a significant role in the ideological production and reproduction processes of the new nation state. Nearly 60 years of writing experience made him one of the most productive men of letters in the history of the republic.

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<sup>7</sup> (Şirin, 5)

Falih Rıfıkı Atay produced in various genres of literary and intellectual works. Newspapers, magazines, memoirs, travel books, collective essays, and novels are among the works of the author. He supported the independence struggle of Atatürk starting from the very early phase when he was working at the İstanbul newspaper of *Akşam* (Evening).

Atay became acquainted with Mustafa Kemal after the War of Independence and became one of his most devoted friends. Beyond his literary journalistic career, he served several terms as a deputy to the Grand National Assembly. With the transition to the multi-party system, he left politics officially, established his own newspaper *Dünya* (World), and continued his battle as part of the opposition. He wrote extensively defending what he called Kemalism and the modernization project in *Dünya* until his death at the age of 77 in 1971.

Concentrating on selected travel books and memoirs of the early Republican intellectual Falih Rıfıkı Atay, this study hopes to bring a new perspective to the Kemalist representations of Turkey. The representations in question have two types of importance. Firstly, while Falih Rıfıkı Atay has wrote travel books in order to find the most appropriate model for Turkey's development, he also struggled to come up with a reasonable definition of "Turkish identity". I claim that his works lead us to question the claims that associated the author with being the sole, passive disseminator of a fixed, pre-given Kemalist ideology. His memoirs and collected essays also indicate the different interpretations and perceptions that he held towards the Republican regime. Second, although he was sent to many destinations on diplomatic missions, his travel books include many instances in which he went beyond official protocols. All in all, this study argues that Atay's texts present us a

fertile area of study through which we can rethink the established roles that the early Republican intellectuals were affiliated with.

### Criticism of the Sources

#### Discordant Abundance

Falih Rıfıkı's travel books, memoirs, and essay-style books are the main primary sources of the present study. Atay's newspaper articles are not in the scope of the study, although he wrote in various papers from the early 1910s to the late 1960s. The huge amount of materials which accumulated after 60 years of writing career created an abundance of the primary sources from various genres. Hence, it was necessary to make a reasonable selection from this big sum of materials.

Travel books were used extensively in this study. Falih Rıfıkı Atay made a number of trips which were published as separate books. *Denizaşırı* (Overseas), or *Brezilya Notları* (Notes on Brazil, 1927) in its previous title before the alphabet reform in 1928, *Yeni Rusya* (The New Russia, 1931); *Moskova-Roma* (Moscow-Rome, 1932); and *Hind* (India, 1943) are the ones used in this study more than others. It does not mean that other books were less useful. A remarkable concern of this selection was choosing geographically dispersed and culturally diverse locations among the different geographies to which he travelled as far as possible.

A careful reader engaged with the books cited here may ask why *Taymis Kıyıları* (Thames Shores, 1934), in which Falih Rıfıkı described his trip along the shores of the Thames in London, was not incorporated in the list. Atay never

hesitated to admire “şimal terbiyesi”<sup>8</sup>, which could be translated into English as “northern manner” or “northern discipline” and the homeland of this model was the United Kingdom, for sure. However, similar discussions on *şimal terbiyesi* appear in *Denizaşırı* too, and the colonial past of India, which was dominated by a long-term British administration is evaluated by the author in *Hind*. In addition, Russia, Italy and Brazil are other countries where new regimes had just been established: like Turkey they were all struggling to build new economies during the interwar period. India was about to achieve its independence when *Hind* was being written, too.

Atay stated why Turkish readers needed to learn about the nations of the new world: “...we have to learn extensive, quick, radical development strategies and the science of life of the new world’s nations whose initial conditions were similar to our current ones”.<sup>9</sup> These four books particularly shed light on why these trips took place.

Furthermore, the travel books, generally, are full of unofficial and spontaneous encounters with people, mostly foreigners, where Atay constructed the perceptions of “the other” in the eyes of a Kemalist intellectual. The travel books differ from other works with their random and free-style narratives, which allowed Atay to employ a less ideological tone.

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<sup>8</sup> Atay, F. (1931). *Denizaşırı*. İstanbul: Devlet Matbaası.

*Yeni Rusya’nın giriş bölümünde bu kitabın Denizaşırı kitabını “ihtilâlcı usuller” açısından tamamlayacağı belirtilir. Denizaşırı ile savunulan ilk esas ise “şimal terbiyesi” idi.*

*“Kaç senedir iki esası müdafaa ediyorum: Şimal terbiyesi ve ihtilâlcı metotlar. Hemen aynı günlerde bastığım Denizaşırı şimal terbiyesinin üstünlüğünü ve Yeni Rusya iptidâî bir halkı ve memleketi, büyük bir hızlan, garp seviyesine çıkarmak için aramış ve bulunmuş ihtilâlcı metotları tez olarak almıştır”* Atay, F. (1931). *Yeni Rusya*. Ankara: Hakimiyeti Milliye Matbaası.

<sup>9</sup> *“Biz çürüyecek kadar olan, topraklarının dibini ve son haznelerini kemiren eski dünyanın melankolik tefelsüfünü değil, ilk şartları bizim bu günkü şartlarıma benzeyen yeni dünya milletlerinin geniş, çabuk ve radikal inkişaf usullerini ve hayat ilmini öğrenmeliyiz”* (F. Atay, *Denizaşırı* 1931)

The memoirs of Atay number no less than the travel writings of the author. To prefer one book to another was more difficult than determining on which travel book to focus. First of all, they covered different periods. Since the memoirs of Falih Rıfki are mostly related to Atatürk's life and the Kemalist Revolution, the way he compartmentalized his memoirs converged with the significant events of the time. Early works like *Ateş ve Güneş* (The Fire and Sun, 1918) and *Zeytindağı* (Mount Olive, 1932) were based on the notes he took during the Great War; hence, they were set aside in this picture. *19 Mayıs* written in 1944, on the other hand specifically focused on the Armistice Period<sup>10</sup>, which was a considerably short timespan when compared with *Çankaya* (1961). The rationale of the period was to conceive of the memoir series as complementary books. Similar to Mustafa Kemal's *Nutuk* (The Great Speech, 1981), in which the narrative began from his arrival at Samsun, where he started the independence struggle, Atay's *19 Mayıs* elucidated the preparation period for the Turkish independence war.<sup>11</sup>

Second, memoirs are not only political histories, but also illustrative of the social and economic history of the given period. Two books among Atay's memoirs come forward, *Zeytindağı* (1993) and *Çankaya* (1984). This is due to their comprehensiveness rather than of a predetermined selection.

Falih Rıfki had quite different considerations when he wrote these books. As it is clearly underlined in the first section of *Zeytindağı*, he wrote this book in order to explain what the Second Constitutional Period<sup>12</sup> had been about.<sup>13</sup> In addition, *Zeytindağı* is more about the leaders of the late Ottoman administration, especially

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<sup>10</sup> It is called "*Mütareke Dönemi*" in Turkish and this term specifically identifies the timespan between the Armistice of Mudros in 30 October 1918 and the Armistice of Mudanya in 11 October 1922.

<sup>11</sup> Atay, F. R. (1944). *19 Mayıs*. Ankara.

<sup>12</sup> "*Meşrutiyet*" is the word the author used in the original text. Atay, F. (1993). *Zeytindağı*. İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi.

<sup>13</sup> (F. Atay, *Zeytindağı*, 5-8)

with Cemal Pasha, under whose command Falih Rıfki had worked during the Great War on the Syrian front. *Çankaya*, on the other hand, is one of the most popular memoirs about Atatürk and the Kemalist Revolution.

These two books help us follow the evolution of Falih Rıfki from his early engagement with the Ottoman modernizers to his becoming an ardent supporter of the independence struggle and Atatürk himself. Both books present critical analyses and interpretations about both the Ottoman and Republican governments. In this sense, they can be seen as early reckonings with the past and present, perhaps in an unusually comprehensive fashion for its day.

The author's smaller books which were written in essay style, especially in novel genre also proved very important sources for this study. Since the author started his writing career in magazines and continued with newspaper articles until his death as a journalist, these pieces constitute huge amount of material. Various publishers collected selections of his essays so as to publish them in small books. *İnanç* (Belief, 1965), *Niçin Kurtulmamak* (Why not Get Over?, 1953) and *Pazar Konuşmaları* (Sunday Talks, 1965) are just a few of the examples of these volumes. Written long after the Kemalist Revolution, they addressed some of the concrete problems of the new Turkey. Furthermore, they demonstrated the author's inner dilemmas about his Ottomanist, Unionist past, revealing an auto critique of himself as a revolutionary intellectual.

Among the smaller books, the one which was often consulted for use in the following chapters is *Roman*<sup>14</sup>. *Roman* shows the ways in which Kemalism was

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<sup>14</sup> Atay, F. (1952). *Roman*. İstanbul: Varlık Yayınları.

*Roman* means novel in English. According to Falih Rıfki, this ironic name implies; the genre of that book could only be called as novel when the issue was the social context of 1930s' İstanbul. The satirical book *Roman* criticizes the people who did not either understand the Kemalist Revolution or the ones deliberately put a spin on it.

sometimes misunderstood or be misinterpreted, even a decade after the revolution. Characters in *Roman*, were especially helpful because they presented the clash between the old and the new in the eyes of Falih Rıfki. It also allocates considerable place to letters written by Falih Rıfki's readers in newspapers at the end of the 1920s. These correspondences provided him with an opportunity to observe how the ordinary people made sense of new Turkey. In a sense, this was a little test of validation for a Kemalist thinker. He simply responded some of the letters and indicated both problems of regime and possible solutions.

### Scarcity of the Secondary Sources

Intriguingly, when the few official documents and state records related to Falih Rıfki's deputyship in the National Assembly are put aside, it is seen that few secondary or academic studies have been written about him. From the 1940s, for example, only an interview which was integrated into the selected essays of the author in a single book is available.<sup>15</sup> Indeed the memoirs of Falih Rıfki have always been instrumentalized within the daily polemics of Turkish politics. The author of one of the most comprehensive academic studies on Falih Rıfki Atay, Funda Selçuk Şirin, too underlines this problem.

(In recent years) the statements of the author about Atatürk and the nation state building are haphazardly used. These references to Atay's statements were used as a means of justifying their own motivations without paying attention to when, where, and in what contexts they were told or written.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ediboğlu, B. S. (1945). *Falih Rıfki Atay Konuşuyor*. Ankara: Berkalp Kitabevi.

<sup>16</sup> (Şirin 2014, 5)



Şirin also gives examples from newspaper articles and magazines to support partisan interpretations of the author and his memoirs.<sup>17</sup>

When Şirin's book, which is an extended and reviewed version of her Ph.D. dissertation, appeared in the spring of 2014, the present topic was about to be presented to the Atatürk Institute at Boğaziçi University as master's thesis proposal. Her book is one of the most comprehensive academic studies about Falih Rıfkı, using newspaper articles of the author between 1912 and 1950 as the primary source.

The researcher compartmentalizes her study according to strict chronological order in the first four chapters. Then she continues with critical themes that the Kemalist cadres of the early republican regime had to deal with such as Westernization, Kemalism, education and schooling, history and language, statism, democracy and political opposition. At the end of the book, Şirin concludes that Atay was a mediator for producing the Kemalist ideology; in this regard, he justified the newly-established political and social order. He played this mediator role with a highly effective usage of newspapers, which had the ability introduce new national myths, heroes and symbols.<sup>18</sup> This study benefit more from Şirin's early chapters on Falih Rıfkı's intellectual development and engagements with other elites. Information on the effect of his instructors during high school, for instance, or the first time he found himself among unionist leaders after taking a job at *Tanin* newspaper and the like were really helpful when trying to make sense of Falih Rıfkı's books written in the 1950s where he discussed his own past.

Although they are not academic studies, there are some other books that contain some memories and anecdotes from Falih Rıfkı. The most recent one

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. See p.5 for the detailed references of the articles and columns of different commentators.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.488

appeared in 2014 with the title *Çankaya'nın Kalemşoru* (Çankaya's Spin Doctor)<sup>19</sup> Another is *Bir Dinozorun Anıları* (Memoirs of a Dinosaur), written by his foster child.<sup>20</sup>

Falih Rıfki has been criticized by various intellectuals for the role he played in the nation building process on irrelevant grounds.<sup>21</sup> For instance, Yücel criticizes him for remaining impartial in the issue of language reform because he took a stand against the over-purification of the Turkish language and defended the idea that foreign words firmly established within society must be protected.<sup>22</sup> Türkali, on the other hand, criticized Falih Rıfki for his ultra-nationalistic reactions, specifically to the Armenian question.<sup>23</sup>

Other articles and journals were scanned for this study. For instance, Bünyamin Bezci's and Yusuf Çiftci's collaborative work on "self-orientalization" was important in constructing a theoretical framework on Atay's perspective on modernity and modernization.<sup>24</sup> More specifically, the present study argues that although Falih Rıfki was in the intellectual forefront of the Kemalist Revolution, there was a big trouble that he inherited from the imperial past. This was his Ottomanist leaning and his utmost desire to do justice to the ancien regime.

Remaining just to the Ottomans while carrying the banner of the Kemalist Republic was the dilemma the author faced, since it required him to reckon with his own past, namely with his ideological convictions and career among other Unionists. The past in question is evaluated and criticized in Atay's writing, but completely

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<sup>19</sup> Gürsoy, Y. (2014). *Çankaya'nın Kalemşoru Bilinmeyenleriyle Falih Rıfki Atay*. İstanbul: İnkılâp.

<sup>20</sup> Urgan, M. (2000). *Bir Dinozorun Anıları*. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları.

<sup>21</sup> Yücel, T. (2007). *Dil Devrimi ve Sonuçları*. İstanbul: Can Yayınları; Türkali, V. (2014). *Bitti Bitti Bitmedi*. İstanbul: Ayrıntı; Haksal, A. H. (2014). *Kendilik ve Edebiyat*. İstanbul: İz

<sup>22</sup> (Yücel 2007)

<sup>23</sup> (Türkali 2014)

<sup>24</sup> (Bezci ve Çiftci 2012)

from the Republican perspective. This time, he had to self-orientalize his own image since all the norms and morals now took the West as the sole reference. Meltem Ahıska's detailed study, *Radyonun Sihirli Kapısı Garbiyatçılık ve Politik Öznellik*<sup>25</sup> was also highly useful when I tried to make sense of Atay's inner dilemmas such anti-imperialist attitude towards the West, which starkly contradicts with representation of the West as the source of inspiration for his reform proposals. However, probably the best way to get to know Falih Rıfkı is to look at his intellectual formation and to learn which currents of thought inspired him. Hence, the following section is dedicated to his educational background, his engagements with Young Turks before 1923, as well as a brief account of the social context of the period in question.

### An Ottoman Child

Falih Rıfkı Atay was born in İstanbul in 1894, to which his family had moved from Sakarya. He received his primary education in a *sıbyan mektebi*<sup>26</sup> (elementary school) but he expressed that he never embraced the education in this school in which he was enrolled at the request of his father.<sup>27</sup> He continued his secondary education in *Rehber-i Tahsil Rüştiyesi* (secondary school). This was a relatively secular institution and the author seems to have gained his first intellectual interests,

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<sup>25</sup> Ahıska, M. (2005). *Radyonun Sihirli Kapısı Garbiyatçılık ve Politik Öznellik*, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları

<sup>26</sup> A common name given to Ottoman elementary school

<sup>27</sup> (Ediboğlu 1945)

like history during these years. His history teacher, Hayri Bey, instilled constitutional ideas in young students with readings he assigned from Mizancı Murat.<sup>28</sup>

For the high school education, his family chose one of the most prestigious schools in İstanbul, *Mercan İdadisi* (high school). Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, the director of the school, also wrote to *Servet-i Fünun*, a literary magazine, informing its readers about Western cultural and literary movements. After the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, Falih Rıfkı found the opportunity to take courses from open-minded, constitutionalists like Celal Sahir and Samih Rıfat.<sup>29</sup> In the social context of the revolution, he was directly affected by popular ideologies like Ottomanism and Turkism.<sup>30</sup>

### An Earlier Break before 1923

In 1909, Falih Rıfkı Atay enrolled in the department of literature in *Darülfünun*<sup>31</sup> (İstanbul University) and experienced some of the most decisive moments in his life. The defeat of the Ottoman troops in Tripoli and the tragic smack down during the Balkan Wars increased the number of factions among both the CUP members and the students at university.

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<sup>28</sup> See one of the most well-groomed and synoptic studies about the Community of Union and Progress for other leaders of Young Turks: Ahmad, Feroz. *İttihat ve Terakki (1908-1914)*. İstanbul: Sander, 1971.

<sup>29</sup> (Şirin, 11)

<sup>30</sup> Turkist Yusuf Akçura published his foundational article *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Three Types of Politics) where he compared and contrast the Ottomanism, Turkism and Islamism in 1904 (Akçura 1991).

<sup>31</sup> *Darülfünun* was the common name given to Ottoman university institution but the school in text specifically has stand for İstanbul University since 1900. The term *darülfünun* literally means “House of Multiple Disciplines”.

These were the days when he began to define himself with the Turkish identity, Şirin notes.<sup>32</sup> He wrote his first political essays after he started to work at *Tanin*, on the invitation of his former teacher, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. Because *Tanin* was strongly affiliated with the Community of Union and Progress (CUP), Atay was able to meet Talât and Cemal pashas, with whom he worked later, as well as Ziya Gökalp.

In the last year of university he left school and went to Syria as a reserve officer of Cemal Pasha. *Ateş ve Güneş* and *Zeytindağı* consist of the notes he took during these years. Şirin notes that since Atay came back from Syria, he was no more the same man.<sup>33</sup> Atay, for the first time, became an eyewitness to a real war and saw that the decision to engage in the Great War with the Germans could only bring the destruction of the empire rather than its continuation. This was a very important stage for the author because departing from the CUP forced him to find another way to earn his livelihood. This new way was the one that would lead him to ranks of the Kemalist elites, since the nation state of the Turks as soon to be constructed.

### The Fulltime Porte-Parole of the Regime

After he taught at the *Heybeliada Çarkçı Mektebi* (Naval Cadet School of Heybeliada) for a while, he started publishing a new gazette, *Akşam* (Evening), with Ali Naci Karacan, Kâzım Şinasi, and Necmettin Sadak in September, 1918. The Ottoman Empire had come to an end with the Armistice of Mudros on 30 October 1918. The years of the Armistice Period was accompanied by widespread censorship and publication bans by the occupying powers. When İzmir was occupied, Atay

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<sup>32</sup> (Şirin, 16)

<sup>33</sup> (Şirin, 86-87)

joined in creating propaganda calling for mass mobilization to save the country from the existing situation which he felt would result in its total destruction.

*Akşam* supported every single achievement of the regular army after the Grand National Assembly of Turkey was established in 1920. The stressful times for Atay and his friends ended after the Sakarya victory; and after that moment, the author spent all his energy to correct the image of Turks in the eyes of Western powers since the Peace Treaty of Lausanne had yet to be signed.<sup>34</sup> He pursued a career introducing Turkey both inside and outside the country. He met Atatürk and became of the most ardent supporters of the regime. Falih Rıfki Atay, with the request of his leader, served as deputy in the Assembly seven terms consecutively. As a journalist, he informed the new Republican audiences about Kemalist reforms, writing in *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye* (National Sovereignty) and *Ulus* (Nation) newspapers, the editorship of which he continued until 1947. Even after he dissociated himself from the editorship of *Ulus*, Atay continued to defend Kemalism at a time when the Republican People's Party (RPP) was in the opposition, during the 1950s.

However, the most colorful and interesting interpretations of what one haphazardly call Kemalism today are found in descriptions in the travel books of the author. In this study, memoirs and smaller books are only considered as far as they build a bridge between the past and present of Atay. In the following chapters, samples from the travel books will be presented focusing both on where the author came from and on the places he travelled.

Falih Rıfki's talent for using his travel narratives to set new agendas and targets for the new Turkey will be demonstrated. To give an example, Atay understood the development of the country mostly from an economic perspective and

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<sup>34</sup> (Şirin, 116-118)

the etatist interpretation of the government did not really appeal to him. Development was important for him, but the major actor that will drive this development process may well change. Public or private sector should not be the critical question. Atay also said that the Republican administration had to be open to any single qualified man to develop the country and the civil servants of the ancien regime should immediately be put to work, in this respect.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately it is argued here that the practical and economic suggestions of the author diverge from a strict Kemalist developmentalism, based on etatism and the authoritarian single-party regime.

Atay's narratives actually display the inevitable tension of the Ottoman transition figures in orientating themselves to the new conditions of modern Turkey, and the wounds that such a double bind made on them. In Atay's writings the necessity of self-critique and reviewing the newly established regime are frequently underlined. The following chapter will try to explain how the author coped with this dilemma of being an ideologue of the regime and criticizing it at the same time.

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<sup>35</sup> (F. Atay, *Yeni Rusya*, 57-58)

## CHAPTER II

### ATAY'S DICHOTOMY: CLASHING REPRESENTATIONS OF TURKEY IN THE TRAVEL BOOKS AND MEMOIRS

Falih Rıfkı Atay was one of the most productive men of letters in the history of the republic. Whatever the genre, the half century writing experience of an intellectual who saw both the end of the Ottoman Empire and the nation building process of the Republic of Turkey, presents an insider's view. In this sense, Atay is the utmost example of a "transition figure".

From the late 1920s to the mid-1940s, Falih Rıfkı Atay travelled the world, visiting Macedonia, Serbia, Italy, India, France, Britain, the United States, Russia, Brazil, and Syria. Many of the journeys were state-sponsored. Kemal Atatürk's initiatives undoubtedly played a key role in these journeys.

Usually, Falih Rıfkı was accompanied by other statesmen or journalists, although he did not refer to any names in general, on the trips and delegations were expected to represent Turkey abroad, with the diplomatic contacts they made. The United Nations Conference on International Organizations, which is referred to in Falih Rıfkı's writings as *San Francisco Konferansı* that resulted in the acceptance of the United Nations Charter in 1945, is just one example of such occasions.

Falih Rıfkı Atay's trips were officially planned. He was supposed to attend at banquets, follow formal procedures and to represent Turkey on every single event in which he took part in. Thus, he was not an independent traveler who embarked on



adventures on his own will. His observations on different civilizations often depended on systematic notes taken during the time abroad. Moreover, Atay noted in several places that he studied the political, social and economic history of the geographies he would be visiting before they left home.<sup>36</sup> This strategy seemed to work because it is clear his travel books were published right after his returns.

### Situating Turkey among other Contemporaries

Beyond this systematic type of writing, what makes Falih Rıfkı's travel books important for the intellectual history of Turkey is the extensive comparisons he made between different cultures, in order to situate the new-born Republic of Turkey among its contemporaries. Comparing Turkey with other countries in terms of their economies, legal systems, education facilities, or comparing two foreign countries outside Turkey in terms of their moral values, Atay's travel books present at least two features.

One is the travel books' unique quality arising from Falih Rıfkı's aim to situate Turkey among other nation building processes. In other words, beyond simply writing down what he had seen abroad, Falih Rıfkı made a kind of evaluation of what the young Republic had done right so far, and what else it should make an effort to do later. Atay's was a naïve attempt to observe the lands outside Turkey and make sense of other development models, such as the socialism in Russia or Mussolini's fascist administration, in the hope that lessons could be learnt from them.

The other feature which made Falih Rıfkı's attempts valuable for their time comes from his objective attitude. Atay tries to distinguish what he read, what he was

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<sup>36</sup> (F. Atay, Denizaşırı, 1)

told, and what he observed in while travelling. As far as the timespan in which he produced travel books, one of the leading characteristics of the interwar period around the world was the spurt of nationalisms and end of dynastic rules.

When ultra nationalist development models like the ones in Italy and Germany were vigorously proceeding, Falih Rıfki displayed a surprisingly moderate attitude compared to those models and by no means offered a militant or irredentist national development model for Turkey. As time went on, he puts more distance between himself and the new regime in his prospective critiques of Kemalist Turkey. This will be illustrated more below with examples from the travel books *Zeytindağı*, *Yeni Rusya*, *Moskova-Roma*, and *Hind*.

#### “Immobility” and Reminding Turks Who They Were

Just like the other travel books of Falih Rıfki, *Denizaşırı* by no means resembles a pocket guide for tourists. From the very first sentences of *Denizaşırı* the relevance of the author’s narrative with the history of Turkey and its imperial past are clear: “The ancient history of the Turks is a huge epos of exodus; our ancestors wandered around the Great Wall of China and the Rhine, along the African deserts and steppes. A normal way of life for the Ancient Turks meant ‘campaign’<sup>37</sup>.”<sup>38</sup>

These are the first sentences of the author at the beginning of *Denizaşırı*, which was re-published in 1931. The notes that constitute the book were taken in 1927, during the author’s voyage to Brazil on a cruise ship. Passages in the book are

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<sup>37</sup> Asıl metinde “sefer” olarak yazılmış kelimeyi “campaign” sözcüğü ile karşılıyorum. “Jihad” sözcüğünü konunun çok geniş bağlamına doğrudan oturmadığı için kullanmamayı tercih ettim. Şüphesiz, Osmanlı kurulduktan sonra batı ve doğuya yapılmış seferler “cihad” olarak değerlendirilebilir.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p.2

full of observations on the characteristics of the other passengers, who came from various nations of the world.

Falih Rıfki examined characteristics of British, French and American people during the voyage. A brief note about the ancient Turks to which I referred above could be understood as the author's effort to remind the Turks who they really were and what type of characteristics they actually had compared to other nations. According to Atay, in contrast with the Americans for instance, Turks had lost their mobility in time and laziness had become one of the most significant problems in their struggle with economic and cultural development. The author accused Abdülhamid II and his despotism of paralyzing the nation for nearly half a century. During the reign of Abdülhamid II, "some of our life-sustaining functions were narcotized, not surprisingly".<sup>39</sup> In other words, Falih Rıfki implies that the prohibitions and limitations of the period of autocracy (*istibdat*) brought about stagnation in the late-Ottoman society. This is why the War of Independence could have only been initiated by members of the military, who had not lost their mobility.<sup>40</sup>

When Atay criticizes the Hamidian regime, it looks in close agreement with his republican character. However, he later directs his criticism to the current republican government and claims that some of the Latin institutions like education also caused the immobility and laziness. "Let's liberate our education system from the decayed institutions of the Latin discipline".<sup>41</sup> Thus Falih Rıfki wisely justified why Turks should look at other role models for their development than Europe and his travels to far-off locales like United States. Apparently, even in such an early date like 1927 Falih Rıfki recognized that there were some problems with the reforms of

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p.3

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p.3

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p.3

Kemalist administration such that he criticized the newly-established institutions like schooling in the early Republican period. Indeed, it was difficult to understand why he accused the schooling in Kemalist regime for being Latin while he did not give reference to sensible similarities between Turkish and Latin way of education. He just spoke of the French and German society; and implied that they set a bad example with their immobile character in which the thought prevail the action. In contrast, according to Atay, action precedes. That is why, Turks must closely observe how things done in the US in order to cope with immobility in question.

For example, he complained that the Turkish youth, did not want to be assigned to the modest and less developed cities of the country, like İzmit as civil servants, while there were plenty of young Americans who made the utmost effort for their missionary ideals in less developed Eastern town like Merzifon and Van, far from the modern centers.<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, discourse of immobility was previously used by Ahıska to make sense of the mentality of early Republican, Kemalist cadres. According to her, the “immobility” was the clear sign of the feeling of “belatedness”.<sup>43</sup> It was the harbinger of a new, modern temporality which, rather, gave precedence to “action” and “progress”. From this point of view, it could be said that Falih Rıfki had just used Latin institutions in the country as pretext for underlining the need for a new mentality that Turks must adopt in the way of modernizing their country.

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<sup>42</sup> Atay does not give specific reference but the reason why he had chosen Merzifon and Van should definitely be the existence of American schools in these cities that are supposed to conduct missionary activities. American College of Mersovan continued to live until 1924 and American Cultural Association has still an agency in Van.

<sup>43</sup> (Ahıska, 91)

## Changing Mentalities, Functional Reasons

I started with this laziness or inaction discourse because Atay went a few steps further and associated other problems of modern Turkey with the same stagnant attitude of its people.

For instance, before sailing out on the Atlantic, he visited Normandy and toured the small towns of Deauville, Trouville, Houlgate and Cabourg. To describe the Normandy shores to the Turkish reader, Atay drew a perfect analogy between them and Kadıköy-Pendik coast line of İstanbul. Eventually, he came up with an interesting observation: neither the sea, nor the weather and the nature of Normandy were better than İstanbul; however, there were people who came from İstanbul to swim along these coasts.<sup>44</sup>

There was no need for complicated explanations for Atay. People came to these small towns because of the active and colorful lifestyle that the French sea shores offered with hotels, casinos, restaurants and shops. Turks, on the other hand, did not bother to attract even domestic tourists. Atay definitely signified a mentality that had to be changed urgently. The author, indirectly, criticized the protectionist attitude that the Kemalist regime had adopted in economic and security related issues.

In his other books, but mostly in *Hind*, Falih Rıfkı complained about the over-protective attitude of the regime about opening the shores of the Mediterranean to tourism. He argued that are no other country had created as many “forbidden zones” as Turkey had.<sup>45</sup> Atay thought that this was hazardous to the development of

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<sup>44</sup> “...ne deniz İstanbul denizine benzer, ne gök İstanbul gökünü andırır, ne tabiyatında İstanbul tabiyatının canı ısındıran hassalarından biri vardır: fakat bu otellerde denize girmek için İstanbul’dan gelen insanlar var!” (F. Atay, *Deniz aşırı*, 17-18).

<sup>45</sup> Atay, F. (1943). *Hind*. İstanbul: Semih Lütfi Kitabevi (p.148)

Turkey. In *Denizaşırı*, he gave several examples from countries such as France, which had found the balance between security and economic considerations: The French people did not like foreigners but never frighten dollars away.<sup>46</sup> In short, the point was to be more practical and be more open to world if Turkey was to advance.

Hoping to change a set of mentalities received a lot of attention in Falih Rıfki's travel books as he sought to construct the most possible model for development in Turkey. Underlining the importance of being an active and hardworking nation in word and deed, he showed his belief that the new Republic could tip the scale in Turkey's favor, once the Turks decided to achieve certain goals.

When he was watching the sea from a small restaurant in Trouville, Falih Rıfki started to think about geographically similar places in Turkey and prepared a little projection on where to construct similar infrastructure and touristic facilities. Highways throughout Anatolia, green villages where productive farmers lived, summer houses in the Bolu Mountains, Black Sea shores to pass the hot summers et cetera.<sup>47</sup> These are all possible to realize, but the only condition was for Turks to change "our life goal".<sup>48</sup>

If the French men could do it, why not Turks? Such comments reveal that all the suggestions of Falih Rıfki, even the one about changing the static, paralyzed character; derived from pragmatic concerns, such as establishing a modern economy and society from which Turkey could profit, rather than seeking a vague Kemalist utopia where every single institution in Turkey was constructed upon six arrows.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> (F. Atay, *Denizaşırı*, 17)

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* p.18

<sup>48</sup> "*Türk inkılâbının hamlesi, bu rüyaya az zamanda vücut verebilir. Bir şart, bir tek şart var: hayat telâkkilerimiz, yaşayış zevkimiz değişmelidir*" (F. Atay, *Denizaşırı*, 18).

<sup>49</sup> Six arrows: The specific name given to sum of the founding principles of the Kemalist ideology in Turkey. Republicanism, Laicism, Reformism, Nationalism, Statism, and Populism are the markers of the founding ideology which are represented with the six arrows on the flag of Republican People's Party whom Atatürk himself had established in 1923.

My argument about Falih Rıfki's pragmatic attitude towards changing "our life goals" is not only about setting a commercial or mercantile mindset among Turks and make them more familiar with "modern development methods<sup>50</sup>". This would be too simplistic. In spite of its undeniable importance, the economy is just one aspect among the countless others that the new born Republic of Turkey needed to renovate.

### Introducing Turkey to the World

For example, introducing the Republic to the world with its "western", "modern", and "European" institutions was one of the major areas at which Turkey had utterly failed. Was it really important to advertise the Republic of Turkey both domestically and internationally in the late 1920s and the early 1930s? Apparently, yes. Getting to know the world outside Turkey and making other nations familiar with the Republic was a frequent discourse in Atay's other travel books as well.<sup>51</sup>

For this passionate desire to introduce Turkey to the world, several factors can be found between the lines of Atay's writings. However, one of the most significant one can be taken as the international political context. Falih Rıfki wrote his travel books during the inter-war period, 1927 and 1943. Europe was experiencing quite turbulent times, when the fascist Italy and Hitler's Germany were highly active. During this period, countries sought alliance agreements to compensate the wounds of the First World War. In other words, war threat was a serious problem and Turkey was not immune to it. The Balkan Pact of 1934 and

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<sup>50</sup> Aslı "*modern inkişaf usulleri*" olan tamlamayı yukarıdaki şekilde çevirmeyi uygun buldum (F. Atay, Denizaşırı 1931).

<sup>51</sup> (F. Atay, Yeni Rusya; Moskova Roma)

Treaty of Saadabad (1937) were former agreements that corroborated this security related considerations. Then, Turkey joined the United National in 1945 and NATO in 1952.

The author also wanted to introduce Turkey to other nations as he believed both Turks and foreigners needed it. Turkey was the country wage war against mostly the Western powers of Europe, but at the same time adopted their judicial and administrative system. According to him, the war was between states and was no longer relevant. Now was the time for Turkey to become equal member of European counterparts and to normalize its relations. It was impossible for the country to continue to isolate itself from the world and it was ridiculous to suppose that Turkey could provide its independence with such an attitude. This interaction discourse, meanwhile, strikingly was in tune with attracting foreigners to come and visit Turkey so as to both meet Turks, to contribute to economy and even to make investment there.<sup>52</sup>

When he set foot in Rio de Janerio, Atay came across the column of a Hungarian journalist in a popular newspaper, which briefly talked about the social, political and military programs of Kemal Atatürk. Atay said, "...who knows, what kind of errors and shortcomings the author has" and argued that Budapest could not introduce him to Rio.<sup>53</sup> What Falih Rıfkı realized during the meetings with many international delegates throughout his travel is that the revolutions and modern institutions established in Turkey were not generally known of the civil code of 1926 which abandoned polygamy officially, the Hat Law of 1925 which abolished the fez

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<sup>52</sup> Atay, F. (1934). *Taymis Kıyıları*. Ankara: Akşam Matbaası; Denizaşırı 1931

<sup>53</sup> (F. Atay, Denizaşırı, 75)



and the turban, Falih Rıfkı wrote, "...affected the Belgian delegate as if he listened fairy tales"<sup>54</sup>

The magnitude of this lack of information is depicted in other place where Atay describes how the leader of the U.S. Democratic Party, M. T. Robinson, who was also the chairman of U.S. delegation, was amazed when he learned that the foreign affairs delegates of Turkey, Atay was certainly included in this group, were not from the United States. According to the author, the young delegate wanted to meet him and other Turkish delegates because he thought that they were Americans.

Indeed, his clothes, behaviors and especially fair-skinned appearance were making the author hardly distinguishable from his many western counterparts, but Atay got still angry with the judgement and asked the reader if the delegate imagined the Turks were black people?<sup>55</sup> Apparently, Falih Rıfkı blamed the Turkish media here more than the Kemalist cadres in government and society. He reminded them of the Italians, who recorded the important speeches of Mussolini onto records and distributed them abroad, and he said it could be an example for the Turks to inform other nations on what the Kemalist revolution was about.

The responsibility for communication with the outside world lay with the media and the government. That is why Falih Rıfkı gave examples from new regimes, like the Italian one above. He admired, for instance, the Russian cultural associations titled V.O.K.S., endeavoring to strengthen the cultural interaction between Russia and other countries.<sup>56</sup>

The magazine of the V.O.K.S., which could easily be followed in different languages, in the thousands of publications it prepared each year and vast number of

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. p.74

<sup>55</sup> "*Kim bilir bu muhterem âyan aynı zamanda hariciye komisyonundan türkleri kara mı zannediyordu, nedir? Belki sadece rengimle yarım asırlık bir masal âlemini yıkmışım*" (F. Atay, Denizaşırı, 75-76).

<sup>56</sup> (F. Atay, Yeni Rusya, 133-136)

books, journals, brochures, academic studies continuously imported from other nations won the approval of the author. Talking to citizens via newspapers and being honest to society were elucidated as other good practices of the Russians that the government of Turkey ought to take as a model. He wrote “...reporting everything to the street, talking to the street, and being accountable to the street have been good revolution practices there [Russia]”.<sup>57</sup>

### A Double Bind: Excesses and Moderations

What we have seen in this chapter so far is an intellectual figure who sought to offer the most applicable economic, cultural, and political institutions and strategies for the development process of Turkey, which was about to contrive its own path to reach the level of the European contemporaries.

The foundational markers of the Turkish revolution, like the abolition of the sultanate in 1922 and the caliphate in 1924 were far away from being superficial administrative modifications, and radically changed the life of ordinary citizen in the most immediate and direct fashion. While the new civil code of 1926 constructed the very basic rules in the home, replacing the *mecelle*<sup>58</sup>, the law on the unification of education<sup>59</sup> (1924) resulted in the reorganization of teaching institutions under the Ministry of National Education.

One of the most significant aims of these groundbreaking operations was to put an end to the cultural and institutional dichotomies inherited from the empire.

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<sup>57</sup> (F. Atay, Moskova Roma, 34)

<sup>58</sup> The Ottoman code of civil law which was once compiled by Ahmet Cevdet Paşa during the late 1860s. The code was based on the sharia.

<sup>59</sup> The original name of the law: *Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu* (1926)

The education and judiciary systems were the most fragmented institutions in late Ottoman society, which had diversely recognized structures with regard to the different *millets* (nations) living within its boundaries.

The dichotomies in question brought many areas of uncertainty about the future of the new regime. The suggestions of Falih Rifkî on new ways of communication with the masses, mercantile approaches on enhancing the tourism potential of certain destinations, and creating channels of contact -either cultural or economic- between countries should be read within the framework of concern for situating Turkey among the modern nations of the new world.

The politicians, artists, men of letters and other intellectuals of the early Republican period had a tendency to keep hold of the early acquisitions of the Republic, such as the lastly determined borders of the Treaty of Lausanne 1923, and taking the Kemalist reforms to an extreme. According to these cadres the Republic of Turkey was born out of the ashes after the Great War. And what was more crucial for the Kemalist revolutionaries was to look ahead at radical reforms rather than dealing with the imperial past. In the words of Mustafa Kemal himself, in an Assembly session where the debates on abolition of the sultanate were underway:

It is simply a question of stating a reality, something which is already an accomplished fact and which must be accepted unconditionally as such. And this must be done at any price. If those who are assembled here, the Assembly and everybody else would find this quite neutral, it would be very appropriate from my point of view. Conversely, the reality will nevertheless be manifested in the necessary form, but in that even it is possible that some heads will be cut off.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> (G. M. Atatürk, 570)

Mustafa Kemal's determination reveals the both sides of the same question: sticking to the reforms or the resurrection of the ancien regime. This created a sort of anxiety in the minds of the Kemalist reformers. Revolutions had to be undertaken as possible. Political opposition, which had either taken a back seat or turned its volume down after the victory of the independence struggle, could use and challenge every acquisition of the Kemalists, including the secular republican regime. The possible reaction (*irtica*) intimidated the reformers and the idea of turning back to the "medieval darkness" of the ancien regime was just a matter of time.

The existence of reactionary remnants from the imperial past occupied a serious place in the mind of republican reformers. What if the reactionary groups gathered strength before the reforms were fully embraced by society? Who could guarantee the future of the Republic after Atatürk's demise? What if, as Falih Rıfki implied in several works without citing names, such as in *Niçin Kurtulmamak?* and *Roman*, there was a huge clique around Atatürk, who were, covertly waiting for his death?

The anxiety that such possibilities created had a strong influence on the politicians and the intellectuals to support whatever the Kemalist administration did.

In this turbulent period, when crucial issues like abolition of the sultanate and caliphate were being discussed, what one might expect from a Kemalist intellectual who had embraced the revolutions since the proclamation of the republic was just to support the new regime and to defend it as a whole. Indeed, Falih Rıfki did an excellently good job in both areas. In his best known book, he loftily said what he felt about Atatürk after the victory of the Field Battle of the Commander-in-Chief<sup>61</sup> (*Başkumandanlık Meydan Muharebesi*): "Mustafa Kemal, I will be grateful to you all

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<sup>61</sup> The last battle in the War of Independence for Turkey, which resulted in the absolute victory of Turks in the Anatolia and withdrawal of Greek troops from the country in August, 1922.

through my life for the pleasure of this day” (F. Atay, *Çankaya* 1984). The prologue in *Çankaya* could be read as the most tangible sample of writing where Falih Rıfki fulminates against those who told the story of the new regime and Atatürk incorrectly, in his belief, after the leader’s death.<sup>62</sup>

However, Falih Rıfki’s travel books are far away from just reaffirming the performance of the new regime. Directly criticizing the founding fathers of the Republic, telling what Republican Turkey had not been able to cope with even ten years after the Republic, making suggestions on how to deal with the bureaucratic cadres of the ancien regime, informing both society and the state about modern local governments and making them familiar with modern municipal facilities were just few examples of how large the contemporary world was seen from the eyes of Falih Rıfki Atay and hints that a transition figure from within the central cadres of the Turkish intelligentsia could be objective, if not impartial in his venture of making sense of the world and the achievements of the new regime.

The following section of this chapter is dedicated to this objectivity questioning and evaluating of both the new and ancient regime of Turkey in the travel books of Falih Rıfki Atay.

The ideological double bind, for the author, prevents us from making correct decisions about the future of Turkey. For instance, applauding every single operation that the republic did well and condemning whatever the empire had done badly by no means works. What was urgent at the very beginning for the republican administration was to implement the fastest developmental strategies in order to eradicate poverty. In other words, there was no time to condemn the imperial past and the foreign powers.

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<sup>62</sup> (F. Atay, *Çankaya*, 313)

## What is Debatable, and What is not?

To on which issues and on what grounds was a transition intellectual to pay attention? An attentive reader, who had engaged in the modern history of Turkey before, may ask at this point on what issues Falih Rıfkı presented a bold front. Did he, for example, speak of the controversial issues in the history of modern Turkey; for more than 60 years? If we search for the answer in Atay's writing, it is seen that Atay's seminal discussions on highly contentious issues like the Armenian massacres of 1915 or the Dersim Rebellion of 1937-38 we will be disappointed.

When his opinions were asked, Atay did not hesitate to respond. In *Denizaşırı*, he described a dialogue between a British lady and himself. The woman asked how the Turks had killed Armenians after Atay had been introduced to her as a Turkish delegate on the cruise ship. Here is the answer, in Atay's own words<sup>63</sup>: "The air froze; the people around us looked at each other. I answered: Madam; in different ways. Some with slaughtered, others were burned, and some others via burying alive".<sup>64</sup> The conversation stopped, and Atay started a new conversation with a German entrepreneur.

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<sup>63</sup> *Beni genç hanıma takdim ettiler:*

*-Türk murahhası...*

*Sevimli İngiliz kadının gözlerine bir tuhaflık geldi, dizlerini yanımdan çeker gibi bir hareket yaptı; ağzından şu sual düştü:*

*-Türkler Ermenileri nasıl öldürdüler?*

*Hava donmuş gibi oldu; yanımdakiler birbirlerine bakiştılar. Cevap verdim:*

*-Madam, çok muhtelif usullerle, dedim; bazılarını boğazlayarak, bazılarını diri diri gömerek, bazılarını yakarak.*

(F. Atay, *Denizaşırı*, 83)

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

Rather than allocating a few more minutes to the British lady, he slid over her question and left her thinking whatever she wanted. My intention was not to bring Atay to account for Turkish history when I was citing this rare sample, which one cannot encounter in other places among literary pieces of the author throughout 1920s and 1930s. The bottom line is to see that Falih Rıfki Atay was really a transition intellectual who was always swinging on the pendulum of double bind.

In addition, it is known that Falih Rıfki had more temperate statements and sensitive attitudes towards the Armenian question and other contentious issues, like the devastation of İzmir after the independence.<sup>65</sup> However, the conversation with the British lady nicely reveals that there were limitations of what the author could speak, especially during such formal occasions where he was supposed to represent his country. Ultimately, the reader of this present study should consider such differences in Atay's language at separate books within this perspective and should not expect to find present-day discussions on behalf of what the researcher of this study calls here as "objectivity".

### Facing Inner Dilemmas

The impartiality or objectivity discussed above, were actually in line with the author's pragmatist approach, and his belief in the need for a change in mentalities for more functional reasons. Atay did not care about enlightening the historical events, although whether they were historical by the late 1920s is open to discussion, still. He used all his literary talent and intellectual capital in the service of developing the country along with other Kemalists, who held various occupations in

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<sup>65</sup> (F. Atay, Çankaya, 324-325; Zeytindağı, 78-79)

bureaucracy, in the media, and in politics. However, this mission never freed the author from the double bind that he felt when he was criticizing the late Ottoman administrators and the republican regime at the same time.

He confessed, once, how he had been happy after he had been accepted in the presence of the Ottoman crown prince, Yusuf İzzettin Efendi, when he had been a young journalist.<sup>66</sup> We already knew that Falih Rıfkı Atay was an Ottomanist and cautious about the activities of the Union and Progress until the Balkan Wars of 1912-13.<sup>67</sup> The same man carried the banner of the independence struggle just a few years later, mostly on the other side of the pendulum.

On the top of it, he never thought his mission as completed after the Republic was established and tried to contribute to the formation and dissemination of Kemalist reforms. Specifically this section of the chapter and possibly my overall narrative of Falih Rıfkı Atay demonstrates how Atay found himself in a dilemma as a republican intellectual who took a role in building the regime, who also felt the need to be objective and voice his concerns.

### Managing the Double Bind

What do I underline, then, as a phenomenon of objectivity in Falih Rıfkı Atay? I refer to at least two features of Atay's writings. One is his efforts to accept and overtly show that the new regime made some serious mistakes and was wrong about some of its predictions. The second is his effort to distinguish between institutions and individuals when criticizing them, and thus avoid big generalizations.

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<sup>66</sup> (F. Atay, Niçin Kurtulmamak?, 23)

<sup>67</sup> (Şirin, İmparatorluk'tan Cumhuriyete Bir Aydın: Falih Rıfkı Atay, 13)



Criticizing the ineffective public works that damaged the environment and historical sites was a common theme in all of the travel books of the author. This could be a naïve criticism, if Atay had simply directed his comments towards unguided urban growth or industrialization. However, Atay questioned the deliberate choices and decisions of specific high level bureaucrats of the regime. Severe comments by Atay about Mustafa Fevzi Çakmak<sup>68</sup> and his operations while he was holding the office of General Chief of Staff follow. Neglected historical sites constituted another issue that Atay persistently underlined. He gave examples from the Western countries, hoping that the Turkish authorities would feel embarrassed.

What is more intriguing to see that, albeit Falih Rıfkı has supported the revolutions, like the Hat Law of 1925 and the clothing reform in 1934, which aimed at spreading modern clothing in Turkish society, he was surprisingly skeptical about whether these attempts contributed to the formation of a more secular kind of a lifestyle. In other words, he questioned whether these changes did not go deep enough, or remained superficial.

Especially the smaller books, such as *Niçin Kurtulmamak?* of 1953 or *Roman* of 1952, which were generally written in the essay style, feature characters who have no idea about the new regime, or who understand the regime and reforms in very uncertain and awkward ways. A bigoted religious leader who is preaching a sermon on how the sharia and democracy resemble each other is an example of how the republic could be interpreted or reinterpreted in mistaken ways by society even ten years after the establishment of the country. A young woman who was asking for help from *Milliyet*, which is the newspaper that Falih Rıfkı Atay was working, to

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<sup>68</sup> Field marshal and statesman. He was the second Chief of General Staff of Turkey, from 1921 until 1944. He was also the Minister of War in Ottoman Empire before the Kemalist Revolution. Atay emphasizes that Fevzi Pasha always wanted the continuation of the ancient regime, and would not have participated independence campaign if Mustafa Kemal had got position against the Sultan, earlier (F. Atay, Çankaya, 204-208).

convince her mother for accepting the intended bridegroom is another phenomenal one. This young lady called out “Alas! Republic, where are you?”<sup>69</sup> A bigoted imam underestimates the republican regime whereas the young girls overestimated it.

There are also other emphatic figures like lawyer Şakir who was accused of exploiting the nationalistic characters of the new regime for seeking financial profit. According to the author, Şakir is the man who had created the silly idea of “patriotic revenue” (*vatanperverce kazanç*).<sup>70</sup> Apparently, Şakir was generating income from illegal ways and benefitted from the nationalistic discourses of the regime to cover his unlawful actions in the market. This is what Falih Rıfkı satirizes with his quick-wit:

When Şakir purchases a building in İstanbul, he celebrates as if İzmir was liberated from enemy occupation. A street in Cihangir is completely decorated with the names that he had given to his apartments: *İstiklâl Apartmanı, 9 Eylül Apartmanı, Dumlupınar Apartmanı*... When he walks down the street, you cannot understand whether he comes from the stock market or from the front line in war.<sup>71</sup>

These are concrete examples that Falih Rıfkı gave after his observations. In other words, there were not fictional characters he created, to support his doubts and ambivalence about the performance of the Kemalist regime. Counter examples could be found, but it seems that Atay wanted to underline the discrepancy between what was intended by the founders of the regime and what actually happened. In spite of these selected manifestations of the republic from the eyes of ordinary people in the street, what one realizes at the end is, neither *Roman* nor *Niçin Kurtulmamak* are not

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<sup>69</sup> Genç kızın kendi cümleleri:

“İşte mili dert! İşte bugünkü genç kızın ıstırabı! Bari çektiklerimizi gazete sütunlarına dökünüz. Analarımızı uyandırınız. Ah, Cumhuriyet neredesin?” (F. Atay, *Roman*, 57).

<sup>70</sup> (F. Atay, *Roman*, 48)

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

desperate books. They just showed the reality and frankly warned the Kemalist administration about unforeseen results of its reforms.

The other strategy of managing the double bind that Atay had overtly felt was his immense effort to be careful in his criticisms. He carefully made distinction between the individuals and institutions or groups when criticizing them. Just like any other author of the early Republic, Falih Rifkî Atay used categories like Turkists, Kemalists, Ottomanists, East-West, modern-primitive, reactionists-progressivists, and so on. He also made stereotypical judgments about different cultures, nations and even races. It is not uncommon to see in his writings far reaching generalizations about people and cultures: “If it takes fifteen days in Paris to forget everything, it takes fifteen hours in the East. My ultimate advice: do not die in the East”<sup>72</sup>; “Working is sacralized in America”<sup>73</sup>; “What make British society so eminent are their comfortable and intimate manners”.<sup>74</sup> However, when we put his observations about foreign people and societies are put aside, the author was meticulous about his evaluations of certain people, groups and institutions in Turkey.

There were names that frequently came up in several books, but one of the most significant examples of such distinctions was made in *Çankaya* and *Zeytindağı*. Journalists of the press in 1920s’ İstanbul were evaluated at length in the first book and they were by no means labelled only according to the positions they took vis-a-vis the independence struggle and Mustafa Kemal. Even if there were two ideal typical (reactionist and progressivist) figures in Atay’s head, there were various positions between these two and his journalist colleagues could only be situated along this line at different points.

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<sup>72</sup> (F. Atay, *Zeytindağı*, 55)

<sup>73</sup> (F. Atay, *Denizaşırı*, 41)

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* p.57

Another categorization Atay became obsessed with was of “Unionists” (*İttihatçılar*), the members of the Community of Union and Progress (CUP). Even if there was an established, legitimate political party where all the Unionists came together under the large and multicolored umbrella of the CUP, the Turkish War of Independence crystallized the various political differences which had already been exist among the unionists.

Falih Rıfki did not blame those who were skeptical about Mustafa Kemal’s operations in Anatolia. The reference point of Atay’s evaluations about Unionists was far beyond taking a stand with or against Republicans. The personalities of the pashas more likely shaped the author’s perceptions about them because he was acquainted with most of the leader cadres of CUP since his early years in *Tanin*<sup>75</sup>. Indeed, just as Falih Rıfki Atay predicates his comments on pashas to his former experience and familiarity with them, his criticisms about the defaults and failures of the regime also depended on tangible observations that he made thanks to his travels abroad.

### The Imperial Hunchback

As discussed above, Falih Rıfki dedicated his whole life to defending Kemalist revolutions once they were promulgated.<sup>76</sup> However, one must be cautious about attributing a fixed and unchanging role to Atay about introducing and propagating the revolutions. As time went by, but long before Democrat Party was

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<sup>75</sup> Turkish newspaper founded in 1908. It was one of the most significant supporters of Community of Union and Progress in the intellectual field within the empire.

<sup>76</sup> (Şirin, İmparatorluk'tan Cumhuriyete Bir Aydın: Falih Rıfki Atay 2014; Durna 2009)

established in 1950, Falih Rıfki Atay started criticizing the founding Republican People's Party.

*Çankaya* is the best known piece in which he addressed problems between Atatürk and other leaders of the independence struggle. It was first published in the newspaper *Dünya* in 1952 and the series were collected into a book in 1961. Although the book is sometimes regarded with disfavor since it was written a long time after the discussions and disputes it touched upon had ended, it still enable us to follow the critical line of the author from mid the 1920s until the 1960s. The following section provides a comparative outlook at how Falih Rıfki Atay started his critiques and where he ended up in the 1950s and 60s.

As discussed above, Falih Rıfki generally did not try to account for the imperial past, and gave preference focusing on the targets of the “new-Turkey”. The reason was obvious: it was not time to idle around and there were numerous reforms to realize. Nevertheless, as an intimate witness who had experienced both regimes, it was impossible for Falih Rıfki to stay neutral or indifferent to the Ottomans. In other words, the empire too got its share from Falih Rıfki's harsh criticism just like the Kemalist regime.

Two types of critiques given above indicate Atay's rather objective attitude in his writing. The first group was about the mistakes of the Republican regime and the unforeseen results of the top-down reforms. The second had to do with the clear distinction he drew between the institutions and their members as individuals. Many of the samples that will be presented below can be evaluated in the scope of both categories. Additionally, some date back to the late Ottoman period as well. It means that the criticisms of Atay against the administration, from time to time, included his early judgments about the decisions of the Ottoman statesmen or the state. For

instance, in *Zeytindağı*, he accused the late Ottoman statesmen of shortsightedness and criticized their incapability in state affairs. According to him, the late Ottoman administrators had damaged the independence of the empire since they had always felt responsible to imperialist powers when dealing even with the domestic affairs.

It is possible to encounter these comments in every single piece penned by Falih Rıfki but those in *Zeytindağı* deserve specific attention. Even though the book in question came on the market nearly a decade after 1923, *Zeytindağı* includes thought-provoking diagnoses about the problems of the Ottoman state. Atay's memoirs in the book mostly depend on his experience with the leaders of the CUP when he was under the charge of Cemal Paşa<sup>77</sup> on the Syrian front during the Great War. Atay's insistence on uncoupling the institutions and individuals from each other dates back to those days of war.

In the very first pages of *Zeytindağı*, Falih Rıfki Atay questioned the anomalies of *Meşrutiyet*, or the Second Constitutional Period, established after the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, and tried to explain how imprudent and short-sighted the CUP administration had been:

I do not know whether there has been another revolutionary political party in history that takes over the power and leaves the government to the statesmen of the ancien regime. The Community of Union and Progress did not deem the title of 'sadriazam' suitable for itself until midway through the Great War.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> He was one of the three leader pashas of the CUP with Enver and Talât. He commanded the Fourth Army of Ottomans during the Great War in Syria and Atay's acquaintanceship with the pasha comes from this front since he came under the command of Cemal who set up his military quarters at the top of "Zeytindağı" hill of Jerusalem during the battle.

<sup>78</sup> "Tarihte bütün bir devlet iktidarını teslim alıp ta, hükümeti eski devir adamlarına bırakan başka bir inkılâp fırkası olmuş mudur, bilmiyorum. İttihadı Terakki Büyük Harbin ortalarına kadar, her türlü sadriazamlığı kendine lâyük görmemiştir." (F. Atay, *Zeytindağı*, 17)

This is the introduction paragraph of a short passage titled “*Kukla*” (puppet) that tells the story of the abduction and execution of Kavaklı Mustafa, who murdered the former grand vizier, Mahmut Şevket Paşa in 1913. However, behind this execution case, Falih Rıfkı conveys the story in order to illustrate how dependent, on the surveillance of other great powers, such as Russia in this case, leaders at the top of state were in their decision making.

According to the story, Kavaklı Mustafa succeeded in escaping after assassinating Mahmut Şevket Paşa. The *Bab-ı Âli*<sup>79</sup>, with the collaboration of Azmi Bey, the chief of police at the time, decided to abduct Mustafa from the Russian ferry by which he was trying to flee to Romania. The strategy was not very complicated. Azmi Bey was supposed to arrest Kavaklı Mustafa before he leaves Bosphorus, but the problem was to pay the price to the Russians when they come to the Porte. The Ottomans had no authority to embark on such an activity on a foreign vessel and they thought that they might be brought to account for this operation before the Russian authorities. Azmi Bey came up with a simple solution. He argued that the incoming grand vizier, Said Halim Paşa, and Talât Bey should not be in İstanbul if they were to achieve their goal. The plan was accepted and the pashas went to Edirne for a while.<sup>80</sup>

Soon afterwards, they received news about the execution of Kavaklı Mustafa when they were at a formal dinner. The problems for the Ottoman Porte started just after the event. One day after the execution, the Russians expelled the chief of police from his job. The Ottoman government assigned Azmi Bey to Adana, as the governor of this city, in order to compensate for this. However Russians did not

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<sup>79</sup> Ottoman Sublime Porte that hosts the central government led by the grand vizier which was equivalent to the prime minister.

<sup>80</sup> Atay was one of the invitees of this short trip (F. Atay, Zeytindağı, 17-19).

accept the appointment, and they put pressure on the Ottoman government to dismiss Azmi Bey. In the end, Azmi Bey was prevented from doing public work again with the “commands” of Russian authorities.<sup>81</sup>

With the help of this short story, Atay presented his readers a concrete view of the Ottoman administrators and the CUP, who hesitated to act on their decisions without the approval of their foreign interlocutors although they held power. The incompetence of the government was also exemplified in the following pages of *Zeytindağı*. Atay’s personal observations on the Syrian front led him to question the legitimacy of going to war against the Allied powers; on top of it, on the side of the Germans.

The mistakes and failures of the Unionists will be discussed further below; but let me paraphrase the very insightful and synoptic paragraph that Atay put at the end of his book. The author, in one sense, laments that despite the massive effort made to wave the Ottoman flag in these provincial territories, similar energy had never been exerted to enrich and develop Anatolia to make it the homeland.<sup>82</sup> He wrote “The Turk has been used, appreciated and memorialized in the time of battle, but he has been forgotten in time peace”.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> “Hiç bir tarafı yapılmamış olan bir vatanın bayrağı Kahire’ye dikilmek için havaya giden bu enerji, boş Anadolu’yu zengin ve umranlı bir vatan yapmak için hiç bir vakit kullanılmadı” (F. Atay, *Zeytindağı*, 135).

<sup>83</sup> “Türk, harpte kullanılmış, kıymetlendirilmiş, destanlaştırılmış, sulhta ise bırakılmıştır” (F. Atay, *Zeytindağı*, 135).



## The Kemalist Rush

It has already been said that from the name of the new system of government to the ingredients of the Kemalist reforms, like the Hat Law or the brand-new civil-code adopted in lieu of *mecelle*, every single operation of the Republic set the West as its reference point. It would not be unfair to presuppose that the Western image in the minds of reformers was a totally idealized one which mostly depended on their naïve optimism about the institutions and relatively long-established regimes of the Europe.

The Ottoman state had initiated diplomatic contacts with the West several centuries before the Kemalist Revolution, and the modernization thrust which became flagrant in the *Lâle Devri*<sup>84</sup> had continued well into the twentieth century via different reformers and paths. Important reformations of the 19th century, like the *Tanzimat*<sup>85</sup> and the First and the Second Constitutional Period, might be evaluated separately, but what is undeniable for any student of Turkish modernization is that all these events signify areas on which Ottomans were involved in a form of relationships with the West before the Republic of Turkey was established.

Atay himself underlined in several places that 1923 marked the beginning of a subsequent stage of development, to be realized in the westernization path of

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<sup>84</sup> The time span commonly known as Tulip Period or Tulip Era experienced between the Treaty of Passarovitz in 1718 and Patrona Halil Revolt in September of 1730. The historical importance of the period for the scope of this study comes from modernization attempts of Ottomans in different spheres such as the launch of the first Ottoman printing press or Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi Efendi's assignment to France as ambassador by the sultan of the time Ahmet III.

<sup>85</sup> *Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerifi* or with its well-known title in English, The Imperial Edict of Reorganization which was proclaimed in 1839 with the initiative of the sultan Abdülmecid I, opened a totally new era in the empire because it brought about revolutionary changes like abolition of tax farming, conscription regulation for all citizens. For the first time the empire promised that it will guarantee the rights of all citizens independent of their ethnic or religious background, before the law.

Turkey.<sup>86</sup> Nonetheless, it was going to be highly difficult to ingrain the Kemalist reforms in the people, in spite of the former westernization and modernization experiences mentioned above. The lyrical quest for new education, accordingly a new citizen, modern attires, and especially urban planning projects were going to prove mercilessly how difficult it would be to realize the changings in question.

The ambitious reforms undertaken by the Kemalists required some time to be accepted by society. Nevertheless, elites like Falih Rıfki often believed that Atatürk was the driving force of the revolution and whatever was required, had to be done while he was still alive. In this study, anxiety that such an attitude of haste laid on the early Republican reformers is called “Kemalist Rush”. The discourse of rush, the researcher of the present study believes, provide a great convenience when the mentalities of devout reformers like Falih Rıfki Atay of the early Republican period are evaluated. While this idea sheds light on the error-prone characteristics of the Kemalist reforms which hurriedly were made one after another, it also gives a certain extent of opportunity to construe such a very eclectic, malleable and amorphous concept of Kemalism. Finally, this study argues that although Falih Rıfki Atay was one of the ardent promoters of the Kemalist Rush in his early writings in the 1920s, he took a milder position later, and continued his endless reforms suggestions throughout 1950s and 1960s, by which time he had learned from the previous mistakes.

Above passages, in which Atay mentioned the reactionary forces who were waiting for Gazi’s demise, while also cheering the reforms grudgingly were discussed. Indeed, just a few years after the republic was promulgated, the unforeseen results of the shiny cover of former plans and ideals were revealed. The

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<sup>86</sup> (F. Atay, Niçin Kurtulmamak?, 26)

urban planning projects for significant locations like Ankara had utterly failed.<sup>87</sup> The issue of afforestation in which the author had overindulged, was put aside and İstanbul became the city which suffered from this policy most.<sup>88</sup> In rural places, most of the legal reforms that were supposed to heal the social position of women did not make a difference.<sup>89</sup> On the top of that, the regime's indispensable principles, such as a secular life style, were not really embraced when practices like polygamy and bride prices were still in question.<sup>90</sup>

Atay's critique about the early Republic mostly began with the uncontrolled urban development, the devastation of historical sites, demolition of forestlands, and early rentiers of the regime, namely the corruption appeared when the cities, especially Ankara, were planned. The Republic had to deal with these. When we come to the 1950s, he moved on to retrospective reviews of the successes and failures of the regime and overall evaluations.

The story of a bigoted religious leader, provided below, was one of the most explicit instances by which Falih Rıfki criticized the failure of the regime in inculcating its principles to the masses. However, 1945-50 marked a significant political moment, namely the passage to a multiparty regime. It shed light on the author's nascent, critical perspective in early 1950s and 1960s. A break between the early criticisms towards the regime's tangible failures, like unplanned urbanization, and the later ones, which had more to do with foundational problems like the failed inculcation of Kemalist principles, are visible in Atay's writings.

Falih Rıfki renounced his deputyship in the GNA in 1950 and decided to establish his own, independent newspaper *Dünya*, in 1952. The widening gap

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<sup>87</sup> (F. Atay, *Niçin Kurtulmamak?*, 109)

<sup>88</sup> (F. Atay, *Roman*, 14-15)

<sup>89</sup> (F. R. Atay, *Bayrak*, 122)

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

between the author and the RPP was manifested long before the Democrat Party came to power. It was 1947 when he left the position of editor-in-chief of *Ulus* newspaper, which had for long been known as the voice of the RPP. Although Şirin points out *12 Temmuz Beyannamesi* (The declaration of 12th July), the declaration that the president of the republic had made so as to manage the tension between the Prime Minister Recep Peker and the leader of Democrat Party, Adnan Menderes, as the reason behind the conflict between Falih Rıfki and İsmet İnönü, Atay said that he had never liked İnönü.<sup>91</sup>

Indeed, the RPP had not been the political party of Mustafa Kemal since İnönü had given permission to the İmam-Hatip schools to open courses to teach fiqh.<sup>92</sup> In addition, Falih Rıfki said the policy that the RPP had followed after Mustafa Kemal was wrong. He wrote that “the RPP actually had been defeated in the general elections of 1946 and it was going to be impossible to win another”.<sup>93</sup> Concessions given to the opposition party DP and the more temperate attitudes of the other RPP members on controversial issues like curriculums of the İmam-Hatip schools may have been the final straw that triggered Falih Rıfki leaving the party and his position at the *Ulus*. That is why, the crux of the problem dated back to earlier times even if 1950 uncovered the existing break. After 1950, the author resigned from his position as a deputy in parliament. While he continuously and severely criticized the democrats, the discordance between the RPP and the author himself grew.

Funda Selçuk Şirin notes that Falih Rıfki was deeply concerned with the maintenance and future of the republican regime when he left *Ulus*. During the 1950 general elections, one of the most significant moments in Turkish political history,

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<sup>91</sup> (F. R. Atay, Bayrak, 18)

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> (F. R. Atay, Kurtuluş, 73)

the only solution for Atay to restore the stability in the political arena was to hang on to the Kemalist principles like secularism.<sup>94</sup> Şirin also argues that Falih Rıfki became a stricter Kemalist after 1950 and he relentlessly accused most of the RPP members of sacrificing Kemalist principles, especially secularism, for political causes. This statement leaving aside the question of whether Atay became a stricter Kemalist or not, has two significant implications.

One is that it actually shows that the early Republican intellectuals may not have been simply passive transmitters of the full-fledged ideology of Kemalism. They, rather, might have had different agendas, demands and dissatisfactions with the regime, although they were once and for all known as Kemalist pioneers. Second, criticisms of Atay on the RPP bring the question how many Kemalisms there were. In other words, if his opposition was not directed only towards the Democrat Party, but also to his previous colleagues in the RPP, is it possible to speak of a sole, Kemalism in the 1950s? Rather than giving a categorical answer of “No”, the rest of this section is dedicated to Atay’s earlier criticisms and tries to understand through which what kind of transformation they passed until the social and political context of the 1950 and 1960s multi-party environment.

Indeed, different Kemalist interpretations were not unknown to the Turkish political scene of 1920s. Suavi Aydın, giving reference to Yalçın Küçük, notes that what the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) promoted was nothing but Kemalism until 1927.<sup>95</sup> Another researcher points out the *Kadro* journal and movement as the “third-way” representation of Kemalism, which suggested an alternative

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<sup>94</sup> (Şirin, İmparatorluk'tan Cumhuriyete Bir Aydın: Falih Rıfki Atay, 415)

<sup>95</sup> Aydın, S. (2001). Sosyalizm ve Milliyetçilik: Galiyefizmeden. M. Belge, & A. İnel (eds.), in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik* (Vol. 4, p.438-447). İstanbul: İletişim p.444

development model to capitalism and communism.<sup>96</sup> This model, Kazancıgil asserts, tried to put the universal features, such the anti-imperialism of Kemalism, rather focusing on to its peculiarities. Again, another journal *Yön* and its movement which was initiated by, Turkish journalist and writer, Doğan Avcıoğlu during the 1960s were described as the socialist interpretations of Kemalism.<sup>97</sup>

While there are discussions of whether military interventions of the *27 Mayıs* (1960 Turkish Coup D'état) and the *12 Eylül* (1980 Turkish Coup D'état) were accompanied by restorations of the earlier Kemalisms,<sup>98</sup> there are also arguments that make distinctions between Kemalism and “Atatürkism”, which were encountered in Attilâ İlhan’s writings. According to İlhan, the Kemalists were unconditionally “Turkists, anti-imperialists and leftists just as Mustafa Kemal Pasha was”; whereas “Atatürkists were advocates of the West, compradors/capitalists and liberals”.<sup>99</sup> Finally Tanıl Bora and Yüksel Taşkın evaluate Peyami Safa’s writings such as *Türk İnkılâbına Bakışlar* (Reflections on the Turkish Revolution, 1938), as an early attempt at a conservative theorization of Kemalism.<sup>100</sup>

However, when we evaluate the period during which Falih Rıfkı loosened his ties with the RPP starting from the mid-1940s, what we mostly encounter is the opposition group who were not pleased with prime minister Recep Peker. This group who would be known as “moderates” (*mutediller*) later, consisted of deputies with

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<sup>96</sup> Kazancıgil, A. (2002). Anti-Emperyalist Bağımsızlık İdeolojisi ve Üçüncü Dünya Ulusçuluğu Olarak Kemalizm. A. İnel (ed.), in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm* (Vol. 2, p.235-237). İstanbul: İletişim. p.245

<sup>97</sup> Alpkaya, F. (2002). Bir 20. Yüzyıl Akımı: "Sol Kemalizm". A. İnel (ed.), in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm* (Vol. 2, p.477-500). İstanbul: İletişim. p.478

<sup>98</sup> Mazıcı, N. (2002). 27 Mayıs, Kemalizm Restorasyonu mu? A. İnel (ed.), in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm* (Vol. 2, p. 555-557). İstanbul: İletişim; Taşkın, Y. (2002). 12 Eylül Atatürkçülüğü ya da Bir Kemalist Restorasyon Teşebbüsü Olarak 12 Eylül. A. İnel(ed.), in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm* (Vol. 2, p.570-573). İstanbul: İletişim.

<sup>99</sup> İlhan, A. (2002). Kemalizm Müdafaa'i Hukuk Doktrini. A. İnel (ed.), in *Türkiye'de Modern Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm* (Vol 2, p. 518-528). İstanbul: İletişim. p.527

<sup>100</sup> Bora, T., & Taşkın, Y. (2002). Sağ Kemalizm. A. İnel(ed.), in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm* (Vol. 2, p. 529-545). İstanbul: İletişim. p.530

whom Falih Rıfki had not got along well. He found Peker's government rather decisive and uncompromising in terms of protecting the Kemalist reforms. In this respect, although he had not given his support to this group in his writings, Atay gave a signal of confirmation to the decisive group, who were being called "extremes" (*müfritler*). However, the moderate succeeded at overthrowing Peker's government with their vote of no confidence in 1947. After this point, Falih Rıfki found writing for *Ulus* meaningless, and increased his criticisms. He broke away from the party at the end of this period. Ultimately, what makes Atay's later criticisms of the 1950s and 1960s different from his early reviews is their Kemalist reference that the author tried to remind his readers, thinking that Kemalist idea had sunk into oblivion after the death of Mustafa Kemal.

Following are some observations he made about the capital and largest city of Slovenia, Ljubljana, and the Turkish town of Bolu, which Falih Rıfki Atay represented in the Grand National Assembly. In the passage I am going to cite from *Tuna Kıyıları* (Danube Shores, 1938), specific attention is given to forestland and the prosperous forest industry in Slovenia. The excerpts below are significant in terms of making sense of the strategy that the author has utilized in the earlier writings.

We are looking at the city from top of the hill that we climbed with difficulty. It is full of forests! I thought that, one day, the civilized and felicitous Bursa must be as green as Slovenia. The inhabitants there work in the forest industries. A similar forestland which was demolished in Bolu -because of the building contractors and the villagers who cut down trees to allocate some fields for their crops- constitutes the heavenly beauty of nature in Slovenia and provides prosperity for its natives.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> "...Döne dolaşa çıktığımız bir dik tepeden şehri seyrediyoruz. Her taraf orman! Kendi kendime, medeni ve mesud Bolu'nun böyle olması lazım geldiğini düşünüyorum. Bunlar dahi ağaçlarla ve o ağaçların tahta ve kimya serveti ile geçinmektedirler. Bolu'da tahrib olunan -ah müteahhidler ve köy baltası- orman burada, Slovenya tabiatının eşsiz güzelliğini ve Slovenya halkının saadetini yapıyor" Atay, F. (1938). *Tuna Kıyıları*. İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi. p.98

According to Atay, Turks had not only cut down their forest, also they had not striven to learn essential knowledge about how to make use of their natural resources. The Slovenians, on the other hand, inherited the forestry from Austrians and made immense contribution to this tradition rather than simply contenting themselves with old-fashioned methods. The story of the development of the Slovenian forestry industry was described by Atay only with the hope of serving as a good model for Turkey. It says something more about the reforms within Turkey; and shows its appreciation of foundational principles such as the insistence of the Kemalist regime on a secular and scientific education. Atay criticizes the anti-environmentalist politics of the regime in Bolu and appreciates the secular educational practices of the same administration within the same passage:

In this country (Yugoslavia), the backwardness was represented by the Turkish and Albanian Muslims. The Yugoslavs generate tourism income from their fez, minarets, fountains, bazaars, and even sidewalks on which grass grows. The Turks of Yugoslavia are educated in *medrese* here, and they apparently could not learn to integrate into this economy with their education. As is clearly seen, the *medreses* still darken the Muslim world outside Turkey, where these schools have already been abolished.<sup>102</sup>

As was seen in this example, Falih Rıfkı started with a general phenomenon that could be comparable between Turkey and another country, and then he applied the issues with the very unique problems that Turks would have to face sooner or later. The underdeveloped and miserable situation of the Turks in Yugoslavia contrasted with both the Slovenians and the Turks of Turkey so as really to answer

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<sup>102</sup> “Bu memlekette geriliği bilhassa Arnavud ve Türk Müslümanlığı temsil ediyor. Yugoslavya, onların da fesleri, minareleri, şadırvanları, iptidai çarşıları, çarşafı ve ot biten kaldırımları ile turizm ticareti yapmaktadır. Türkiye dışında, Türk hürriyeti demek, onu her türlü inkişaftan alıkoyan medrese hâkimiyetinin hürriyeti demektir” (F. Atay, Tuna Kıyıları, 99).



the question of where Turks were, when we criticize our own government for its failures and mismanagement.

Similar types of examples of comparisons the Turkish diaspora and Turks in the homeland are also encountered in the late pieces of the author. However, those penned in the mid-1960s, such as *Atatürkçülük Nedir* (What is Kemalism?), generally are aimed at the justification of the early Republican regime. In the mentioned book, for instance, Atay shares the photograph of a dozen Turk, who had come from Komotini, Greece<sup>103</sup> to visit Athens in March, 1966. This is the photo of a dozen of men wearing traditional clothes like fez and rawhide sandals. The note accompanying to the photo in bold type, says that “If there were not the revolutions of Atatürk, we would have been like these Turks (from Komotini), today”.<sup>104</sup>

This comment and the example cited here might look as if they are in utter conflict with the former argument on the sensitivity and critical thinking of Atay in the late writings of 1950s and 1960s. This study argued above that as time passed, Falih Rıfkı became more critical of the new regime on the grounds that the subsequent cadres after Atatürk gave concessions to opponent groups, some of which openly supported sharia and the ancien regime. What happened then and what made Falih Rıfkı consider it necessary to praise the Kemalist reforms, independent of how damaged and weaken they were, as the author himself continually complained? The answer can only be given within the political context of the 1960s, during which the debate on Kemalism reached its apex.

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<sup>103</sup> A city in the northeast of Greece of which considerable amount of Muslims have been living. People who were mentioned in the photograph are the ones who did not come to Turkey after population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923.

<sup>104</sup> “Eğer, Atatürk İnkılâpları olmasa idi biz de bu gün böyle olacaktık” Atay, F. (1966). *Atatürkçülük Nedir?* İstanbul: AK Yayınları. (The photo in question was inserted between pages 32-33 as separate sheet)

The student movements and the vibrant political environment of the post-1960s coup ushered in a relatively liberal environment in Turkey. A significant increase in both the numbers and quality of political actors with the new Constitution of 1961,<sup>105</sup> introduced following the military intervention in May 1960. Kemalism was one of the most contentious topics of the period; and its followers split into different camps like left-Kemalism or right-Kemalism, celebrated by different political factions and youth organizations.

Kemalism and Atatürk were not the sole topics of discussions. The struggle to determine the historical status and place of Turkey in the process of modernization was another popular debate.

Given this environment, it is interesting to observe that 40 years after the Kemalist revolution in 1966, Falih Rıfkı Atay still found it necessary to prepare a book titled *Atatürkçülük Nedir?* (What is Kemalism?).

The prologue of *Atatürkçülük Nedir?* indicates Atay's intention in the mid-1960s. It starts with a parable from the history of early Christianity and highlights its similarity with the fate of Kemalism.

It is time to remember a historical parable. Sixty years after the demise of Jesus Christ, several Christians in Sidon said that 'Everyone has abandoned the teachings of Jesus. We shall obey and retain him in our manners and way of living'. Eventually, both the mentioned Christians and their followers were executed by hanging, on the grounds that they all had corrupted the religion. Kemalism so started wandering from its original identity gradually because of both left and right movements of thoughts. It is the bulwark of the communists on the left and of the Ayasofyacılar<sup>106</sup> on the right. Twenty-eight

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<sup>105</sup> See the full version of the 1961 "Constitution of the Turkish Republic" in the link: <http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/1961constitution-text.pdf>

<sup>106</sup> A group of people generally with Islamist and conservative political orientations in Turkey has long been campaigning for converting the museum status of Hagia-Sophia into the mosque and they are known as *Ayasofyacılar*. See one recent example for such pedantic discussions that became unending clichés in Turkish politics:

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/blog-before-converting-hagia-sophia-look-at-the-mosque-cathedral-of-cordoba.aspx?pageID=238&nID=67578&NewsCatID=339>

years have passed since his demise. From 1923 until his death, I was with him and wrote for his newspaper as the editor-in-chief. In order to elucidate the real Kemalism to the youth of today, I have embarked on writing this book.<sup>107</sup>

The analogy that Falih Rıfkı made between the course of Christianity and the current situation of Kemalism raises important questions. As time passed, institutions, no matter how well-thought-of they are, can go astray. They might even bring hazardous structures forth from within their own development. Falih Rıfkı implied that Kemalism had gone astray. Despite its leader Mustafa Kemal and his reliable comrades who had made an immense effort to establish the principles of the new Turkey, how the regime had developed made Falih Rıfkı think of the shortcomings of the Kemalist revolution and its dilemmas.

The early writings of Atay featured critiques or denouncements of the ancien regime. The target that the author chose was the every single so-called eastern, backward, and corrupt institution/tradition/rituals of the Ottomans. The morals of the East (the phenomenon of East usually signifies its Muslim character) that does not permit eastern societies to separate religious and moral considerations from social relationships was one of them.<sup>108</sup> The legitimacy of governmental posts that were either sold or offered unlawfully (the reign of Abdulhamit the Second is often cited when Falih Rıfkı compared the experiences of foreign countries) was another one.<sup>109</sup> The inability of the weak-minded sultans and their crown princes who led to the deterioration of the empire was yet another.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> (F. Atay, Atatürkçülük Nedir?, 7)

<sup>108</sup> (F. Atay, Denizaşırı, 14)

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. p.80

<sup>110</sup> (F. Atay, Niçin Kurtulmamak?, 15)

In short, the common denominator of all these calamities was the imperial system. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, in Atay's writing, the problem was the Ottoman institutions. Now, it was time to scrutinize, if not reckon with, Kemalism, while protecting the origins of the Kemalist revolution.

The early years of the Republican regime were very much celebrated and the Kemalist Revolution was admired internationally. Indeed, regardless of the new Turkey's voluntary quest to modernize and develop its economy with a statist onslaught led by the constituent power the RPP, in the 1920s the Islamic world itself underwent two developments with the Kemalist revolution. First of all, the abolition of caliphate strikingly proved that Islam did not need a caliph to survive. Second, Turkey's experience with secularism showed that Islam did not need a state to live, either.<sup>111</sup>

The Kemalist elite broke the relationship between Islam and jurisdiction, but this did result in the death of religion.<sup>112</sup> One way or another, Kemalism succeeded at protecting both these departments and it always deserved to be remembered with its ideological and institutional originalities. Soon afterwards, the regime started to be undermined during the interwar period because of both external factors such as the Great Depression and the emergence of the intrinsic limits of Kemalism itself.<sup>113</sup>

Plaggenborg underlines the markers by which we can follow the erosion within the regime. *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (Liberal Republican Party), according to him, knocked down the naïve belief of the founding cadres about the absolute and everlasting support of the Turkish masses for the Republican principles. Furthermore, although the Kemalists had successfully removed the previous capitulations with the

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<sup>111</sup> Plaggenborg, S. (2014). *Tarihe Emretmek Kemalist Türkiye, Faşist İtalya, Sosyalist Rusya*. İstanbul: İletişim. p.426

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p398-426

<sup>113</sup> (Plaggenborg, 184-194)

Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923; their statist approach to the economy had destroyed the trust of foreign investors.<sup>114</sup> This created a dilemma between the independent character of the regime and developmental desire of Kemalists. The Republican administration nationalized the number of companies with operations in Turkey. The Kemalists have revealed their anti-imperialist characters with re-purchasing the concessions once given to foreign companies and supported the approach with other nationalistic campaigns such as *Vatandaş, Türkçe Konuş!* (Citizen, Speak Turkish!) in the 1930s or *Varlık Vergisi* (The Capital Tax) in the early 1940s. However, these all fell short of their expectations and did not forestall their overthrow from the power in 1950.

The Developments in question gained speed and led Falih Rıfkı to ask more questions about the problems of the intrinsic Kemalist regime. What was the problem with the regime? The titles of the books he wrote in 1950s and 1960s directly address this question: *Niçin Kurtulmamak* (1953), *İnanç* (Belief) (1965), *Roman* (Novel) (1952), and *Atatürkçülük Nedir* (What is Kemalism) (1966).

It should be noted that Falih Rıfkı did not go over the details of what the Kemalist Rush or the miscalculations of the regime. Rather, he shared his experience with individuals and sometimes uncertain group of people on the grounds that they either over or under estimate the principles of the regime or misinterpreted them. This is exactly the reason why these small books and some other memoirs like *Çankaya* (1984) and *Zeytindağı* (1993) are utilized in this chapter.

One of the most frequently encountered criticisms of Atay in his books throughout the 1950s was a figure who either misunderstood the principles of Kemalism or misinterpreted, sometimes intentionally, the Republic.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid. p.187

## “31 Mart Hakkı” A Bigoted Religious Leader

Specific military officers, politicians and different groups of reactionary journalists constituted the characters that Falih Rıfki had criticized. However, the figure on target sometimes was an ordinary person on the street. In *Roman*, for instance, a bigoted religious leader who is preaching a sermon on how the sharia and democracy resemble each other are shown. Falih Rıfki identified this imam in Erenköy Vatan Kulübü<sup>115</sup> for the first time. The author visited the club with an intermediary<sup>116</sup> who showed him around İstanbul to help him find an interesting topic to write about.

This imam, as the author heard from the intermediary, was one of the most ardent propagators of the *31 Mart Vakası*<sup>117</sup>, with papers he had written for the newspaper *Volkan*. This publication had been infamous with its inciting news about the March insurrection of 1909. The imam, according to Atay’s companion, was such a significant figure for the gazette that he was called “*31 Mart Hakkı*” (31 March Hakkı) among the inner circle. After the War of Independence, he had shaved his beard and put on modern clothes; then he had started preaching sermons on democracy and its requirements. Hakkı informed the members of *Vatan Kulübü* about democracy. According to him “democracy means decency, it means showing respect

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<sup>115</sup> No English translation available; and there is no information about the club in the literature.

<sup>116</sup> Türkçe baskıda “*tellal*” olarak geçen sözcüğün çevirisi için “intermediary” ifadesini uygun buldum. Sözü geçen tellal, genellikle İstanbul’un farklı yerlerindeki taşınmazları pazarlamaya çalışarak esasen emlak komisyonculuğu yapmaktadır. Falih Rıfki da roman yazmak için konu aradığını söylediği vakit, bu davetsiz misafir uygun bir yol arkadaşı olmuşa benziyor.

<sup>117</sup> 31 March Incident is the counter coup of various groups in opposition against the CUP just after the restoration of the *Meşrutiyet* (the Second Constitutional Period). The insurrection was put down by Ottoman Third Army, commonly known as “Action Army”. Bernard Lewis notes that it is known as “*Kurtuluş Ordusu*” or Hareket Ordusu. Lewis, B. (1984). *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu

See also following resources that are elucidating the reasons and background of the counter revolution: Hanioglu, Ş. (2008). *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Macfie, A. (1998). *The End of the Ottoman Empire 1908-1923*. Longman: London.

to elders and to keep one's (he warns the younger interlocutors there!) place, and it is the true sharia".<sup>118</sup>

The intermediary said that the imam now indicated his disfavor with the habits of people that he did not see as compatible with democracy. Whereas, people were well aware of the fact that Hakkı was also dissatisfied with the same habits when he had been preaching the sharia.<sup>119</sup> That is why the imam was making a fuss about social behaviors of especially youth and became furious when discussing women and men wearing swimsuits on the beach.

The intermediary tried to illustrate the imam's changing position with the following words: "Take each of the articles that 31 Mart Hakkı has written in *Volkan*. Replace the words "sharia" with "democracy", and the word "God" with "*millet*"; then it looks like as the ones written nowadays".<sup>120</sup>

The fascinating passage continued with Hakkı's harsh accusations and degradation of another member of the *Vatan Kulübü*, Halit Efendi. Halit Efendi was one of the prominent and younger delegates of the club. Falih Rıfkı did not give reference there, but Halit was probably a man of letters, too. His young, healthy character, secular mindset and materialistic ideas which are overtly felt in his writings, led Falih Rıfkı and his companion to call this young man "29 Ekim Halit" (29 October Halit).<sup>121</sup> The historical connotation of "29 Ekim" against "31 Mart" represents every single virtue and acquisition which have accompanied by the Kemalist Revolution.

During the sermon of imam Hakkı, Halit's membership to the club was cancelled through a pseudo vote while he was absent. The story did not end there.

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<sup>118</sup> (F. Atay, Roman, 39)

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. p.40

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. p.40

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. p.107-110

Towards the end of the book, Halit comes to the club with several revolutionary comrades and kindly requests Hakkı, his supporters and all other, so called reactionary, constituents to walk out of Vatan Kulübü.<sup>122</sup> In short, he overcomes the rule of 31 Mart Hakkı just as the Ottoman rule was once superseded by the Republic of Turkey. The young revolutionary Halit and Falih Rıfkı Atay later exchange letters with each other and Atay puts the hot-heated letter of Halit and his response at the end of *Roman*.

On the evening of the house-cleaning, while Atay admired the young Kemalist for demolishing a reactionary elements of the club, he was not able desist from warning that “in politics, it is always more difficult to know one’s place than protecting his/her life”.<sup>123</sup> In other words, Falih Rıfkı associates the hasty and hot-blooded character of the young man with immaturity. Halit was informed about this claim and urgently wrote a letter that accused Falih Rıfkı of laziness and opportunism, which resulted in hindering the revolution. Falih Rıfkı, in his response, reminds that the revolution is not realized just in the big metropolis like İstanbul and advises him not to act impulsively.

Erenköy is not a real *köy* (village).<sup>124</sup> I wish that the army of conquest<sup>125</sup> -the term that Halit used in his letters to refer to Kemalist cadres, mostly youth-could conquer a real village. It is not a problem to kick blind followers out of Erenköy. Insects, wooden plow, malaria, the Asia, and whatever represent the primitiveness continues in the Anatolian villages.<sup>126</sup>

The message of Atay is clear: if İstanbul has a revolutionary army of conquest that is asking for an arch of triumph under which he will cross, it can no more be the army

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid. p.110

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. p.110

<sup>124</sup> “*Köy*” means village and Falih Rıfkı underlines that the district of Erenköy is not actually a village although its name is carrying the word “*köy*”. It is rather a very central district in İstanbul.

<sup>125</sup> “The army of conquest” makes a reference to the letter of Halil and what the term characterizes is definitely the Kemalist cadres.

<sup>126</sup> (F. Atay, *Roman*, 112)



of conquest when there are thousands of acres that the revolutions have not arrived yet all around Anatolia.

This approach of Atay says much more than his admiration. One of the most substantial issues within the extent of this study is to signify that Falih Rıfkı, as a forerunner the militant of Kemalist Revolution and representative of the insurgent reforms referred to here as the Kemalist Rush, has realized that the Kemalist cadres did make some serious mistakes from the very early stages of their struggle.

First of all, it seems that they could hardly make the revolution and its principles public. Huge numbers of people who either misinterpreted the republic or deliberately distorted the principles of the revolution for their own interests (as in the case of Hakkı) created this sad but true reality. Second, Atay knew that the Kemalist reforms had not reached the anticipated success in the provinces and villages. The strong existence of reactionary mindset in the middle of Istanbul, as the imam displayed, must have astounded the author.

It might be helpful to remember here how the author criticized the young civil servants who did not want to work in the less developed and moderate towns of Anatolia.<sup>127</sup> This criticism was an important issue in *Denizaşırı* in 1927. He continued to criticize the problems within the new Turkey until the late 1960s. And *Roman* was the first step in this long journey.

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<sup>127</sup> (F. Atay, *Denizaşırı*, 4-5)

It has already been said that Falih Rıfıkı made a clear distinction between institutions and their members when he criticized them. Atay's examples of the bigoted, fanatic and sometimes imperceptive figures of the early Republic similarly targets individuals rather than institutions. Nevertheless, the names in question held high positions at the time the Turkish nation state was being constructed.

The CUP was the first example in Atay's list, if we are to observe the distinctions between institutions and their members. The title of this section was inspired by the very first pages of *Zeytindağı* (1932) in which the author argues what an awkward and ambiguous adjective “*ittihatçı*” was. His acquaintance with this idiom started after he began writing in the newspaper *Tanin* in 1913 which was strongly affiliated with the CUP. He also had the chance to get to know the Turkist leaders of the CUP such as Ziya Gökalp thanks to this occupation. The poet Tevfik Fikret, the lead-writer Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, and Babanzade İsmail Hakkı were other members of this elite political group.

Thanks to this invaluable experience, Atay had the opportunity to contribute to the nationalist cause before the Great War broke out. That is why *Tanin* (and the CUP, to which it was connected consequently) was probably one of the best environments in which a young, nationalist journalist in 1912 would like to be engaged. However, throughout the war, the CUP was not a monolithic structure. It seems to have broken into different factions.

Hence, Falih Rıfıkı argues that it was no longer appropriate to call someone “*ittihatçı*” during the Great War. *İttihatçı* could only be used to refer to “anonymous”

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<sup>128</sup> “Unionist” is the word that I prefer to use in this study in exchange for “*ittihatçı*”. Unionist is the name given to the members of Community of Union and Progress.

and “insignificant elements of the party”.<sup>129</sup> This anonymity has obstructed the understanding of the members of the party individually. During the Armistice period, being known as an *ittihatçı* became more problematic. The unionists were kept under the rigid surveillance of the British so as to preempt their probable reactions to the Mudros Armistice. Falih Rıfkı was himself arrested and taken to the court during this period on the grounds that he supported the national struggle in his newspaper column. Fortunately, he was able to get free from the prison before the final verdict was given, thanks to ongoing success of Kemalists in Anatolia. However, the worst was yet to come.

During the war Mustafa Kemal kept himself aloof from the CUP and when he succeeded in the Independence Struggle, the popularity of the Unionists declined. What we call the official history today has returned the verdict on the CUP leaders and put the blame on the *ittihatçı* pashas for getting the Ottoman state into the Great War. Atay agreed with this. Although he worked with Cemal Pasha on the Syria front and with Talât Pasha after returning from the Fourth Army in Zeytindağı he took every opportunity to give each pasha his share and distinguishes the collective responsibilities of the Community of Union and Progress from individual mistakes or sometimes successes, too.

After the Young Turk Revolution, the promulgation of the First Constitution encouraged the CUP leaders to make ambitious demands. The idea of not leaving Crete to the Greeks, not recognizing the independence of Bulgaria, taking back Bosnia-Herzegovina from Austria Hungary, Falih Rıfkı thought indicated nothing but the irredentist claims of the CUP members.<sup>130</sup> Consequently, when Atatürk became disengaged with the community, Falih Rıfkı Atay followed him. However, both

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<sup>129</sup> (F. Atay, Zeytindağı, 39)

<sup>130</sup> (F. Atay, Çankaya, 53)

*Çankaya* and *Zeytindağı* give the impression that the author was somehow not comfortable with the over generalizations and accusations about the CUP and the republican transformation in general.

*Çankaya* opens with a justification of why and how the author decided to write this book: “Atatürk’s term has been exploited in the hands of those who have a tendency to introduce themselves different from what they actually were, since 1950”.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, he contends that most of the memoirs published since 1946 either showed deceased people as their witnesses or used rumors that nobody had heard as truths. The most significant sufferer of mentioned manipulations, not surprisingly, was Atatürk. The book was dedicated to him.

On the other hand, Atay showed a similar sensitivity for the reputed pashas of the CUP. First of all, he clearly puts that Unionists were not traitors.

We (Ottoman Empire) entered into the Great War not because of greed but of ignorance. We were not sold to Germans. Unionists were not traitors. All of its leaders died badly-off, helplessly, with the inimical bullets. Unfortunately, they were incapable of making long-term plans and they did not have the necessary authority to realize their decisions as well.<sup>132</sup>

This passage could be read as the conclusion that the author came up with after working together with the leader cadres of the community for many years (Enver Pasha may not be included in this picture since Falih Rıfkı did not work under his command). However, for every pasha in question, Falih Rıfkı had some criticism and he treated each separately.

Albeit he worked several years with Cemal Pasha and wrote one of his most popular book, *Zeytindağı*, when he was under his command, the criticism of the

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid. p.7

<sup>132</sup> (F. Atay, *Çankaya*, 120-121)

author mostly addressed the biggest competitor of Mustafa Kemal, Enver Pasha.

Atay's anger with Enver can be observed in other memoirs of the author as well.<sup>133</sup>

Atay sees Enver Pasha as one of the most fervent supporters of the war and describes him as a man of detrimental ambitions and chaos. In contrast, Atatürk was the symbol of foresight. "If Mustafa Kemal had been the war minister in 1914, the Ottoman state would not have entered into the Great War".<sup>134</sup> Enver was also an ardent supporter of Pan-Islamist thought, which Falih Rıfkı cited as one of the two different imperialisms of the Constitutional regime (*Meşrutiyet Türkiyesi*) with Pan-Turanism.<sup>135</sup>

Sometimes, Atay compared Enver with other two pashas of the CUP. In these passages, his effort to put Enver in a different place vis-à-vis Cemal and Talât is clear:

In 1914, the air of İstanbul was inundated with Enver; it was either lighting up or getting dark with him... I realized that even Talât Bey, whom I worked with as his personal secretary was overshadowed by Enver. Actually, I have never appreciated him as an intellectual. For me, the liberties and freedoms like thought, life, woman that our youth was seeking, could only be expected from Cemal Pasha and the ones, if there are, who had a similar mindset with him. Enver could only retain the settled order of Muslim dark ages... No, the victory of Germans was not enough to save Turkey. What we needed was to get rid of both Enver and Germans together.<sup>136</sup>

In the introduction of *Zeytindağı*, Falih Rıfkı notes that the book received much criticism after the first edition had been published in 1932 on the grounds that the author had spoken ill of the deceased Cemal Pasha. Rather than defending himself lengthily, he chose to put several reviews of admitted writers and critics such

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<sup>133</sup> (F. Atay, Çankaya, p.114; Zeytindağı, p.29; Niçin Kurtulmamak?, p.6)

<sup>134</sup> (F. Atay, Niçin Kurtulmamak?, 6)

<sup>135</sup> (F. Atay, Çankaya, 80)

<sup>136</sup> (F. Atay, Zeytindağı, 28-29)

as Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu and Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın at the beginning of the later editions.

He had no intention to put the blame on Enver Pasha and to acquit Cemal and Talât from the massive crisis that the Empire had drifted towards. In several places, the author reminds that neither Cemal nor Talât Pasha had been his benefactor during his career.<sup>137</sup> He did not see even the necessity to dedicate a book to any figures of the Second Constitutional Period.<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, we observe that the author focused on the more humane aspects and virtues of a few pashas, such as Talât, in comparison with Enver. In *Çankaya* for instance, we encounter Cemal and Talât as humble and patriotic figures who made immense contribution to the independence struggle led by Mustafa Kemal although they left the country during the Armistice Period.

Falih Rıfki argues that “these unionist leaders were men of honor even if there were millionaires raised under their patronage”.<sup>139</sup> Talât Pasha, for example, did not want to move into the mansion reserved for the grand vizier. He justified his decision saying that “it would be difficult to abdicate later”.<sup>140</sup> Elsewhere, Talât again refuses to take the bread offered by the quartermaster general (*levazım reisi*), saying that he wanted to purchase bread from the bakery, just as everyone else did.<sup>141</sup>

What we have seen there, is not only the distinction of institutions from their members, but also the distinction the author made between the professional liabilities of individuals and their characters. Talât Pasha, who was praised for his sober-

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<sup>137</sup> (Ediboğlu, p.27; F. Atay, *Çankaya* 1984).

<sup>138</sup> (F. Atay, *Zeytindağı*, 7)

<sup>139</sup> (F. Atay, *Çankaya*, 122)

<sup>140</sup> (F. Atay, *Çankaya*, 122)

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* p.122

mindful, populist behavior above, is criticized when he came to the agreement with Enver about getting in to the Great War.<sup>142</sup>

Similarly, Funda Selçuk Şirin, giving reference to the memoirs of Cemal Pasha too, argues that Atay tries to show the more skeptical and critical attitude of Cemal towards the relocation of the Armenians while Talât and Enver were intent on it.<sup>143</sup>

Underlining characteristics of individuals and their occupational responsibilities separately is somehow compatible with Atay's own demeanor. In an interview from the mid-1940s, he described how disparate his colleagues and close friends that he spent time with. "Even though I enter into the most adamant discussions with some people, nothing prevented me from greeting them respectfully when we meet".<sup>144</sup>

It may not be surprising to see a popular intellectual like Atay communicating with various groups and representatives of the different ideologies while he is still known as a populist disseminator of the Kemalist ideology. But this would be a too simplistic account of Atay's immense effort to be an objective narrator of recent history. Did he really try drawing the strict, sharp lines for the framework of what we broadly call Kemalism today? Was Falih Rıfki a passive conductor of the six arrows once shot haphazardly from the revolutionary center? Was he simply educated and equipped by the revolutionary cadres with the weapons of the newly established nation state? The answer to all these questions is probably negative.

Just as Atatürk and the revolutionary visions he brought about were not so, Falih Rıfki Atay was not just a product of the young Republic of Turkey. Albeit the republic defined Western civilization as a target, there were at least a hundred years

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<sup>142</sup> (F. Atay, Çankaya, 343)

<sup>143</sup> (Şirin, İmparatorluk'tan Cumhuriyete Bir Aydın: Falih Rıfki Atay, 85)

<sup>144</sup> (Ediboğlu, 26)

of experience in modernization upon which the Kemalists built. Atay's search for appropriate methods of modernization did not necessarily make him a strict Kemalist and a passive carrier of the early state ideology.

First of all, Falih Rıfki was aware of a range of alternatives other than western democracies and dictatorships to be taken as model for development.<sup>145</sup> For instance, at the beginning of the century, Young Turks were inspired by the Japanese victory over the Russians. The modernization experiences of the Japans and Turks are compared by Falih Rıfki, and he ardently acclaimed Japan for its success. After the country was awakened through the Western pressure, the new Japan became one of the strongest countries within just forty years.<sup>146</sup> In addition, his voyage to India in the early 1940s somehow dislocates views that perceived Atay's a simple sign of the early Republic's quest for the Western model.

Beyond the quest to observe the best development model for Turkey and situate the country among its contemporaries, Falih Rıfki made very interesting suggestions to the republican administration and to Turkish society as well. A new lifestyle that puts forward pleasures like vacation, demand for reorganizing religious practices according to necessities of contemporary everyday life, and emancipatory views on the question of women in underdeveloped societies hovered around the blurred edges of the Kemalist ideology.

Other researchers also pointed out at this point, Kemalism had never been a strict ideology which had unchangeable principles.<sup>147</sup> When defining the term

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<sup>145</sup> The author's travels to Russia and Italy were already discussed. We know that he classifies the dictatorships as the Western and Eastern type. That is why it would be mistaken to argue that Atay simply chooses the Western democracies as the matchless alternatives although he has always appreciated the Western institutions and the view of life of Western people. *Taymis Kıyıları* (1934) and *Tuna Kıyıları* (1938) constitute the main travel books that mentioned leaning of the author could intensely be traced.

<sup>146</sup> (F. Atay, *Atatürkçülük Nedir?*, 18-23)

<sup>147</sup> (Yeğen, 2002; Belge, 2002; Aytürk, 2011; Kazancıgil, 2002)



Kemalism in the broadest sense, Aytürk claims that it is “...an eclectic framework of political, economic and social views to aid in the construction of a nation-state on the remains of the Ottoman Empire”.<sup>148</sup> On the other hand, Belge argues that even the “...six principles known as *Altı Ok* are very much open to discussion”.<sup>149</sup> If there was not a sole ideology of Kemalism and this “eclectic” construction was open to clinch on to other political discourses and practices, how did Falih Rıfkı’s suggestions correspond to the political agenda that early Republican regime followed?

As discussed above, most of the suggestions that Atay made were neither realized nor taken into consideration by the Kemalist circles. However, just this situation insinuates that Atay’s proposals fell out of the mainstream discourses of Kemalism. For that reason alone, Falih Rıfkı’s writings deserve attention. Among the proposals, those related to issue of religion and women come to the fore as the most contentious problems of Turkish modernization. The following chapter is dedicated to Atay’s contributions to and differences from the Kemalist state ideology.

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<sup>148</sup> (Aytürk, 309)

<sup>149</sup> (Belge, 38)

## CHAPTER III

### DIVING INTO THE ACHILLES HEEL: REAWAKING THE ISSUE OF ISLAM AND WOMEN IN MODERN TURKEY

Falih Rıfıkı Atay was never content with the state of Kemalist revolutions and administrative reforms. According to him, the reforms constructed by the state elite had to be embraced by society. This was the only condition for the perpetuation of the new regime.

Westernization can only be realized when it is absorbed by the masses. Otherwise nothing is achieved when you send the police on lawbreakers and zealots... A revolution may be started from the top, but it can never hold on to its ideals and targets when they remain among the elite circles.<sup>150</sup>

Accordingly, Atay always found it important to disseminate his knowledge and espoused Kemalism to the masses. This is what other scholars have also observed so far.<sup>151</sup>

The dissemination of Kemalist principles and the new legal reforms which radically affected the everyday lives of the ordinary citizen took up a significant place on Atay's agenda, as observed in his travel books and memoirs. The discourse of "immobility" which was discussed above, was just enough to understand how crucial the issue was for him.

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<sup>150</sup> (F. Atay, *Gezerek Gördüklerim*, 37)

<sup>151</sup> (Durna 2009; Şirin, 2014)

However, there seems to be a missing dimension in this picture. As argued at the end of the previous chapter, presumptions that put the early Republican intellectuals into the straitjacket of certain narrow forms of Kemalism, left no room for alternative approaches that may have a more balanced and sensitive attitude towards Kemalist regime starting from the very beginning of its foundation. Although the early Republican intellectuals are often labelled as absolute and so-called infallible disseminators of Kemalist ideology, it is indeed difficult to encounter such consistent figures when their writings are closely examined. And Falih Rıfkı Atay was no exception.

For instance, he had more radical suggestions and solutions for the unsolved issues of the country that the new-born republic and Mustafa Kemal himself faced. Religious affairs, and specifically worshipping practice of the masses, were topics where Atay developed his most radical ideas and suggestions. While the author repudiated prohibitions of Islam, he also insisted on new forms of religious practices, such as performing *namaz* (salaah) on foot, with regard to the necessities of the modern era. Such ideas could not have been propagated even among the most progressive revolutionary circles of 1930s. In addition, it must be noted that laicism, which was one of the six principles of the Kemalist regime, has never been interpreted as radical as Atay intended in the early Republic.

As well known, recent critics of Kemalism have associated its principle of laicism in terms of strict control and prohibition of religious practices, spaces, and images in the public sphere.<sup>152</sup> It is true that the Kemalist regime took regulation of

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<sup>152</sup> Göle, Nilüfer. «Modernist Kamusal Alan ve İslami Ahlak.» in *İslamın Yeni Kamusal Yüzleri*, Nilüfer Göle (ed.). İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2000; Göle, Nilüfer. «Modernleşme Bağlamında İslami Kimlik Arayışı.» in *Türkiye'de Modernleşme ve Ulusal Kimlik*, Sibel Bozdoğan ve Reşat Kasaba (eds.), 70-81. İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1999; Kadioğlu, Ayşe. *Cumhuriyet İradesi Demokrasi Muhakemesi*. İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1999.

religious affairs as seriously as legal reforms. However as Islam, for centuries, had been the faith that majority of the people in Anatolia adhered to, and it was nearly impossible for Kemalist modernization project to overlook this belief system. It rather chose to control and to regulate it instead of eradicating.

That is why, the reforms, from the Hat Law (1925) to the secular civil and penal codes, the new alphabet, and the Law on Unification of Education (1924), all worked to reorganize the practical reflections of Islam in everyday life. In other words, the modernization attempts of the early Republican period implied a serious secularization process, too. However, even Kemalist laicism seems to have paled in comparison to Atay's radical suggestions such as performing the *namaz* (salaah) on foot and bringing certain principles of faith like pilgrimage in compliance with the necessities of present times. Ultimately, none of the original proposals of the author resonated powerfully with the Kemalist elite. Hygienic concerns and economic limitations that Falih Rifki Atay put emphasis on in order to reorganize Islam with the present day, did not really appeal to other revolutionaries.

For example, Atay noted that the pilgrimage could well be carried out by means of a selected nominee on behalf of a certain number of believers without spending that much money.<sup>153</sup> The present chapter deals with such courageous proposals of Atay, because these suggestions have once -maybe still- surpassed the boundaries of Kemalist thought.

Second, one more attitude that drives Atay a little bit ahead of his time: the question of women and their legal and social status in the new Republic. According to him, the republican administration, which had beaten the pants off the imperialist

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<sup>153</sup> (F. R. Atay, Bayrak, 135)

powers during the independence struggle, really messed up when it faced the inner problems of the country. And the issue of women was one of the leading ones.

In almost every book, Atay has a separate section in which he touches upon the problems of women and their integration into the public life. In *Çankaya* for instance, the transformation of the Ottoman woman to the Republican one is narrated, where the unyielding attitude of Atatürk is proudly underlined. “In Ottoman social fabric, woman was the primary concession given to (religious) bigotry by the state...Mustafa Kemal was going to tear-off this tight jacket”.<sup>154</sup> The new regime, especially the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, had a strong intention to make women more visible in every aspect of social and economic life.

However, the reforms that changed the appearance of women or the new legal arrangements on the law of inheritance were simply insufficient for him. One of the characters in *Roman* criticizes Falih Rifkî in the course of a discussion: “You granted woman a seat in a city council, the right to hold occupations like medicine and even law much more easily than the French did; but in no way granted her femininity yet”.<sup>155</sup> While the owner of this criticism -Madam Cevat- in *Roman* does not make an in depth analysis on what she exactly mean with “femininity”, it is clearly understood from the passage that being a woman should include something more than being a feminine object; rather, it must bring her individuality to mind. Madam Cevat simply wants Turkish women to have equal rights with their male counterparts; and these rights not only consist of judicial ones but also social norms and moral principles too. That sort of argument, which brought a serious criticism to republican reforms on

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<sup>154</sup> (F. Atay, *Çankaya*, 410)

<sup>155</sup> (F. Atay, *Roman*, 78-79)

women's status, as being "feminism from above", actually became the very central argument of women and gender studies in Turkey in the post-1980 period.<sup>156</sup>

Falih Rıfıkı Atay, in the cited dialogue, seems to give out a voice to women. Even if the dialogue an imagined one, it is still stunning to see how an early Republican intellectual could make connections between the strict and radical reforms of the regime and people's demands which could at some point contradict these. That is why Falih Rıfıkı and his writings on women present with a perspective quite original and different for his day.

### Kemalism: "A Great and Radical Reformation of Religion"<sup>157</sup>

In his best known memoir *Çankaya*, Atay notes that the actual independence struggle of the Turks started just after the military campaign was won.<sup>158</sup> When he went to İzmir to congratulate Mustafa Kemal and to celebrate the victory of the Battle of the Commander-in-Chief, Atay shared his first impression about Atatürk: "...we met a leader who looked as if he had just started working rather than one who was finished with it".<sup>159</sup> For Atay, it was time to defeat internal enemies which had long been prevented Turkey from achieving the level of contemporary civilizations. In Falih Rıfıkı's writings, internal enemies in question had changed over time. Specifically, while a reader can encounter communism and right-wing political ideologies as the nemesis of Turkey throughout 1960s, early books of author cite the

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<sup>156</sup> Kandiyoti, D. (1987). Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case. *Feminist Studies*, 2(13), 317-18; Arat, Yeşim. «From Emancipation to Liberation: The Changing Role of Women in Turkey's Public Realm.» *Journal of International Affairs*, 2000: 107-123.

<sup>157</sup> (F. Atay, *Çankaya*, 393)

<sup>158</sup> (F. Atay, *Çankaya*, 392).

<sup>159</sup> (F. Atay, *Niçin Kurtulmamak?*, 6)

sharia and religious fundamentalism as the biggest internal enemies of the country.<sup>160</sup>

According to the author, the reason why the former Westernization attempts of the Ottoman reformers had failed had been their hesitation to establish a secular base for their actions.

The Edict of Gülhane (the imperial edict of reorganization which was proclaimed Abdülmecid I) starts with the allegation that whatever bad had happened to us, stemmed from the degeneration of the sharia. In point of fact, we have suffered from not separating the world, intellect and religious from each other. When Âli Paşa suggested importing the French civil code, he found *mecelle* in the opposition. The intellectuals of the Tanzimat period like Namık Kemal and Ziya Pasha accused Âli and Reşit pashas of ‘adopting the Western canon when the sharia of Islam is still there’. Everything (for those like Namık Kemal and Ziya Pasha) had to be congenial with the sharia.<sup>161</sup>

While the passage cited above clearly signifies the necessity of making a harsh distinction between the state and religious affairs, this approach also prepared the basis of the support that Atatürk received, when the motion that recommended the abolition of caliphate was brought to the Grand National Assembly.

In Şirin’s study, certain essays of Falih Rıfkı are shown as harbingers of the reorganization in religious affairs by the state in the near future. She notes that Atay wrote his columns to prepare the public opinion for the forthcoming reforms in advance.<sup>162</sup>

It is true that Falih Rıfkı supported the abolition of the caliphate and agreed with Mustafa Kemal on this issue. Arguably, he argued that it was the most substantive reason of backwardness to live for “the other-world”.<sup>163</sup> However, the reasoning behind such statements again came from the personal experiences of Atay

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<sup>160</sup> *Roman* (1932) and *İnanç* (1965) could be compared to see different perception of the author towards “internal enemies” of the time.

<sup>161</sup> (F. Atay, Çankaya, 393)

<sup>162</sup> (Şirin, İmparatorluk’tan Cumhuriyete Bir Aydın: Falih Rıfkı Atay, 90)

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.* p.238

in his travels mostly around the former Ottoman territories and some other countries such as India where he encountered Muslims.

At this point, the Ottomanist past of the author must be remembered. Falih Rıfki grew up reading books of his radical-minded, reformist brother; whereas his father was a typical conservative, who enjoyed the refined examples of Ottoman poetry and classical music.<sup>164</sup> In addition, thanks to his lycee education received in *Mercan İdadisi*, the general director of which was the late Ottoman intellectual Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, Atay encountered the ideas of constitutional monarchy, revolution and saving the empire.

In this sense, Falih Rıfki Atay was an Ottomanist until the failure in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13.<sup>165</sup> However, the turning point that induced a huge fracture in his Ottomanist thinking and strong belief on the unifying potency of Islam occurred after his own experience with the Great War, especially when he went to the Syrian front to serve under the command of Cemal Pasha. It was clear that saving the empire with its pre-1914 borders and expecting support from the Muslim societies within the Ottoman State was no longer feasible he noted while planning for his well-known memoir *Zeytindağı*.

Just four or five years would be enough to create a new country, if the one-year effort of the Turks which was spent to the desert (Arabian Peninsula) had been saved with a good plan... The energy carelessly spent to plant the flag of the (Ottoman) state to abandoned lands of Cairo, had never been spent in barren territories of Anatolia to make this geography our rich and affluent homeland.<sup>166</sup>

These lines appear on the very last page of *Zeytindağı* showing how frustrated he was with the military adventures of the Ottoman state in the early of 1910s. More

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<sup>164</sup> (Ediboğlu, 5; Şirin, 9-10)

<sup>165</sup> (Şirin, 31-32)

<sup>166</sup> (F. Atay, *Zeytindağı*, 135)



importantly, the young unionist who was vehemently in favor of the radical operations of the Young Turks and their romantic ideas to save the empire, for the first time came into contact Muslims of the Arab-populated lands of the empire. In these provinces, as Atay noted, there was no empire at all. Sedentary modes of living that Atay deplored, the miserable and destitute condition of the Arabs in Medina, gave him the perspective to question the ideas that the Ottoman state governors had long been pursuing. “The holy Jihad, the Ottoman state, Allah and the prophet: the greatest names are intermingling in my mind. I (just) want to laugh.”<sup>167</sup>

The massive effort the Ottomans had given to the the Arab provinces and especially the Holy Land in the Great War seemed to irritate Atay to such a degree that he predicted how the Ottomans would give reaction when the Arabs of Mecca get into another trouble in the future:

Tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, you will be encircled by Arab gangs. The descendants of the prophet will riddle green dome of Rawdah<sup>168</sup> with bullets. And we distractingly, as if Istanbul is lost, will send you the Turkish offspring from the heart of Anatolia.<sup>169</sup>

The futility of fighting for these lands was understood better when the tomb of Mohammed in Medina was visited by the Turkish delegates who intended to pray in the Prophet’s mosque. Atay notes that while the visitors were expecting a more solemn and spiritual atmosphere inside the mausoleum, many hands and arms of beggars outside the windows stuck into the tomb and clipped their fingers to beg for money.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> (F. Atay, Zeytindağı, 68)

<sup>168</sup> The dome in Prophet’s Mosque (Al-Masjid an-Nabawi) in which the tomb of Mohammed is located.

<sup>169</sup> (F. Atay, Zeytindağı, 69)

<sup>170</sup> (F. Atay, Zeytindağı, 65)

This was the home of the last prophet and these destitute people were supposedly their faithful believers. The individual experience of Atay with the Syrian front and inhabitants of the region later drove him to support a potential religious reformation within Islam. That is why; he ardently defended the abolition of the Caliphate. Indeed, it was a highly popular decision of the new-born Republic that found sound resonance and sympathy in the foreign press as well. The positive reception of secular way of government in Atay's writings was being discussed in widely read magazines like *The Economist*:

Both by tradition and by theory, the Caliph is an absolute monarch over a united Islamic world, and it is therefore almost impossible to find a place for him in a national state (whether it be called a republic or a constitutional monarchy) in which the sovereignty is vested in the parliamentary representatives of the people.

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The Turkish nation will only be able to stand erect and to exercise its limbs when it has flung the useless burden of empire from it, and it should therefore divest itself of Sultanate and Caliphate.<sup>171</sup>

These excerpts were in absolute compliance with Atay's defense of the decision of abolition. In this respect, while Falih Rıfkı took a westernizationist attitude towards the abolition of the Caliphate, he also encouraged the Kemalist administration to make further reforms on religion and prepared the readers for his more radical suggestions to come after March 3.

The history of the last century has well proved that Turkey could not live as a medieval theocratic state and the Turkish nation cannot survive as a backward-oriental society any more... It was time to make a decision but we were not capable of. Mustafa Kemal was the one who had already made the decision. *March 3, was the beginning of the revolution.*<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> «The abolition of the Caliphate.» *The Economist*, 3 1924.

<sup>172</sup> (F. Atay, Çankaya, 392)

In this sense, for Atay “Kemalism, indeed, was a great and radical reformation of religion”.<sup>173</sup>

The bill of law accepted to abrogate the Caliphate also brought about changes in the education system. The Law of Unification of Education, which gathered all types of schools under the single roof of the Ministry of Education, was one of the greatest blows struck to the Ottoman *medrese*. In addition, the exile of the last caliph Abdülmecid, along with the remaining members of the Ottoman house from Turkey, boldly underscored the irrevocability and determination behind the government’s decision.

As it was generally case for other Kemalist revolutions of the Republic, Falih Rıfki was never content with the changes that the abolition of the caliphate brought about. The well-known cliché of laicism, which separated religious affairs like worship from state affairs like laws, legislations and jurisdiction, was not the end-point that Falih Rıfki had in mind for the Kemalist regime.

There were, and still are, numerous areas of Islam which give form to the everyday practices of believers. The vast scripture provides clues on what to eat, when to perform prayer, whom and how to help with zakat,<sup>174</sup> and puts the ideal standards for the Muslim believer. Atay, on the other hand, restrainedly argued that even the binding, mandatory duties of Islam could either be abrogated or be changed so as to be performed more easily in the present conditions.<sup>175</sup>

Hygienic considerations, economic limitations or everyday concerns like noise are taking the shape of quite unusual proposals for reform in religious practice;

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid. p.393

<sup>174</sup> Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam. It is a sort of mandatory alms-giving which is determined according to the certain percentage of the believer’s possessions.

<sup>175</sup> (F. Atay, Çankaya, 393-394)

in Atay. In his practical justifications for religious reform, we encounter the pragmatic attitude that was formerly discussed in the previous chapter when the lack of investments on tourism and infrastructure.

For instance, *zekat* is the legacy of an era in which there were no income tax or rent charges.<sup>176</sup> “Could an unemployed person give alms? No”.<sup>177</sup> For this highly pragmatic intellectual, even the most mandatory duties of the faith could only be realized when the conditions of its believers were suitable and the necessities of modern times were fulfilled. He made similar criticism about the pilgrimage and offered a solution: The pilgrimage had been established to protect the Mohammedanism of the inhabitants of Mecca; therefore any other Muslim societies cannot be held responsible for this activity.<sup>178</sup>

When Mohammed was alive, the pilgrimage was like a travel from İstanbul to Bursa. Now, it has become a matter of foreign currency. Furthermore, a prospective pilgrim should not have an economic problem. His children’s needs must be completed, too. Namely, he must be well-off. By the way, the ones who had sold their arable fields to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca consume the goods made in Greece. In other words, there is nothing imported from Turkey among these goods. It is all the results of inappropriate religious education... The ones whose wealth does not suffice, should not venture on the pilgrimage. A certain number (ten or twenty, Atay says) of these people may come together and select a representative to carry this religious service on behalf of all. In which mosques and what kind of imams could tell these to people?<sup>179</sup>

The requirements of the religion had to be subordinate to everyday conditions and they could well be circumscribed when it was required. In other words, he declared that the religion should be reorganized according to the new, secular way of life.

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<sup>176</sup> (F. Atay, Çankaya, 392)

<sup>177</sup> (F. R. Atay, Bayrak, 135)

<sup>178</sup> (F. Atay, Çankaya, 393)

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. p.135

The passages just cited were taken from books written in the 1950s (*Çankaya*) and 1960s (*Bayrak*). That is to say, a critical reader may find the given dates somewhat late and the statements of the author belated, to be distinguished as different or ahead of the Kemalism of the 1930s and the 1940s. However, one should give the author credit for his speaking of strict secularism when Democrat Party was in power. It must be remembered that reciting the *ezan* in Turkish, which could be seen as the most radical reorganization Kemalist regime, was abolished after DP came to power. Furthermore, similar examples and proposals for reformation in Islam are seen in Atay's previous writings, mostly in the travel books. Probably the most memorable one in which the exigency of religion to adapt itself to modern times is found in his book *Hind*.

During his travel to India in 1942, Falih Rıfkı had the chance to visit several mosques and recorded his impressions about the Muslims of the country, which was about to achieve its independence. According to the author, "the new classes of the society" were not in favor of going to the mosque. Since the Muslims of India preferred to eat their meals on the dining rooms instead of sitting Indian style on the ground, they could no longer accept kneeling to the ground on lots of socks and feet step.<sup>180</sup>

It is for sure that here Atay was trying to make some connection between two societies and underlining similarities so as to indicate solutions applicable in his country as well. Immediately after sharing his impressions with regard to Indian Muslims, he frankly put the solution for the sanitary problems in the prayer halls:

Formerly, a wise imam who discerned the disengagement of Islam from the social life had given the fatwa that counsels to perform the *namaz* on foot or

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<sup>180</sup> (F. Atay, *Hind*, 190)

just sitting on a chair. At one stage, this has even resulted in a massive trouble in Albania. If the imams resume their obstinacy on formalism and do not reorganize the practice of prayers, future generations will come to mosques with gabardine slippers just to take lessons of architecture.<sup>181</sup>

It seems that, there were other factors that the author once miscalculated about the Turkish society. It goes without saying that Atay utterly failed in his predictions about people's perception towards religion in time. While he generally addressed the Western civilization as the source of inspiration for Kemalist reforms; he tried solving problems with reason, and evaluated the every single issue from the perspective of progress, namely the Enlightenment. However, the inner mentality of faith and religious practice can neither be modified nor be resolved only with human reasoning. That is why, Islam has continued to be the most dominant faith in Turkey and numbers of people have performed their prayers just as Islam had said. However, the Albanian imam and Falih Rıfki's appeal to his suggestions have some serious implications within the scope of this study.

For instance, in these shrewdly written lines of cited text, Atay did not express his thoughts directly but points to a religious leader whose point of view and capacity for pioneering religious reforms should serve as model for his Turkish counterparts. In other words, he encourages the religious leaders on taking their own initiatives rather than give support to revolutions, as passive recipients.

In addition, the passage alludes that to author's view that the modernization path for two different countries somewhat similarly. When he praises the wisdom of an Albanian imam, he actually speculated about how the religion and perception of believers towards it should be in Turkey in the future. Similar routines of what he called "the new classes" also dignified the secular way of life of urbanites. Indeed,

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<sup>181</sup> (F. Atay, Hind, 190-191)

the discourse of new classes in Atay's writings corresponds to urban, westernized elite that the author got in contact with during the voyages; and they strikingly resemble the clique, namely the Kemalist elite, of which he was member of. In this sense, it is easier to understand why the author expected the future generations to take more neutral, if not negative, stance towards religion itself. And finally, if we go back previous discussion on the timing of Atay's original proposals in different books, *Hind* indicates that his reformist ideas on religion did not come out of the blue in the 1950s and 1960s. They rather have backgrounds in his early writings.

Apparently, Falih Rıfıkı Atay had ideas that differed from the rest of the republican elites. He both praised and criticized the reforms and suggested practical solutions for specific problems. Yes, his proposals never materialized and were rarely put into words within the cadres of the Kemalist administration. Atay, on the other hand, retained unyielding attitude in his view for the need of religious reformation that called for more simplified and modernized adaptations of religious services. Almost in every one of his books, this was such an issue to the extent that it later drove a wedge between him and the president of the Republic, İsmet İnönü.<sup>182</sup> While Atay was campaigning for further reform in religion and religious practices like *namaz*, what he had in mind was a more secular society who will not live for "the other world". However, İsmet İnönü had much more moderate stance on religious affairs such that he gave permission Imam Hatip schools to be opened. After this point, for Atay, neither RPP could able to remain as the party of Mustafa Kemal, nor could he remain as a member of this party.

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<sup>182</sup> Indeed, is already known that relationship between the founding party RPP and Falih Rıfıkı was going worse when the author has decided to leave his job in *Ulus* newspaper in 1947. He did not become a member of parliament after 1950.

According to Atay, the biggest obstacle which prevents the republic from keeping religious services up with the times was the remnant of sharia among the religious leaders or what he mostly called *taassup*, or bigotry. Since bigotry or religious fanaticism is a religious attitude that pretended to have final word on every single divine command and duty, it closed the gates of what he literally calls *içtihat*<sup>183</sup> within Islam.<sup>184</sup> For Atay, unfortunately, İsmet İnönü was the man who resurrected the *şeriat* after Atatürk's death.<sup>185</sup>

The Turks were looking towards the West finally. The revolution on religion was about to come, too. Just like the *ezan*, worship itself was going to be in Turkish. The centuries-old slavery of women had already ended. The alphabet and language reforms were exhibiting the difference of the Turkish mentality from the Arabic ones. Atatürk has lived for a very short time... (and) laid the foundations of new-Turkey before his death. The one who replaced him was a 'second man'. So as to remain in power, he accommodated the previous reactionaries and enemies of Mustafa Kemal. He even removed the pictures of Atatürk from the banknotes. In the end, he revived *şeriat* by opening *medrese* during the transition period to democracy (multi-party period).<sup>186</sup>

The discussion of sharia, bigotry and their relationship with İnönü signifies Atay's complicated stance on the republican revolution. First of all, the originality of the author's proposals does not only come from their radical character. Discourses such as *içtihat*, and the effort that Falih Rıfki put to utilize this concept for making further religious reforms seem to be in conflict with the author's previous call for more secular way of life, at the first glance. As has been continuously expressed in this study, Atay was never content with the early Kemalist revolutions. He always

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<sup>183</sup> İjtihad is an Islamic term which used to call decision making process about a religious case or duty. The religious law relies on Quran and Hadith when putting the ijthihad into the practice. At the end, the original law and rules are interpreted according to new conditions and necessities where the authoritative texts are either silent or insufficient.

<sup>184</sup> (F. R. Atay, Pazar Konuşmaları, 60)

<sup>185</sup> (F. R. Atay, Bayrak, 31)

<sup>186</sup> (F. R. Atay, Bayrak, 130-131)



demanded more, and kept the bar high for the infant republic for other reforms to come.

His proposals on religious reforms and other subjects such as environmental problems reflect a thoughtful analysis based on his travels around the world. When he was building his impressions about societies who had formerly gone through a similar modernization and nation building processes, he took notes of the relevant reform practices, hoping that they would provide some inspiration and courage into Kemalist cadres. Sometimes, these examples are selected from the highly old-dated ones and it momentarily confuses the reader who is looking for a modern, maybe Western origin of reformation movements. In this way, he found some age-old references to back reforms of early Republican administration and prepared the ground for his more radical suggestions on religious reform as well.

For instance, the Mughal emperor Akbar the Great who made deep reforms on religion as early as the 16th century was given as an example by Falih Rıfkı. Atay describes Akbar's reforms hoping to inspire Turkey's reforms in 1940s. Akbar, the author underlines, abolished polygamy, rendered the imperative religious services such as pilgrimage and fasting, restrained child marriage, replaced teaching the Qur'an and Hadith with math, literature and history, and cancelled some of the established rituals of Islam like the *ezan* and growing a beard et cetera.<sup>187</sup>

Despite the deep historical gap between Akbar and republican intelligentsia, the delicate point of Atay's reference to a centuries old reformation model is related with persuasiveness of the authority and feasibility of Akbar's reforms. The primary aim of Akbar was to collect a highly differentiated society under the common denominator of the most overarching faith. For that purpose, he combined certain

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<sup>187</sup> (F. Atay, Hind, 49 and 142)

beliefs of the Muslims, Parsees and Hindus.<sup>188</sup> In the end, the highly pragmatic initiative of the great emperor succeeded in reinterpreting and combining the separate religions. The secret of the success for Falih Rıfkı, since the beginning of the story, was the unorthodoxy and secular reasoning of Akbar. In other words, the leader of the reformation program was in absolute contrast with Atay's famous figure "31 Mart Hakkı".

Actually Atay argued that when fanaticism was prevented, Islam was already open for reinterpretation and the necessary ratification anyway had been found with the "reasoning" of mankind.<sup>189</sup> When he bases himself to reason, Atay gives the impression that he took the impression from the Enlightenment which signifies the considerable departure from religious texts. However, one of the sub-sections of in *Çankaya, Revolutions*, is allocated to the issue of religion and revolutions, and it openly argues for reinterpretation of the religion and presents a religious justification from within Islam.

The language of the author there employs benefits from Islamic terms such as the right of *nesih/nesh*<sup>190</sup> which was mentioned in Qur'an.<sup>191</sup> Surely, the passage cited below can also be read as a defense of Mustafa Kemal putting *nesih* into practice.

Kemalism was a great and radical reformation of the religion. God changed one sharia that he had given to prophet with another, when a new prophet came up. He even cancelled the imperative which was written in the Qur'an with another verse, so as to show that religion must keep up with the

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<sup>188</sup> (F. Atay, Hind, 140)

<sup>189</sup> (F. Atay, Çankaya, 393)

<sup>190</sup> *Nesh/nesih* is the reinterpretation of religious provisions which are not fundamental in Islam. The ways of worship and details about how to practice religious services like salaah could be given as examples. Islam itself got benefit from *nesih* since it synthesized considerable principles of former religions like Christianity and Judaism (Güllüce 2015).

<sup>191</sup> Güllüce, V. (2015, 7 19). *Nesh, Nesih*. <http://www.sorularlailamiyet.com>:  
<http://www.sorularlailamiyet.com/article/9145/nesh-nesih.html>

evolution of society. In fiqh<sup>192</sup>, we call this *nesih*. Since Mohammed was the last prophet, the right of *nesih* was handed over to the universal reasoning of mankind. That is why Islamic scholars passed the judgement that religious provisions are going to change in time. What Mustafa Kemal did is to use this right for *nesih*.<sup>193</sup>

As it seen, although Falih Rıfki is considered an openly westernizationist intellectual, he sought the justification for religious reforms within Islam itself. Such a demeanor, even if some could find the passage cited above as the author's tactic to win over the Islamists, closely likens him to the men of the Tanzimat like Namık Kemal and Ziya Pasha whom he harshly criticized before. According to Atay, they were unfortunate intellectuals who have tried to accord every single reform attempt with the sharia.<sup>194</sup> Furthermore, the intellectuals of the Tanzimat had never mingled freely with the crowd and usually "looked down upon the society" like viziers of the same period.<sup>195</sup> Ironically, many years after his death, Falih Rıfki was also criticized because of his elitist attitudes which putatively granted him to think and discuss on behalf of the ordinary citizen on the street.<sup>196</sup> Şirin argued that the elitist discourse of Atay determined the every single notion the author had in mind. For instance, even *irtica* (reactionism) was produced by Atay to emphasize the urgent need for an elite cadres to cope with this danger; and it was unimportant, for Atay, whether the society was aware the danger.<sup>197</sup>

He just wanted to observe similar development phases that he had witnessed in other countries during his travels. The pragmatic tendency of the intellectual and his established reputation within Kemalist circles and especially Atatürk himself,

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<sup>192</sup> Islamic jurisprudence.

<sup>193</sup> (F. Atay, Çankaya, 393)

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. p.393

<sup>195</sup> (F. R. Atay, Başveren İnkılâpçı, 15)

<sup>196</sup> (Şirin, 253; Durna)

<sup>197</sup> (Şirin, 253)

drove him to express his thoughts and proposals more overtly. In other words, although the question of how much and in which context Falih Rıfki express elitist attitude are still open to discussion, it is not unfair to say that he was given a certain room to voice his criticisms about the regime thanks to his acquaintance with the Kemalist circle and with Atatürk himself. It was already discussed in the second chapter that he did not hesitate from expressing his ideas when he was asked about certain issues such as Armenian question. However, it is also known that the author was exposed to admonition of Mustafa Kemal when he disagreed with him on current issues. To give an example, Falih Rıfki was not in favor of the forming of the Liberal Republican Party and he was explicitly warned so as not to write columns against the forthcoming party. Apparently, Falih Rıfki Atay could raise his voice on the issues left behind, and was allowed to make a retrospective analysis on the performance of the regime. Whereas, he was not able to criticize the present actions of the Kemalist administration within the room for maneuver granted him by the same cadre.

As was seen in this section; there are a number of ideas where Falih Rıfki many areas upon Falih Rıfki diverges from official Kemalism. Rather than implying a totally different agenda, his radicalism hopes to push beyond the limits of the achieved reforms. Since the young Atay had already experienced the demise of Ottomanism and Islamism during the early years at *Tanin*, among the veteran leaders of the Community of Union and Progress, his nonchalant relationship with radical forms of Islam looks more understandable. However, none of his radical proposals have been applied and obviously most of them were not even discussed among the Kemalist elite or within the government.

## The Women of an Unaccomplished Revolution

Religion was not the only issue on which Atay dissociated from the Kemalist revolutions. As was the case in religious matters, Atay never contended with revolutions aimed to “heal” the social position of Turkish women in either the public or the private sphere. Indeed, Falih Rıfkı praised Kemalist revolutions that sought to reorganize the status of women in society and remained proud of this venture until the end.

As usual, the legal reforms of early Republican regime were not only admitted but applauded by the author. While the author frequently allocates specific place to the issue of women in every single book, what he mostly focuses on is the stark contrast between the early Republican era and late Ottoman period. In *Çankaya*, which is the most popular book of the author, the issue of woman finds significant place under the subheading of *The Changing Life*. The section mostly put emphasis on the major discrepancies between two different social patterns that the author had experienced in late Ottoman and early Republican periods.

The position accorded to women in Ottoman society was the State’s main concession to fanaticism. For the fanatics, morals meant chastity and chastity meant women. In Istanbul, a woman’s chastity was the business not just of her husband and parent but also of all the population of the district where she lived... Everyone thought himself entitled to interfere in what a woman chose to wear in public. Faces, hands, arms and legs must be covered, the all-enveloping, *çarşaf* (burqa) must give no hints of the outlines of the body, and veil must be concealment and not an adornment... Women and men could not ride in carriage together. In steamers, trams, and pastry shops, the women’s place was marked off from the men’s by a curtain or a grille.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> (F. R. Atay, *Çankaya*, 228)

Falih Rıfkı was saying that the “(Institution of) *harem* could be observed even in recreation spots of the city”.<sup>199</sup> The lines in question most probably describe the ordinary lifestyle that Falih Rıfkı and almost everyone from his generation experienced. As was stated in the prologue of *Çankaya*, the book written in order to correct other misleading and inaccurate memoirs written after the loss of Mustafa Kemal.<sup>200</sup> That is why it took the responsibility of telling the story of Atatürk and independence struggle of the Turks in the most correct way. In this case, the audience of the author was mostly the younger generations who did not know much about the Ottoman past.

*Çankaya* was firstly published as installments in the newspaper *Dünya* throughout 1952, just after the author severed his ties with the RPP and left the RPP-supported newspaper, *Ulus*. When the book was completed, nearly 30 years had passed from the 1923. Then, rapidly populated<sup>201</sup> Turkey of early Republican period had a considerable number of young people he felt needed to hear what the new-regime has really changed.

That is why it must have seemed normal for Atay to describe what the country looked like just a few decades earlier as if he were speaking of the ancient experiences of a remote geography. He exaggerated the impact of what he called bigotry in the daily lives of the Ottomans and in some way stigmatized a certain ways of life with the markers of backwardness. He illustrates a dark, uncertain and ominous picture of the ancient regime in order to motivate young generations to hold

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid. p.408

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. p.7

<sup>201</sup> The exact statistical indicators about demography of mentioned period could be observed in the data series of Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat). In the resource which was cited in this thesis, detailed information about the population changings could be followed from 1927 which corresponds to date that first general population census was carried out in Turkey. Accordingly, when we came to mid-1950s, population of the country has just doubled (TurkStat 2010).

on to Kemalist revolutions more strictly. In this way, he both justified the Kemalist revolution voluntarily and alluded to the danger of traditional morality for the young readers. But he had a few more serious targets, when discussing the Ottoman past.

While Falih Rıfki criticized the late-Ottoman period and so-called archaic traditions of the past, the earlier reform attempts such as Tanzimat and even the ones from a nearer past like the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 took their share from this attack. If the Kemalist revolution was such a seminal turning point in the history of Turkey, it could never have been rated with prior reform attempts of the different sultans or of the CUP regime. In this respect, the years that followed the Young Turk revolution in 1908 and the Armistice Period, between the Armistice of Mudros and the Anatolian Struggle were also accused of paying no single attention to the problems of women.

Even after the *Meşrutiyet* of 1908, the literature instructors of girls' schools were still being selected from among eunuchs. The Western intellectual (which was the major criterion of Atay) says that if you want to understand how civilized a nation is, just look at how its people treat women. In the Ottoman society woman was treated as female objects (which brings their standard, conventional roles and duties to mind, such as maternity and household duty).<sup>202</sup>

On the top of that, Falih Rıfki argued that women had been stigmatized and held responsible for every single calamity the country got into. For him, even the leaders of the CUP and their government continued to stigmatize women as the scapegoats for their failures. Women were generally accused of undermining morals; which supposedly resulted in the failures of either army or the state in their operations just as it was exemplified below.

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<sup>202</sup> (F. Atay, Çankaya, 409)

If you read the newspapers of the period just after the Armistice (Mudros) you would suppose that the Ottoman Empire had collapsed because of women. Enemy fleets anchor in Istanbul harbor? An attack on women. Treasury hard pressed, salaries not paid this month? An attack on women. Many papers criticized the Istanbul Chief of Police for his lack of concern with the problem of women. But during the occupation women did succeed in liberating themselves to some extent, especially in Beyoğlu and Kadıköy.<sup>203</sup>

As foretold, *Çankaya* was addressed to specific group of people, especially younger generations of the new regime. It took one of the most significant responsibilities, to narrate the history of the Turkish independence struggle, to present a medium length biography of Atatürk, and to rehearse what the Kemalist regime had changed through various reform program in the 1920s and 1930s. That is why, *Çankaya* could not be a book in which the author could haphazardly express his views and criticism of the current situation of women in the new regime.

Indeed, Falih Rıfkı was aware of the fact that reforms that banned polygamy or that initiated legal recognition of civil marriage were not seriously applied all over the country. Remote areas and especially villages retained the Islamic traditions around the family institution. Kemalist regime did not force women in rural regions to comply with new provisions of the civil law, having thought that revolutions could only go along with advancement in economic conditions. “A woman working in the cropland will eventually become independent. The real danger in the issue of women is the harem in towns and villages”.<sup>204</sup>

However, for Atay, after the demise of Atatürk, the revolutions which had once given sacrosanct rights and liberties to Turkish women started to be undermined. This fact frequently appears in Atay writings, especially in the books written after 1950, such as *Bayrak*, *Kurtuluş* and *Niçin Kurtulmamak*.

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<sup>203</sup> (F. R. Atay, *Çankaya*, 229)

<sup>204</sup> «Atatürk.» *Yeni Ufuklar*, December 1963: 41-45



In 1960s Atay was displeased with the situation of the country. He is deploring where the country ended up when he thought back, especially to the 1920s, that Turkey was a role model for other Muslim societies. For instance, he gave an example from his voyage to India where he had met some young students and journalists who had been eager to learn about the new regime in Turkey and the success of the Kemalist administration.

Before his departure from India, a group of young Hindus and Muslims had asked him to give an advice for the future of their country, which was to achieve its independence within a few years. Falih Rıfki gave them two clues which he thought would liberate India. One was to put the cows in barns. And the other was to take the women out of the sack-cloths in which they were wearing. Nearly 25 years later, he added the following statement to the end of this story: “How could I estimate that one day we would to dress free women in the same sack-cloths and produce fanatics when we thought they had disappeared?”<sup>205</sup>

Primarily, the outer apparel and physical appearance of the people had never constituted a central importance in Atay’s writings. More precisely, the author had not really associated putting on a suit or ensemble with modernity. He always had seemed to skeptical about the direct effect of the attires in the way of modernization of a country. There are very short, but thought provoking arguments that the author touched upon, concerning the question of apparel. In *Niçin Kurtulmamak*, for instance, he pointed to earlier changes in clothing in the Ottoman period and gave the example of the hat:

What was the hat? A cap!  
Then, what was the fez that once replaced turban? Just another cap!

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<sup>205</sup> (F. R. Atay, *Kurtuluş*, 134)

What about the kalpak (fur cap), which took fez's place? Yet another cap! Islam is in one's mind and in his/her conscience...<sup>206</sup>

Falih Rıfkı argued that none of these outward changes had made Turkish society less devout than other Muslim countries. However, the researcher should ask whether Atay supported republican reforms on clothing, hat et cetera.

When he walked around the streets of Russia, the simple and patchy clothes of people took his attention. According to the author, the clothing of the Russian people was a rather casual. Foreigners who came to the country should not insist on wearing bowler hats and white collars. It just irritated the ordinary people and drove them to stigmatize visitors as "bourgeois".<sup>207</sup> Furthermore, it was only ridiculous to be in contradiction with what many other people do here. However, the more surprising part of this view of the author was the following statements in which he drew an analogy between the turban (*sarık*) and his western hat: "Imagine that a man with a green turban who is going up the hill of Çankaya; You see, this is exactly the same impression that bowler hat gives to people there in Russia".<sup>208</sup>

The examples given above should not mean that Atay did not lean towards reforms in dress. However, what he considered most necessary was the schooling of the masses right from the primary education and the self-inflicted evolvement of society rather than changing the social life by legal and disciplinarian measures. Turkish women could only be emancipated from prohibitory remnants of the tradition through times. Many years after the death of Atatürk, Atay honestly conceded that Atatürk and the regime he had established had failed to deal with the problem of women.

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<sup>206</sup> (F. Atay, Niçin Kurtulmamak?, 37)

<sup>207</sup> (F. Atay, Yeni Rusya, 30-31)

<sup>208</sup> (F. Atay, Yeni Rusya, 30).

Atatürk could not press the issue of women. Among the backward masses and villagers, the most important thing is chastity and chastity is equivalent to woman. It is the sole bench mark of morality. The unbreakable oaths are taken on chastity. The new civil code was not the existing order of Turkish society but its ideal for the future. The society could not be cast in mold by the courts. People would be thought in coeducational schools together. Living opportunities that economic conditions provide should have liberated the women. Atatürk understood that the liberation of women would take a long time.<sup>209</sup>

While the author presented the perception of the Kemalist regime towards the issue of women, he also gave examples from the current troubles and oddities that the regime had to cope with, but not really succeeded. Among the most familiar problems preventing women from enjoying equal rights and taking opportunities to participate in public life, polygamy, which definitely went hand in hand with the institution of the harem, was leading the pack. This was the issue that Falih Rıfkı has one way or another addressed in his every book. The ones written or published after 1950 gave special attention to individual cases through which the continuation of harem and polygamy exemplified.<sup>210</sup>

In addition to signaling the responsibilities of the Kemalist regime on the issue, Falih Rıfkı's writings also highlighted the uneven development and penetration of reforms that affected Turkish women. He, for instance, made a note of the existence of modern, self-sufficient republican women as well as the existence of second or third wives who had married with religious ceremonies.

Now, we are experiencing the anomalies of a transition period. A woman physician is celebrating the 25 year in her job, a woman judge is trying criminal men in the courts, another woman is now working in chemistry laboratory, a woman architect or sculptor is preparing her monument or project. And the third wife of a headman (*muhtar*) is probably making coffee for guests.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> (F. Atay, Niçin Kurtulmamak?, 81)

<sup>210</sup> (Atay F. R., Bayrak, 122; Kurtuluş, 40; Niçin Kurtulmamak?, 82).

<sup>211</sup> (F. Atay, Niçin Kurtulmamak?, 81)

Explaining the anomalies with the nature of “transition” overtly shows how big the problem was. It was 42 years passed from the Kemalist revolution and the issue of women, Atay argued, was still in a transition phase in the mid-1960s. It is another way of saying; nobody knows how much time the issue takes to be resolved.

The honest evaluation of the past 25 years mercilessly reveals the fact that the revolutions, which sought to liberation of Turkish women, were not dispersed equally all over the country. According to the author, embracing revolutions and adopting the Western life-style were not innate but learned attitudes that people could adopt only through time. It was necessary to change the position of women in the way that they could really be a part of the economy and could achieve equal citizenship. Atay confessed that the unequal and secondary social position of women did not disturb him and it had not even taken seriously his attention when he was a young man.<sup>212</sup>

It was difficult to realize the contradictions that women had been exposed to in our childhood and youth. Steamers and tramways were either divided with curtains or bars which were separating men and women from each other. Men were accustomed to leaving their wives to the women’s section in these vehicles and to going back to their own places among the other gents, albeit they were not less broadminded than they are, today. We never found it sad not being able to attend the theatre or cinema together. However, Turkey in those days was an oriental country, for sure.<sup>213</sup>

Espousing his early position on the issue of women, Atay presents us with another fact that has been most of the time falsified in the secondary literature on Falih Rıfki Atay.<sup>214</sup> Falih Rıfki did not think himself superior to society and to the

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<sup>212</sup> (F. Atay, Niçin Kurtulmamak?, 81).

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. p.81

<sup>214</sup> (Şirin, İmparatorluk’tan Cumhuriyete Bir Aydın: Falih Rıfki Atay, 2014; Durna, 2009; Nişanyan, 2008)... In the mentioned resources and many other newspapers articles which have lesser importance for the scope of this study, elitism is signaled as the very common epithet Falih Rıfki Atay has been marked.

men of politics and letters around him. After all, he had grown up within moderate conditions in a middle-class family. He then believed in modernization of the country and used his pen to support Atatürk; although a little bit earlier than his counterparts.

When the author's loyalty, to Kemalists which started from the very early phases of the Anatolian struggle and his strict criticisms of opponents of the new regime are added to the picture, these features occasionally have led researchers to mark, if not to accuse, him of having been the elitist pioneer of the regime. Nevertheless, he never thought himself superior to people. He rather found everybody, especially the youth, responsible for founding, protecting and developing the republican regime.

On the issue of women, too, Falih Rıfki's attitude indicated that Atatürk's republic was not the first and last historical stage that could be seen as the target for modern Turkey. As discussed above, Atatürk himself was aware that the issue of women would take a long time since common practices in traditions of long years and the long-established system of values, could change only through time.

In the course of time, the persistence of opponents to modernizing Turkish women could not be excused and bad examples had to be utilized to indicate what the ideal was. That is why he reacted to opponents harshly when needed. For example, when the good-will ambassador of Nigeria in Ankara claimed that the woman was an

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While it seems deniable for any researcher that the author has certain extent of guardianship or patronage provided by Gazi and subsequent leaders of the republic, it is not fair to jump in to a conclusion that he was an elitist. Just as it was the case for earlier thoughts on issue of women, Falih Rıfki has reckoned with his past in many other writings where he expresses how he got used to the changings accompanied by revolutions such as Hat Law of 1925.

While the author has often appeared in portraits with his bowler-hats, he has several times narrated that his family and inner circle were calling Christians "infidel" (*gâvur*), and calling Christians that they specifically were not pleased with as "infidels with hats" (*şapkalı gâvur*) when he was young (F. Atay, Çankaya 1984).

object, he immediately got a sharp answer from Atay: A mind that regarded woman as an object in this era was nothing but a bag of bones.<sup>215</sup>

The established practice of bride price (*başlık parası*) was another target Falih Rıfki occasionally attacked. Like the *harem*, the bride price was one of the most significant obstacles to women from choosing their partners. For him, the bride price was the result of the same mentality as the one of the Nigerian ambassador: The sale of young women in Anatolian villages actually resembled the long practice of slave-trade in Africa. Recently, a young woman had been murdered by her father just because she had had intercourse with her lover, who was not well-off enough to pay the demanded bride price. Turks had to get rid of this shame.<sup>216</sup>

It was argued above that *Çankaya* was not enough to make sense of Falih Rıfki Alay's position on the issue of women. The books written after 1950, which reflect the dates that the author both broke away from the founding party of the Kemalist regime, the RPP, in 1950, and left the office of *Ulus* newspaper sponsored by the government in 1947, plausibly demonstrates that Atay was more critical both of the RPP and the DP regimes since he thought the modernization project of the Kemalists addressed the issue of women better, when Atatürk had been alive.

His harsh criticism of the new regime and his great expectations on the issue of women, as the author confessed, had already started in the early Republican writings. However, it is reasonable to come to the inference his travel had a strong impact on him about women. They apparently shaped his overall critical outlook in the later years. Starting from late 1910s he went to many places around the world. He met considerable number of people not just from diplomatic positions but also from ordinary citizens during leisure times.

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<sup>215</sup> (F. R. Atay, Bayrak, 153).

<sup>216</sup> (F. R. Atay, Bayrak, 122)

Sometimes he addresses the equal citizenship topic, and at other times the author focuses on their attires and beauty.<sup>217</sup> And although rare, some countries were appreciated in cases where women were able to keep up with modernity, as was the case when Falih Rıfki introduced a Zoroastrian girl who did not consider smoking in public evil.<sup>218</sup> Overall, the outgoing characters, self-sufficient figures who had already gained their social and economic independence from men and the ones with secular lifestyles stayed in Atay's mind.

These encounters with foreign women may have found a resonance in the writings of the early Republican period, long before *Çankaya* appeared in the 1950s. A direct reference to his travels was not found when the issue of women is discussed in early writings, but a precious resource from early 1930s waits to be discussed for the point in question.

In the first chapter of the thesis, it was argued that Falih Rıfki Atay was aware of the fact that the Kemalist modernization was not an omnipotent project and it contained many deficits to overcome. The issues of religion and women constituted the two specific fields that supported this argument in this chapter. What the author did was gradually increase the density and tone of criticisms of the governments once the regime had covered some distance and its fragility had been reduced in the meantime. That is why writings of the 1950s and 1960s were more emphasized in this chapter. However, his book *Roman* steps out of this line for various reasons. *Roman* appeared in 1932 and it has quite likely remained as the most interesting and strange book of Falih Rıfki, although he continued writing for 40 years. The reprint of the book by Varlık Publications in 1952 with the initiative of Yaşar Nabi indicated the current nature of the issues on which Atay touched.

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<sup>217</sup> (Atay F. , Denizaşırı, 25; Yeni Rusya, 63-71)

<sup>218</sup> (F. Atay, Hind, 275)

The book consists of quite a few letters from the readers of *Milliyet* newspaper, in which Falih Rıfkı asked them to suggest a topic for his forthcoming book, *Roman*. The primary intention was to mirror the current the social life of İstanbul of the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>219</sup> However, reading these letters brought an unimagined fact to the light: they revealed the perceptions of the new-born republic in the common people's minds and signaled their expectations from the regime. Namely, in 1930s' Turkey, where the interaction channels between people and the printed press were much more limited compared to now, Falih Rıfkı was able to reflect what the people thought about the regime, revolutions and even their mundane problems expressed in the letters.

In addition, he interviewed various people and learned about their lives in İstanbul while he was waiting for suggestions from the *Milliyet* readers. And what makes *Roman* so peculiar for this section was the story in which the author himself played a role. On one occasion, Atay met a wealthy woman who had just divorced her husband. This woman, by the name of "Madam Cevat", confided her experiences with "Turkish men" and complained about her ex-husband and even his friends to the author. Jealousy, unadjusted and imbalanced sexual impulses, rudeness are just few of the topics of which Madam Cevat complains. Falih Rıfkı gave her some defensive responses. The woman got angry with him and expressively directs her criticism to the Kemalist regime this time. She argued that the republican regime had just cast the femininity of woman aside and left her adrift in a male-dominant society alone.<sup>220</sup>

According to the woman, retaining the former habits of the *harem* were indefensible and giving political rights to women could never excuse such a shame.

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<sup>219</sup> (F. Atay, *Roman*, 15)

<sup>220</sup> (F. Atay, *Roman*, 77-82)



Here are the words of Madam Cevat on the remnants of the *harem* in modern Turkey and women's social position on which no serious headway had been made.

Harem, monsieur; did not die... In this country the word 'woman' is only used for a mother. Women can go out of the walls only after giving birth to many children. Whenever a man walks into the salon, more than half of the women stand up. Just look at the eyes of women in the street. In the palm of most of your hands, smell of the women you beat could be caught... Are you still supposing that harem means just sitting separately? (Definitely) not; it (rather) means two separate moralities, two opposite honors and chastity, two disparate lives and philosophies in the end. The flirt of a man is moral; but of a woman is immoral. A man in street indicates the honor whereas a woman outside home connotes dishonor and rascality... God! This is the reign of, the sultanate of men...<sup>221</sup>

That burst of anger seems to have disturbed the author such that he felt obliged to come up with a counter argument: "When you extend the scope of harem that much, we can probably find similar features of it even in France".<sup>222</sup>

What was not clearly understood is the madam in question was either from French origin or was a Francophone. Upon the defense of Falih Rıfkı, Madam Cevat responded: "Let me tell you the strangeness (of Turks). Since you allocate the public sphere just for men, women are also demanding to be in the streets and want to get around freely, night and day. You have granted woman the seat in a city council, the right to perform occupations like medicine and even attorneyship much more easily than the French did; but in no way have you granted her femininity in public yet".<sup>223</sup>

According to Cevat, the free expression of femininity in public, womanhood in other words, had to take precedence over everything. When a woman is not recognized as an equal member of society with her socially defined and biologically

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<sup>221</sup> (F. Atay, Roman, 78-79)

<sup>222</sup> (F. Atay, Roman, 78)

<sup>223</sup> (F. Atay, Roman, 78-79)

given features, it is meaningless to become a member of parliament or to cast a vote in elections. Indeed, Cevat did not openly argue that these rights were comparatively less important. She additionally said: “I have never seen a Turkish woman who suffers since she is not able to pull out a tooth or to render a verdict in court... I only see ladies crying for not feeling like women”.<sup>224</sup> Indeed, where exactly Madam Cevat gained such an impression from Turkish women is very much open to discussion. However, it would not be surprising that if she had encountered them within the republican elites and upper-class urbanites of İstanbul; since she was living in a mansion which has a full view of Bosphorus as Falih Rifkî noted.<sup>225</sup>

This femininity issue and liberties of women could only come to the fore in feminists’ agenda in Turkey as late as 1980s and finally discussed more extensively starting from 2000s. Yeşim Arat, for instance, argued that “while women were given civil and political rights equal to men in the 1920s and 1930s, they remained confined by communal norms and customs”.<sup>226</sup> These customs and norms of course are not really elaborated in Madam Cevat’s hot tempered speech. Whereas Arat was clearly indicating that these rules were selectively taken and recognized by the most predominant actor of the time, the state: “...state enabled women to become educated and enlightened, and in turn, to challenge the boundaries that the state had drawn”<sup>227</sup>

Madame Cevat made no statement about what the sources of these norms were. On the top of it, what she referred as femininity was not clear. However, despite its sketchiness and uncertainties, the madam’s argument still touches an important issue, that became a bold line of criticism in post 1980 women’s studies. It

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<sup>224</sup> (F. Atay, Roman, 79)

<sup>225</sup> Ibid. p.77

<sup>226</sup> (Arat, 107)

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

renders *Roman* a perfect writing experiment for Falih Rıfkı Atay since he became aware of serious problems of women at a very early date of the Republican regime and found the chance to publicize it, no later than the death of Atatürk.

The issue of actuality has already been discussed in another section of this study, but it could be suitable to reinstate the point. Even if the letters in *Roman* and dialogues like the ones took place between Madame Cevat and Falih Rıfkı were fictional, they do not lose their value. Indeed this possibility further leads us to suspect whether letters and arguments of different figures, either of Madame Cevat or of the young girl asking help from Falih Rıfkı to convince her mother to accept her suitor<sup>228</sup>, belonged the author, Falih Rıfkı himself.

While this study dealt more with original suggestions of Atay about the new regime and focused on the representations of the new Turkey in his different books, it has not embarked on making a detailed literary analysis of Atay's writing. Ultimately, Falih Rıfkı decided to publish all these criticisms about Kemalist Turkey and touched upon the deep-seated problems of Turkish society. Rather than keeping silent on what he recognized as faulty and sweeping the mistakes of the elites around him under the mat, he expressed quite "out of his time" views on issues like religion and women, to resonate both among the state elites and society.

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<sup>228</sup> See the relevant section of the study: p.32.

## CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

This study tried to bring a fresh interpretation of the early Republican intelligentsia. A monolithic definition of Kemalism and overall criticisms brought to the Kemalist modernization project dominated the academic research on Turkish modernization experience such that they leave no room for alternative perspectives which can enable us to understand the early Republican period better. Not only the period itself but the actors who experienced it first-hand have usually been studied in this generalizing fashion. Intellectuals are one of the most mistreated groups since they have been mostly described as the receptors and passive conveyers of the Kemalist ideology and the true believers of the new nation state. This study questioned the validity of this presumption by focusing on a single figure from the early Republican intelligentsia, Falih Rifkî Atay, into closer perspective.

As an author, journalist, politician who was known for his friendship to Atatürk Falih Rifkî Atay was the intellectual often identified with Kemalism, hence exposed to the typical simplifications and overgeneralizations on the early Republican period more. It is proposed here that, in stark contrast to what has been believed and mostly written so far, his travel books and memoirs provide us with an immense field of study where the very individual experience of a man with Kemalism from within the Atatürk's immediate circle could be observed.

While Atay had Ottomanist and Unionist political leanings before the Armistice of Mudros, he started overtly supporting the Independence Struggle led by

Mustafa Kemal, as early as in his twenties. After the victory, he met Atatürk and continued his journalism career, this time in the government backed newspaper *Ulus*, as editor-in-chief. He also acted as a member of parliament seven terms consequently, until 1950. Then he broke away from the RPP and made his living from publishing his own newspaper, *Dünya*, where he proceeded with propagandizing his thoughts on the unending struggle of modernization in Turkey, until his demise.

The present study focused on Falih Rıfkı's travel books, memoirs and books which were written in essay style. It intended to shed light on the mentality of a single transition figure, who was known as an absolute Kemalist.

The second chapter observed how the author instrumentalized the travel books to create ideal representations of early Republican Turkey from his own perspective. Accordingly, it was elucidated that Atay was driven more by pragmatic considerations and concrete targets, rather than establishing his intellectual capital to disseminate and propagandize the principles of the regime, namely the Six Arrows. For instance, depending on his observations in foreign, mostly Western countries, Falih Rıfkı addressed what he called the intolerable "laziness" and "immobility" that Turkish people had inherited from the autocratic Ottoman sultans and from their narrow-minded administrations. The immobility in question, for the author, was not an inherent feature of Turkish society whatsoever; and it had to be replaced with an active, hardworking and disciplinary mindset; which was prerequisite for Turkey to take its place among contemporary civilizations. The "Immobility" discourse in Atay's writing also revealed that the author was not pleased with the protectionist economic approach that the early Republican administration had embraced. Atay decided that the over protectionist economic policies were exaggerated. The security

considerations of those who could not leave the mentality of the Great War behind; for Atay, prevented Turkey from the development it needed.

While the author's criticisms addressed the late-Ottoman administration, his honest and sharp attitude pushed Falih Rıfki towards criticizing the Kemalist administration, too. He was a protagonist of the Kemalist regime, and this created a tragic dilemma; which was called in this study the double-bind. So as to manage this double-bind, Atay had to face at least two things.

First of all, Falih Rıfki accepted that, regardless of the successful Independence War which had resulted in the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, the Kemalist cadres had made some very serious mistakes starting from the late 1920s. The area that in which the Early Republican administration has failed worst was the dissemination of the Kemalist reforms to the masses. In spite of the inner consistence and good will of the initiators, the regime had gone too fast when making reforms in series. Supporters of this haste, which was called the Kemalist Rush in this study, who obstinately emphasized the necessity of completing the reforms when Atatürk was still alive, drew Atay's attention as early as the 1930s. Then, he developed interesting representative characters, like 31 Mart Hakkı or Lawyer Şakir, in his writings to indicate how the Early Republican regime had either been over/under-estimated or exploited by ordinary people.

The second strategy that Atay applied to ease the tension of criticizing both the ancien and present regimes, simultaneously, while supporting the Kemalist revolutions was to remain objective as much as possible. In this respect, he always tried to make a distinction between institutions and the actors working under the roof of these institutions. Put differently, he tried to distinguish between the collective

responsibilities of organizations like the Community of Union Progress from its well-known leaders Cemal, Talât and Enver Pashas. Since the author himself was a veteran Unionist who had been arrested and taken to the court during the Armistice Period, reflecting the most accurate picture about the historical portraits of Unionist Pashas was a good opportunity to throw off the imperial hunchback that the author had inherited from his youth, when he was just working under their command.

Even if they had made terrible decisions, such as entering the Great War with the Central Powers, Atay expressively stated that they were not traitors; and in a sense acquitted the veteran Pashas of CUP when the official history of Turkey was being written. He rather focused on his own intimate experience with the pashas and mostly on the humane side of these leaders. The destructive ambition of Enver, the relatively precocious position of Cemal at critical decision making moments and the humble character of Talât are just few instances where Atay displayed his sensitivity when criticizing them.

While the figures described in Atay's books indicated awareness by the author of the inherent problems of the Kemalist regime, they also prepared the background for his later criticisms came out in the 1950s and 1960s, after he had broken away from his party and left the job at the government-backed newspaper, *Ulus*.

Falih Rifkî Atay was not content with the existing Kemalist reforms and was aware of the fact that the intensive reform agenda of the Kemalist modernization experience during the 1920s and early 1930s had not let society progress as it should. Just as the people had not become less devout Muslims with the arrival of the new legal system; they had not become an absolutely civilized and decidedly modern

society with the adoption of the new civil code and fedoras. Chapter Three focused on such severe criticisms and original suggestions of Falih Rıfki on the two rather polemical issues of modern Turkey, religion and women.

The issues of religion and women are fields where Falih Rıfki's thoughts are very much left on the edges, if not completely outside, of the typical approaches and applications of the Kemalist regime, especially those of after Atatürk's death. First of all, the author argued that the religious imperatives and the worship, specifically *namaz*, itself had to be modified according to what he called the necessities of modern conditions. The conditions in question bifurcated as economic reasons and sanitary considerations. *Zekat* (alms), for instance could not be given by the ones who are not well off. *Hac* (pilgrimage) could not be imposed on believers in the recent age of "foreign currency". *Namaz* (salaah), on the other hand, had to be performed standing up, since the hygienic measures of the day did not accept bowing on floors that large numbers of people had already stepped on.

Such sharp interventions of Atay to the religious imperatives of Islam were not taken seriously within Kemalist circles. However, beyond the original and outstanding character of these thoughts, Atay insisted that Kemalism was "a great and radical reformation of religion" and he gave Islamic references to these suggested reforms. Consequently; this attitude ironically resembled the early reform attempts of the Tanzimat statesmen whom Falih Rıfki severely criticized because of their insistence for religious justification for reform.

The last section was dedicated to issue of women. While Falih Rıfki praised the early rights that women gained with the new civil code and attached importance to the voting rights and the right to hold office, he implied that Kemalist Revolution



has not actually accomplished all necessary reforms for Turkish women. According to him, the Kemalist reforms had not reached women in the rural areas and villages in Anatolia. In addition, the reforms had not spread into every single location of the country equally. Polygamy and the institution of the harem were still being practiced in Anatolia in the 1950s and traditions like bride price was common even in Turkey of the 1960s. According to Atay, all these problems enslaved the women, and prevented them from integrating into the public life, and most importantly for him, to the economy of the country.

Putting the author's hot-tempered tone aside, the economic justification of his opposition to established traditions on the issue of women unsurprisingly indicated again how pragmatic he was on even such a sensitive issue that the country still has not coped with today. However, the suggestions of Atay on the issue of women presented rich information which can easily challenge the representation of the early Republican intellectual in overgeneralized and simplistic manner. At first, it is understood that the author did not find the social position of women in the late Ottoman period strange until Atatürk came in and argued that rights of woman must be radically improved. This implies that although Falih Rıfkı had been known as the typical representative of the westernizationist elite, he accepts and often reminds that he and his family had not been different from the masses once. The author too came out of the ordinary people and what made Falih Rıfkı sensitive on the issues such as religion and the women derives from his belief on modernization thrust of Kemalist Turkey and his individual experience with other civilizations outside Turkey. In other words, Atay did not consider himself superior to the rest of the society and did not judge what the good/bad is for society as a -so called- Westernized intellectual.

In addition, Falih Rifkî often referred to his childhood, especially the times when his family hesitated in front of Western norms, as in the case of the peaked-hats that only “infidels” had worn before. That is to say, Atay realized that the need for change was something learned and stands to one’s reason in time. It is neither pre-given, nor an innate feature of any society. That kind of evolutionary approach to reforms does not really accord with the association of Atay with an elitist “revolution from above”. To the contrary, Atay cautioned the ruling cadres that the revolution would take time. Again, most works on Atay overlook his individual experiences in the travels. Namely, the author have witnessed the situation of women in many other countries and allocated considerable space to the issue of women in his travel books, starting from the 1920s. Otherwise, a rare and precious criticism like the risk of deprivation of femininity of women when the political rights are easily given could not have come to the light, I firmly believe.

The critical and independent attitude that Atay held in his memoirs and collective essays indicate, how comprehensive and complex the author’s thoughts were. They present a much more different portrait of the author than has been drawn before. Yes, he did a quite good job of defending the regime. Yes, he absolutely believed in the modernization project of Kemalism throughout his life. In fact, he voluntarily remained a full-time advocate of the Kemalist republic. Falih Rifkî was a man who overtly took a stand against establishing new political parties in the 1920s although Mustafa Kemal himself was uncomfortable with this spurt, and conflicted with Atay just because of this issue.<sup>229</sup> Specifically, when *Serbest Fırka* (Liberal Republican Party) was being established, Falih Rifkî had openly indicated his disfavor with this decision of Mustafa Kemal. As a matter of fact, Atatürk wanted

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<sup>229</sup> (F. Atay, Çankaya, 463-464)

him to leave Yalova, the town where he had taken the decision to support the new party, and not to publish antagonist columns about the new party. All in all, one could argue that he did not become a puppet of the regime and did not blindly stick to RPP or any other political movement in order to protect his privileged position near Atatürk.

At some point, he left his job in the party-backed newspaper (1947) and cut off the communication with the RPP (1950). Then he pursued his life by establishing his own paper and continued expressing his thoughts, suggestions and criticisms to develop the country, which he believed was “Kemalist once upon a time”. As we learned from the memoirs of his step-daughter Mîna Urgan, he led a humble life in his old age and chose to stay in the country even though many prestigious representation posts were offered him abroad.<sup>230</sup>

More often than not, the political position at which the author stood was situated both at the center and at the edges of Kemalist thought, as have seen in his suggestions for religious reform and worship. Perhaps, neither performing the *namaz* standing nor the abolition of *zekat* and *hac* could have been practiced in a newly-established republic, where the majority of the society was Muslim. Atatürk himself never embarked on implementing these changes either. Nevertheless such extraordinary suggestions of Atay revealed that it was nearly impossible to understand early Republican intellectuals resorting only to criticisms of Kemalist modernization project which drew either too descriptive or too reductionist picture for them. Although he was always described as a Kemalist pioneer of the regime in the secondary literature, Falih Rıfkı’s inner dilemmas which derive from his Ottomanist political past and his highly original reform proposals on the issues of

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<sup>230</sup> Urgan, M. (2000). *Bir Dinozorun Anıları*. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları. p.135

religion and women overtly contradict with this picture. Besides the very peculiar example of Falih Rifkî Atay it focused on to challenge the monolithic approach in question, this study invites other students of Turkish modernization to ask whether the broad and general category of “Kemalism” is sufficient enough to understand individual portraits of early Republican intelligentsia.



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