The Young Turks and Generational Forces

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A thesis presented to the

Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
at Boğaziçi University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

August 2023

Approvals

"The Young Turks and Generational Forces," a thesis prepared by Gözde Işık in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts from the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, has been approved on 21 August 2023 by:

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Declaration of Originality

The intellectual content of this thesis, which has been written by me and for which I take full responsibility, is my own, original work, and it has not been previously or concurrently submitted elsewhere for any other examination or degree of higher education. The sources of all paraphrased and quoted materials, concepts, and ideas are fully cited, and the admissible contributions and assistance of others with respect to the conception of the work as well as to linguistic expression are explicitly acknowledged herein.

Abstract

The Young Turks and Generational Forces

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for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, 2023

Professor Asım Karaömerlioğlu, Thesis Advisor

The thesis focuses on the "Young Turk generation," a term frequently employed in various contexts, and it examines the Young Turks' generational consciousness primarily through analyzing their memoirs. This study argues that the Young Turks fortified the discourse on generational identity and established a foundational generational lexicon for subsequent generations to adopt. It is contended that educational growth has played a critical role in this generation's formation, reinforcing generational awareness and making a two-axis understanding of the concept of "generation" more prevalent. The thesis also explores the pragmatic yet high value that members of this generation placed on youth, and it examines maturity and seniority narratives within their memoirs to discuss the defining characteristics and boundaries of the Young Turk generation.

39,500 words

Özet

Jön Türkler ve Jenerasyonel Güçler

Gözde Işık, Yüksek Lisans Adayı, 2023
Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü

Profesör Asım Karaömerlioğlu, Tez Danışmanı

Bu tez, farklı bağlamlarda sıklıkla kullanılan "Jön Türk kuşağı" tabirini merkeze almakta ve esas olarak hatıratlar vasıtasıyla Jön Türklerin kuşak bilinçlerini incelemektedir. Bu çalışmada, Jön Türklerin kuşak mensubiyeti üzerine olan söylemi güçlendirdiği ve sonraki nesillerin benimsemesi için temel bir kuşak sözlüğü oluşturduğu savunulmaktadır. Ayrıca, eğitimin bu kuşağı şekillendirmede belirleyici bir rol oynadığı, genişleyen eğitim ortamının kuşak bilincini güçlendirdiği ve kuşak mefhumunun çift eksenli bir anlayışının yaygınlaşmasına imkan tanıdığı ileriye sürülmektedir. Tezde bu kuşağın üyelerinin gençliğe verdiği değerin yüksek fakat pragmatik olduğu savunulmuştur ve Jön Türk kuşağının tanımlayıcı özelliklerini ve sınırlarını müzakere için hatıratlardaki olgunluk ve kıdem anlatıları incelenmiştir.

39.500 kelime

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NOTE: The in-house editor of the Atatürk Institute has made detailed recommendations with regard to the format, grammar, spelling, usage, syntax, and style of this thesis.

1

Introduction

The initial enthusiasm behind the present endeavor was to weigh the possibilities of the juxtaposition of "Young Turk" and "generation," two components laden with abundant and varied connotations. Both notions have been catapulted into expansive and atomistic lexicons simultaneously. The initial query, born after encountering a bulk of references to "Young Turk generations" in and out of academia, was twofold: Were the Young Turks, whomever they may be defined as, conscious of such generational identity? Was it they who self-considered and appropriated such a shared link, or was this an external ascription?

Exploring through a generational framework bears great advantages. Primarily, it permits nuanced scrutiny of transient moods, acknowledging that generations, too, are products of the "fuzzy" boundaries that these cohorts inhabit. Simultaneously, the thesis does not dismiss critiques of the generational framework encountered during the research. One salient counterpoint views the concept of generation as more of an "artifact, an illusion that people engaged in social action hold about themselves,"[1] a rampant, though possibly illusory, categorization.

[1] Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Volume I: Conflicts and Divisions*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 507.

Nevertheless, even if "generation" proves to be largely an artifact, this investigation has been engaged since its inception with the perspective that there is value in probing this history of illusions, for such illusions, too, shape the actions and self-perceptions of those who hold them.

The gaze then turned towards memoirs, as one is, by the promise of the genre, free to gather and balance all their past and present illusions within its pages. No memoir is devoid of the historical aspect, mirroring a generation in that it becomes "the spontaneous horizon of individual historical objectification."[2] The thesis seconded the idea that a generation is an instinctive mechanism for converting memory into history.[3] This notion grows more salient and revealing when the object under scrutiny is the Young Turk generation, as the primary outlook of several of the memoirs studied is their reciprocal aspect, the dialogue with one another. This reciprocity, in turn, deepens the exchange concerning the historical and generational dimensions.

The Young Turks' and their generational peers' perceived "decisiveness" acted as the catalyst for this reciprocal dynamic, positioning them at the epicenter of a cultural and historical narrative. They were held to account for the creation of a new world and bore the weight of both accolades and criticisms inherent to such a grand undertaking. Navigating a landscape marked by increasing globalization, their perspective extended beyond the insular ethos to resonate with the broader "spirit of the times," *i.e.,* the "Zeitgeist." The act of claiming or disclaiming their role in seminal events became a central thread in many of their memoirs. In this sense, their memoirs are not mere reflections of individual lives but calculated acts of shaping a collective legacy, a quid pro quo where the act of writing becomes a means to assert and cement their influence and legacy over time.

The subsequent chapters embark with an opening segment dedicated to assembling and scrutinizing the diverse definitions and characterizations associated with the terms "the Young Turks," "The Young Turk

[2] Nora., 528.

[3] Ibid., 528.

generation," and "generation." Upon establishing this foundational familiarity, the third chapter hones in on this generation's interactions with the ones that immediately preceded and succeeded them. This section of the thesis explores within the memoirs the voluntarily defined distinctions that set this generation apart and the instruments of influence, such as "utopia," they exercised through other genres.

The fourth chapter is structured to probe into the profound implications of education for this generation, an element that the current study posits as central to their generation formation. It advances the argument that education played a transformative role, notably pivoting the generational dynamics from being predominantly vertical to acquiring a double axis. Emphasis is placed on the role of schools as social and developmental arenas, transcending their mere functional purpose of knowledge dissemination. It delves into the dynamics that drove decisions related to enrolling in and transitioning between schools within the Ottoman context and Europe. Further, it explores the wide-ranging criteria these individuals used to compare schools and assess their subsequent impact on self-perception. The chapter offers insight into the contrast perceived between the worlds within and outside these institutions' walls. It also sheds light on this generation's selection of intellectual predecessors, a choice significantly informed by the dialogue fostered and propagated within and beyond their educational environments. Additionally, this chapter brings attention to the prematurely terminated educational journeys, particularly evident in the memoirs of the younger cohort, a consequence of the disruptions wrought by World War I, highlighting a distinctive experiential divergence.

The fifth chapter delves into the exercise of periodization, examining the outlook of the historical eras this generation nurtured and the actors' own internal segmentation of life into distinct phases. Central to this chapter is the inquiry into the significance of 'youth' for this generation, a theme already underscored in existing literature as a quintessential aspect they treasured. The pragmatic and calculated deployment of the notion of youth is dissected, laying bare its varied and consciously modified implications. Notably, the chapter accentuates the role of seniority

narratives in shaping and enhancing the levels of horizontal unity or divergence within the generation. Too the complex relationship that this generation forged with time and space, a relationship that is constitutive of their generational identity, is examined. The chapter draws to a close with a discussion on the bookends of this generation.

2

Whence Emerged the Protagonists of a Fading Epoch?

§ 2.1 Who were the Young Turks?

Considerable levels of ambiguity will catch the eye of a reader who intends to read the very checkered history of the couplet "Young Turks." Invented in Europe, the term has been in use to refer to a late-Ottoman social group. The scope of this group is much debated. Probing the nuances enfolded within this nomenclature, one discerns the variegated assemblage of factions, ideologies, and personalities to which "Young Turks" has been ascribed, rendering a clear-cut definition a moot point. Deliberations henceforth will emphasize specific groups encapsulated by and dynamics that coalesce under this appellation.

The prominent inclination perceives "Young Turks" as adversaries to Abdülhamid II throughout the time frame stretching from the conclusion of the first constitutional era in 1878 to the eve of the second constitutional period in 1908. In this context, the ambit is occasionally constricted, equating the Young Turks solely with the faction that took on the

positivist slogan "union and progress"[1]- or later its transposed version[2]- as their name in 1895, thereby oversimplifying the diverse undercurrents within the movement. The equation may revolve around (i) the enduring influence of this faction, which is considered "the most durable"[3] faction within the Young Turk movement, (ii) the faction's extent that is not fixed and has undergone transformations, with different "incarnations and off-shoots"[4] being recognized, (iii) the label "Young Turk" adopted by the members of this faction to assert their position within the lineage of "Young" movements[5], and (iv) the pivotal importance ascribed to the constitutional revolution of 1908 in Ottoman history, with the young officers who emerged as its heroes belonging to this faction *i.e.* Committee of Union and Progress[6] (hereafter CUP.)

Erroneously, the post-1908 Constitution administration, steered by the CUP, is frequently designated as the "Young Turk government" by a number of European historians.[7] However, elements of both regime and opposition were entwined with the broader Young Turk movement, and the CUP government was just one part of this larger ensemble. The equation attempts do not always denote narrowing tendencies. Preference is often declared towards subsuming all the opposition to Abdülhamid II's regime in the "Young Turk movement." Şükrü Hanioğlu notes that the term "Young Turk" has been subject to vague and inaccurate use, and that overlooks the existence of some independent groups working in the

[1] Hasan Kayalı, "The Young Turks and the Committee of Union and Progress," in *The Routledge Handbook of Modern Turkey*, eds. Metin Heper and Sabri Sayarı (New York: Routledge, 2012), 27.

[2] Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, vol. 3, "İttihat ve Terakki" (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1989), 7.

[3] Kayalı, 27.

[4] Ibid., 26.

[5] Ibid., 26.

[6] Erik J. Zürcher, "Who Were The Young Turks," in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building* (London: IB Tauris, 2010), 104.

[7] Şükrü Hanioğlu, "Young Turks," in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Facts On File, 2009), 604.

Ottoman Empire against the regime of Abdülhamid II that had no dealings with the Young Turks.[8]

The genesis of the term "Young Turk" in Europe precedes the formation of the CUP and various independent groups denoted by this name. Consequently, the second prominent predilection situates the factions referred to with this name within earlier epochs. Origins of the term were traced back to British historian Charles MacFarlane in 1828, who used it to describe the youthful Ottoman generation. The term took on various connotations throughout the mid-nineteenth century as it was adapted and applied in diverse contexts.[9] The "Young Turk" designation characterizes, says Hasan Kayalı, "a string of cognate sociopolitical platforms and associational affiliations in the late Ottoman Empire," and he underlines that in the 1860s, "the literary, political dissident group that had formed in Istanbul and called itself the 'New Ottoman' [later known as Young Ottomans] was becoming known to Europe as the 'Young Turks.'"[10] Although the Young Turks of the subsequent generation often confirmed multifold affinities with the New Ottomans, they represented "a new generation of dissidents."[11] Ryan Gingeras notes that the Young Turk revolution of 1908 "was a moment that was decades in the making and was only one turn in a series of revolutionary steps towards top-down reform" and highlights the question often considered as engaging several generations of dissidents' attention, namely, "How can this state be saved?" Respondents varied in terms of age cohorts and political orientations, but as Gingeras notes, "it is this generation of political leaders and societal managers that would have the final word."[12] This generation presents a fecund topic for an investigator exploring the connections between the notions of youth and generation, and within the purview of the present work, they will be the subject encompassed by the term Young Turks.

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[8] Şükrü Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4.

[9] Şükrü Hanioğlu, "Young Turks," in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, 604.

[10] Kayalı, 26.

[11] Ibid., 26.

[12] Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 14.

Literature to date underscored the Young Turks' high regard for youth. Both the Young Ottomans and the Young Turks identified themselves in French contexts as *la Jeune Turquie*[13], and both eschewed employing the conventional Turkish term for "young" in their designations. The Young Ottomans characterized themselves in Ottoman contexts using the descriptor *Yeni*, which translates to "new," while the latter adopted the label *Jöntürk*, a straightforward transliteration of their French moniker. The label *Genç Türk* appears in the memoirs and writings of the second group, highlighting the evolving use and adaptation of the term. Erik-Jan Zürcher notes, "The Young Turks were quite young in a literal sense when they came onto the scene in 1908, but they were also the first generation of Ottomans to see youth as an asset." He adds that youth, for them, functioned as a means of legitimizing their actions.[14] However, it can be argued that the dynamic was bidirectional, as they also sought to legitimize youth. Although they were attentive to various invented traditions and portrayed themselves as the natural heirs of earlier reformist movements, such as the Young Ottomans, this generation set itself apart by embracing the label "Young" and extolling youth for its associated qualities of "dynamism, activity, and progressiveness."[15]

Shmuel N. Eisenstadt postulates that, in special historical circumstances, youth symbolism is resorted to articulate generational consciousness.[16] Citing Talat Pasha, who had said, "A man at the age of twenty is a mature man"[17] Tarık Zafer Tunaya records that in the CUP subsidiaries, the issue of age was given great importance. He defines the Unionists

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[13] Şükrü Hanioğlu, "Young Turks," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. Gerhard Bowering et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 601.

[14] Erik J. Zürcher, "The Young Turk Mindset," in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building* (London: IB Tauris, 2010), 104.

[15] Erik-Jan Zürcher, "The Young Turks – Children of the Borderlands?," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 9, no. 1/2 (2003): 275-286.

[16] S. N. Eisenstadt, "Sociology of Generations," in N. J. Smelser and P. B. Baltes, eds., *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences,* vol. 9 (Amsterdam, 2001), 6058-59, quoted in Niall Whelehan, "Youth, Generations, and Collective Action in Nineteenth-Century Ireland and Italy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56, no. 4 (2014): 946.

[17] "Yirmi yaşında adam koca adamdır." Quoted in Tunaya, 214.

as a community keen to include everyone of all ages and categories "who had the psychology to turn their views into a political sect" yet declares that the CUP attached great importance to youth, "and this was the quality that attracted them the most."[18] It will be posited later in this thesis that this quality attracted not only CUP members but also their generational peers, which will be subsumed under the name "the Young Turk generation." Additionally, the relationship between the importance they placed on seniority and youth will be argued to be more nuanced.

Niall Whelehan cautions in his analysis of 19th-century revolutionary groups in Ireland and Italy that one should not merely view descriptions of youth and maturity through the lens of age. He highlights that symbolic markers, such as marriage, educational completion, property ownership, rebellion participation, and aspects like gender, occupation, and ethnicity, can shift perceptions. He suggests considering youth in terms of "how it related to contemporary understandings of maturity and adulthood."[19] Despite the extensive character of the scholarly and popular literature on the Young Turks, research has not been statistically substantiated enough to answer the questions of when and where the Young Turks were young regarding such rites of passage and, in a very broad meaning of the term, classes. Zürcher shows that the standard works on the period abound in "very broad, and in some cases contradictory"[20] generalizations: Feroz Ahmad calls the Young Turks' "lower middle class" and "newly emerging professional classes."[21] Henry Elisha Allen says they were "young officers," which is also Geoffrey Lewis's classification, while Bernard Lewis talks about "Muslim Turks, mostly soldiers" and "members of the ruling élite," which is in direct contrast with Stanford Shaw's "lower class" and "subject class." Richard Robinson describes them as "new technicians, newly awakened intelligentsia, western-oriented army officers," while Sina Akşin summed them up as "Turks, youngsters, members of the

[18] Tunaya., 214.

[19] Whelehan, 937.

[20] Erik J. Zürcher, "Who Were The Young Turks," in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building* (London: IB Tauris, 2010), 96.

[21] Ibid., 95.

ruling class, western-educated with a bourgeois mentality."[22] His usage of the term Young Turk, Zürcher notes, accounts for "the whole group that was involved in the constitutionalist agitation before 1908, the CUP and its off-shoots between 1908 and 1918, the leadership of the national resistance movement after World War I and the leadership of the early republic (until 1950)."[23] He discerns six subgroups: the founders, the leaders of the 1908 constitutional revolution, the politically active officers in the Ottoman army, the members of the CUP's Central Committee, the leadership of the nationalist resistance after World War I, and the early republican ruling élite.[24]

In the late 1880s, as European-style educational institutions flourished, dissatisfaction with Abdülhamit II's reign grew among students. These young minds formed networks, advocating for the revival of the parliamentary system that had been cast aside in 1878. Opposition swelled, both inside and beyond the empire's borders. By 1895, Ahmed Rıza steered the helm of the CUP's Paris Branch, persevering even when domestic dissenters were silenced and exiled on the cusp of their planned coup d'état in 1896. The Parisian committee welcomed fresh faces and bolstered the modest internal voices with its publications. Come 1902, during the Congress of Ottoman Liberals a rift emerged within the CUP, with Prince Sabahattin founding a faction, the Society of Ottoman Liberals.[25] Zürcher deems these early figures as the "founding fathers"[26] and "first generation."[27] He paints the budding Young Turk movement as "a conspiracy of medical doctors," all 14 pivotal early members boasting post-secondary education. While they trained in military institutions, none actively held an army post. Zürcher suggests that these individuals sought learning in the empire's most advanced schools without harboring military ambitions. Aside from the slightly older Ahmed

[22] Zürcher, "Who Were The Young Turks," 96.

[23] Ibid., 312.

[24] Ibid., 96.

[25] Ibid, 98.

[26] Ibid., 97.

[27] Ibid., 99.

Rıza, Ahmed Saip, and Mizancı Murat, this cohort was born between 1864 and 1874, averaging 27 years of age in 1896,[28] on the eve of the ill-fated coup d'état.

Three members of this group, who were civilians in their early thirties, founded the Ottoman Freedom Society in Salonica in 1906 and approached seven army officers, two belonging to a higher rank and age, with the average age of the rest being twenty-six. This group of ten forms "the leaders of the 1908 constitutional revolution," Zürcher's second subgroup. He points out that all of them had public posts and, barring Talat, had also received higher education. They differed from the first group in that there was a "complete absence of individuals from the Anatolian inland, Kurdistan, the Arab provinces or the Muslim areas of the Russian Empire," and resembled it in terms of "the status and social standings of their fathers,"[29] which showed great variation. Zürcher records that the CUP had about two thousand members in 1908, and around two-thirds or more seem to have been military men.

A more juvenile profile is seen in Zürcher's third subgroup, the "politically active officers in the Ottoman army," with the average age being twenty-nine in 1908, "which makes them about seven years younger on average than the group of civilian leaders (or party bosses) around Talât."[30] Like the second subgroup, they came disproportionately from the Balkans and Istanbul. Their fathers had been in the service of the state, yet this time the significant variation was between the positions they held or their social status. Another subgroup, that of "Volunteers" (fedaiin), was loosely defined and differed from the elite officers in terms of their ranks, yet tied to them with bonds of friendship formed during the years of training.[31] The CUP's Central Committee, a separate

[28] Zürcher, "Who Were The Young Turks," 98-99.

[29] Ibid., 100.

[30] Ibid., 101.

[31] Ibid., 102. Also see, Benjamin Fortna, “Late-Ottoman ‘Rogues’ and their Paths to Power: A Prosopographic Study," in *Age of Rogues: Rebels, Revolutionaries and Racketeers at the Frontiers of Empires,* eds. Ramazan Hakkı Öztan and Alp Yenen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023).

subgroup, included civilians, but largely excluded younger military officers[32] and dissenting Young Turk veterans[33]. World War I led to significant changes in leadership, with the self-imposed exile of a small group of key leaders due to their responsibility "for the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war and particularly for the persecution of the Armenians."[34] Many figures had also "departed from the scene" as they were interned in Malta following their arrest by the government or by the British. However, a powerful resistance movement had emerged, and the "people involved with the start of the national struggle do not constitute a new group. They are familiar figures from the preceding era."

Zürcher shows that three groups heretofore discussed seem to have been influential here in particular: "First, politically active military officers (…)– all of them early CUP members; second, CUP party bosses (…) and third, former fedaiin."[35] The leadership of this subgroup represented a bicephalous form. The Council of Commissars (heyeti vükela) membership which was determined by the elections held in the National Assembly from April 1920 onwards, formed "the political leadership of the resistance movement, apart from the military leadership." Let alone one exception, the members of the council, who were slightly older than the group of military leaders, were forty-one on average in 1920. Zürcher highlights that seven out of seventeen had served as members of the Ottoman parliament, and all except Celal had higher education. The absence of the exiled Unionists in Malta at the turn of the national resistance movement and the total absence of the small group of CUP leaders who left the country and never managed to return paved the way for a new locus of control. The new leadership formed around Mustafa Kemal combined these facilitator factors with the elimination of "the former Unionists and former resistance leaders who could provide a credible challenge" to it and established its monopoly.

[32] Zürcher, "Who Were The Young Turks," 104.

[33] Ibid., 103.

[34] Ibid., 104.

[35] Ibid., 105.

The analysis reveals that the early republican ruling elite, similar to the preceding Unionists, were educated in European-style secular schools and mirrored familiar geographical characteristics from previously examined subgroups of Young Turk leadership. "No less than half of the people who led the new republic came from areas that were lost by the empire in the period 1911–13," says Zürcher, calling these members of the last subgroup refugees in a technical sense.[36] Describing the underlying premise behind his attempt at a group portrait, he elucidates the pertinence of scrutinizing the political elite from the 1908 constitutional revolution to the cessation of one-party dominion in the republic as a singular, cohesive group.

Employing the term "generation" in lieu of Zürcher's "group" appears promising, as his findings reveal not merely the legacy of an ideological group but the enduring influence and hegemony of a generation on its successors for an extended period. In his *The Modern Theme*, José Ortega asserts that at times, society holds fast to the legacies of the past, viewing such inheritance as indivisible from their own personal acquisitions. These epochs are hallmarked by periods of aggregation, a harmonious union of the fledgling and the matured, wherein the new entrants adhere to the tenets of the previous order. Contrarily, there are epochs that recognize an incongruity between the legacy of the old and the novel possessions of the present. Such times are punctuated by periods of dismissal and contention, a rivalry between generations.[37] This bipartite categorization of historical epochs posits that cumulative epochs were the domain of the old, whilst eliminatory epochs belonged to the youth. Harnessing this conceptual framework, the Young Turk generation might be seen as instrumental in helming the shift from a cumulative to an eliminatory epoch and later leading the shift back, continuing to hold sway over the political and ideological milieu during the progeny generations' youth.

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[36] Zürcher, "Who Were The Young Turks," 107.

[37] José Ortega y Gasset, *The Modern Theme*, trans. James Cleugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 17-18.

The literature perused, notably Zürcher's remarkable undertaking, proffers an aperture to delve into the generational aspects of the Young Turks. It is precisely this aperture that the present disquisition aspires to enrich. Beyond the generalizations Zürcher scrutinizes, one can discern a penchant for singularization within Young Turk narratives. Specific prominent figures have frequently been commandeered to serve an array of teleologies. As an illustration, Alp Yenen provides the example of Enver Pasha, who has been characterized as "either a desperate and clumsy charlatan scheming destructive machinations or as a quixotic adventurist following a tragic but prideful quest."[38] Hanioğlu underscores the necessity of considering the "era of adventurists"[39] when interpreting Enver Pasha's actions. This adventurist element can be traced in various accounts, encompassing the Young Turks' self-portrayals, Orientalist texts that brand them as an elemental threat, or writings evaluating their legacy.

Howard Bliss, a contemporaneous observer of Cemal Pasha's rule in Syria and Lebanon, depicts the Young Turks as audacious individuals wagering high stakes and prepared to embrace desperate measures.[40] This existential temperament recurs in numerous accounts. Leon Trotsky, in a 1909 composition, introduces Prince Sabahattin as either a dilettante dreamer or a yet-to-be-unveiled schemer.[41] Zürcher cautions against

[38] Alp Yenen, *The Young Turk Aftermath: Making Sense of Transnational Contentious Politics at the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1918-1922* (PhD diss., University of Basel, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2016), 7.

[39] M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, "Enver Paşa," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 11, 44 vols., 261–264 (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1988–2013), 11:264, cited in ibid., 8.

[40] "The Syrian Protestant College and the Ottoman Government: A forecast of some of the more or less remote contingencies in the course of the war's progress," a seventeen-page report dated February 1916, American University of Beirut Archives, Howard Bliss Collection, Box 16 AA 2-23-2 16-6, cited in Selim Deringil, *The Ottoman Twilight in the Arab Lands* (Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2019), xlii.

[41] Leon Trotsky, "The Young Turks (January 1909)," in *The War Correspondence of Leon Trotsky*, Kievskaya Mysl 3, January 3, 1909, accessed May 30, 2023, https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1909/01/1909-turks.htm.

dismissing Enver's post-World War I reorganization plans as mere capers, recalling that both Lenin and Mustafa Kemal were once labeled as fantasists and reckless adventurers.[42] This contextual imperative also propels an investigation of the generational perspective underlying the aforementioned mood.

§ 2.2 Generation Young Turk

The labels "Young Turk" and "generation" have frequently graced the annals of historiography. Scholars, while dissecting the movement and its ancillary phenomena, recurrently deploy the notion of "generation," albeit in multifarious ways. Tunaya's well-known work on the CUP was thoughtfully titled "The History of an Era, a Generation, a Party,"[43] serving as a testament to this recurrent pattern. This dynamic is also represented in the second-hand prefaces of ego documents, in which editors or reviewers guarantee a transformative exploration of a generation or a vivid portrayal thereof. Mustafa Abdülhalik Renda's memoir was published with a preface split under two subtitles, with the former "The Representative of a Generation"[44] implying Renda himself, and the latter "The Transformation of a Generation."[45] One preface to Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın's *Tanıdıklarım* asserts that deciding whether a portrait painted by Hüseyin Cahit, that of Ömer Naci, is a model of the Unionists or an exception can help in "understanding a generation."[46]

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[42] Erik J. Zürcher, "The Young Turk Mindset," in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building* (London: IB Tauris, 2010), 122.

[43] Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, vol. 3, "İttihat ve Terakki: Bir Çağın, Bir Kuşağın, Bir Partinin Tarihi" (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1989)

[44] M. Abdülhalik Renda, *Hatırat*, compilers Aytaç Demirci and Sabri Sayarı, ed. Yücel Demirel (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2019), 12.

[45] Ibid., 21.

[46] Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Tanıdıklarım* (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2019).

The Young Turk generation is typically positioned as the last within a succession of intellectual cohorts that underscore the cultural and political tableau of the late Ottoman era post-Tanzimat. It is also frequently portrayed as the concluding chapter of the "constitutionist generations," a dyad that encompasses both the Young Ottomans and the Young Turks. Erdem Sönmez works with a likely categorization in his piece on the Young Turk leader Ahmed Rıza, situating him "between two generations of constitutionalism."[47] He argues that Rıza's intellectual framework and political attitude throughout the opposition years bore traces of the generations that came before and after him. Intellectually, Sönmez says, "Rıza was not as sophisticated as the Young Ottomans; yet he was not eclectic like the Unionists either."[48] Despite his impact that was not significant on the CUP's decision instigating the 1908 revolution, he held a significant stature in the initial stages of the second constitutional period, thanks to his persistent resistance against Hamidian rule. His ensuing role as the parliamentary chair proved to be of little consequence in policy-making, although, following a 19-year hiatus, his return to the Ottoman Empire was accompanied by the honorific title of of *Ebu'l-ahrar.*[49]

"The beauty of a generation is that its ancestry, unlike that of a family, can continually be re-invented,"[50] asserts Stephen Lovell. This perspective encapsulates the resonance found within memoirs and scholarly work, and it further enables the already elastic term "generation" to morph into a versatile tool for categorization. In her *Turkey: A Past against History*, Christine Philliou seizes this flexibility. She first depicts the Young Ottomans and Young Turks as successive generations: During the 1860s and 1870s, the Young Ottomans took the initiative in articulating Ottoman liberalism, setting the stage for the proclamation of the Ottoman

[47] Erdem Sönmez, "Revisiting Dominant Paradigms on a Young Turk Leader: Ahmed Rıza," in *War and Collapse: World War I and the Ottoman State*, edited by M. Hakan Yavuz with Feroz Ahmad (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2016), 203.

[48] Ibid., 204.

[49] Ibid., 218.

[50] Stephen Lovell, "From Genealogy to Generation: The Birth of Cohort Thinking in Russia," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, no. 3 (2008): 590.

Constitution in 1876. With the premature suppression of the constitution by Sultan Abdülhamid II, liberalism and its proponents were driven to the shadowy margins of Ottoman society, only for their mantle to be reclaimed "a generation later"[51] by the Young Turk movement from exile or the secluded corners of the Ottoman military. Philliou situates Refik Halid, whose life narrative forms the foundation of her work, within the Young Turk generation. She, at times, complicates her view of Young Ottomans and Young Turks as consecutive generations by recognizing two successive lineages to the Young Ottomans — that of "Refik Halid's father's and then his own," positioning Refik Halid as "a few generations" distanced from the Young Ottomans.[52] These choices suggest a flexible application of the notion of generations in her work, which can also be traced with ease in other scholarly discourses and memoirs, where the term is concurrently used to denote both biological and intellectual phenomena.

While "generation" serves as a marker of both continuity and rupture, the state preservation perspective *i.e. "How can this state be saved?"* in Ottoman and Turkish historiography is particularly eager to interpret shifting dynamics as a generational handover. In this context, "generations" primarily imply cohorts, underscoring the revised concept and emphasizing a sense of orderly transition amid change. Philliou proposes a nuanced understanding of the Young Ottomans and Young Turks, which she also asserts to be often overlooked in favor of generational simplifications. She posits that the CUP was fueled by a "generational rebellion" post the Balkan Wars, yet faced with limited administrative expertise and a lack of justifiable revolutionary ideology, they strategically opted for subtle infiltration rather than outright revolution. This tactical decision, she contends, created a tension between preserving the empire and dismantling its establishment, influencing the political landscape of the empire's final decade and shaping the early republican era.[53]

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[51] Christine M. Philliou, *Turkey: A Past Against History* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 5.

[52] Ibid., 41.

[53] Ibid., 49.

Recent scholarship on the Middle East and Balkans tends to adopt transnational and comparative perspectives, reflecting on the long-lasting influence of the faded world of this generation. In a recent scholarly contribution, Harun Buljina investigates Bosnia's "Young Turks," a cadre of Muslim intellectuals he perceives as being sculpted during the Austria-Hungary occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. He deploys the notion of the "Young Turk generation," and draws compelling comparisons between this group and their Ottoman Young Turk counterparts.[54] Philipp Wirtz's *Depicting the Late Ottoman Empire in Turkish Autobiographies* delves into the literary corpus of authors born within the Ottoman Empire and later penned their works within the Turkish Republic's boundaries, and his research also encompasses texts that reverberate beyond the post-Ottoman sphere. His chosen subjects, authors born between 1879 and 1906, provide autobiographical insights into the tumultuous last decades of the Ottoman Empire. His concentration on individuals with substantive life experiences during this era aims to capture the Ottoman world's unique position in their life narratives, highlighting both the transitional period and its enduring impact. Wirtz's stated aim is to illuminate a specific era and the generation it molded rather than spotlighting a distinct social or professional group.[55]

In *The Last Ottoman Generation*, Michael Provence adopts an overarching approach, steering clear of the often-dominant focus on discrete national histories. Instead, he crafts a narrative woven with shared experiences, emphasizing commonalities until the 1940s. He elucidates the transformation of a generation from the provincial children of the late Ottoman era into the state elites, nation builders, and revolutionaries of the subsequent period. Provence unveils a narrative of pervasive trauma, profound loss, and deep-seated disorientation that ensued from the empire's collapse. He depicts an era so cataclysmic that its conspicuous

[54] Harun Buljina, "Bosnia's 'Young Turks': The Bosnian Muslim Intelligentsia in its Late Ottoman Context, 1878–1914," in *The Turkish Connection*, edited by Deniz Kuru and Hazal Papuççular (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022), 29-48.

[55] Philipp Wirtz, *Depicting the Late Ottoman Empire in Turkish Autobiographies* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 5.

silence serves as a testament to the ubiquitous suffering rather than its inconsequence.[56] Contradicting traditional historical narratives that emphasize the emergence of nations or the ascension of ideologies, he unearths a narrative of thwarted hopes and resilience, underscored by intermittent optimism, and by focusing on the collective journey of this generation, he elucidates the Ottoman legacy.

Hasan Kayalı highlights the "natural" legacy left by the Young Turk era, thanks to its substantial place in the timeline of the Middle Eastern institutional and ideological transformations post-Tanzimat — rising just before the formation of the Ottoman successor states.[57] He then notes the intriguing dissonance between this historical continuum and its discursive rejection by those successor states. Echoing these insights, Alp Yenen mentions the "Young Turk zeitgeist," the intellectual and political currents of which should be considered, not only while viewing the formation process of new nation-states but reflecting on the era's "lost battles and forgotten dreams."[58] He posits that entrenched discursive dichotomies and methodological nationalism in historiography continue to obstruct understanding of the political culture of contention among late and post-Ottoman insurgents.

There is compelling evidence in international scholarship to suggest that the post-World War I decade was a pivotal period in the reshaping and rethinking of 'generational' concepts. Historiographical approaches using a generational lens have been applied to dynamics from the early 19th century and even earlier[59], but a noticeable surge in its use can be

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[56] Michael Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 4.

[57] Kayalı, 33.

[58] Alp Yenen, "The 'Young Turk Zeitgeist' in the Middle Eastern Uprisings in the Aftermath of World War I," in *War and Collapse: World War I and the Ottoman State*, edited by M. Hakan Yavuz with Feroz Ahmad (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2016), 1181-1216.

[59] Abosede George, Clive Glaser, Margaret D. Jacobs, Chitra Joshi, Emily Marker, Alexandra Walsham, Wang Zheng, Bernd Weisbrod, "AHR Conversation: Each Generation Writes Its Own History of Generations," *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 5 (December 2018): 1510-1511, 1532-1534.

traced to studies centered around World War I and regionally significant early 20th-century events. Roy Foster's *Vivid Faces* encapsulates the 'generation of 1916 in Ireland',[60] a tribute to Robert Wohl. In his study, *The Generation of 1914*, Wohl aimed to transcend national borders to convey the shared experiences of the 1914 generation while acknowledging the importance of individual national perspectives. His approach combined a "European perspective, comparative method, and national structures"[61] to expose the distinct elements of each experience without undermining the broader generational narrative.

Reflecting on the challenging task of chronicling the history of the 1914 generation, Wohl initiates his exploration with the complex question - "Who were its protagonists to be?"[62] This query is a dominant consideration for historians engaged in generational studies. Maria Todorova, in her *The Lost World of Socialists at Europe's Margins - Imagining Utopia, 1870s–1920s*, ruminates on the same question and strategically demarcates the year 1900 as the dividing line between two political generations, primarily focusing on the leftist political spectrum. This generational division, while - like all others - arbitrary, is a discerning choice that captures the transitional mood and the radicalization process of the era. Her clarification follows that individuals born before 1900 matured within the socialist ideology amidst the turbulence of World War I and navigated within a repressive yet functioning parliamentary system. This generation, composed of several age cohorts, formed a unified political unit. Conversely, the post-1900 generation was radicalized by the wars of the early twentieth century and the Russian Revolution.[63]

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[60] Roy Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890–1923* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, London, 2015).

[61] Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 3.

[62] Ibid., 2.

[63] Maria Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists at Europe's Margins - Imagining Utopia, 1870s–1920s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 85-86.

The concept of the "Young Turk generation," already long-established and employed with various perspectives,[64] is not newly introduced in this study. The primary objective of the present work is to investigate the degree to which the "Young Turk generation" exhibited generation consciousness, with occasional external commentary. However, much like Wohl's initial conundrum, the same pressing question emerges within this study. The research commenced with mapping the birth years of notable figures within the Young Turk leadership. As the reading of memoirs got underway, the distinctive reciprocal nature of these texts proved instrumental, effectively guiding the selection of the subsequent memoir to be examined. The study extensively drew upon bibliographies[65] of memoirs that reflect on the Young Turk era and Zürcher's prosopographical endeavors. The memoirs scrutinized span authors born between 1844 at the earliest and 1906 at the latest, with a significant majority from the cohort born between the 1860s and the 1880s.

What is provided here, undeniably, is a partial understanding. The study is also mindful of the inherent elitism[66] in the generational concept. Amidst the numerous ventures undertaken by potential members of the same generation, only a select few gain retrospective recognition, their protagonists standing as representative figures for their contemporaries. Recontextualizing Max Nordau's words within generational contexts offers a fruitful perspective: Reflecting on the fin-de-siècle period, Nordau observed that a small minority took pleasure in the "new tendencies." But "this minority has the gift of covering the whole visible surface of society, as a little oil extends over a large area of the surface of the sea."[67]

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[64] See, for another example, June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner, eds., *Generational Consciousness, Narrative, and Politics* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002).

[65] Murat Hanilçe, "II. Meşrutiyet Dönemine Dair Hatırat Bibliyografyası Denemesi," *Bilig* 47 (Fall 2008): 144-168. Ali Birinci, *Tarihin Hududunda: Hatırat Kitapları, Matbuat Yasakları ve Arşiv Meseleleri* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2012), 56-63, 81.

[66] Annie Kriegel, "Generational Difference: The History of an Idea," translated by Elisabeth Hirsch, *Daedalus* 107, no. 4 (1978): 29.

[67] Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905), 7.

§ 2.3 The Concept Reviewed

Generation — A concept that has been fraught with contestations, it is essential to provide a brief exposition on its relevance for those who remain uninitiated to its various connotations. The illustrious T.S. Eliot reviewed the propagation of the concept in 1931, "I dislike the word 'generation,' which has been a talisman for the last ten years,"[68] addressing the critics of his poem "The Waste Land," who claimed that Eliot had expressed "the disillusionment of a generation." He was not alone in his antipathy. Many critics of the concept underscored the proclivity to embrace generational frameworks as an overarching explanatory model for social phenomena. Jürgen Kocka's witticism, "After ceasing to think of class structure, we have begun to divide society into generations,"[69] aptly captures the tendency to view the concept of 'generation' as a panacea. As previously noted, the remarkable versatility of the concept's connotations renders it particularly vulnerable to reductionist tendencies. The flexibility to apply the notion of 'generation' across diverse contexts and historical periods can inadvertently encourage oversimplification. The intricacies of individual and collective experiences risk being overshadowed by broad generalizations based on mere chronological datum, which Mannheim calls "arithmetical mysticism,[70]" or “a sort of sociology of chronological tables (*Geschichtstabellensoziologie.*)”[71]

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[68] F. O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935), 106.

[69] Jürgen Kocka, "Reformen, Generationen und Geschichte," *Neue Gesellschaft/ Frankfurter Hefte* 8 (2004): 34, cited in Maria Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists at Europe's Margins - Imagining Utopia, 1870s–1920s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 84.

[70] Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *Essays*, edited by Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge, 1952), 282.

[71] Ibid., 311.

Maria Todorova, in her compelling work, *The Lost World of Socialists at Europe's Margins - Imagining Utopia, 1870s–1920s*, observes that despite the ubiquitous invocation of Mannheim's generational theory, scholars often misconstrue his nuanced distinctions, opting instead for a cursory nod to his most rudimentary definition: "The social phenomenon 'generation' represents nothing more than a particular kind of identity of location, embracing related 'age groups' embedded in a historical-social process." With a discerning eye, Todorova elucidates Mannheim's distinctions, drawing particular attention to his vital bifurcation between "generation as actuality" and "generation-unit."[72] To illustrate this differentiation, Mannheim turned to the post-1800 German youth, wherein he revealed how the romantic-conservative and liberal-rationalist youth, though belonging to the same chronological generation, manifested two opposed responses to a singular historical catalyst. Consequently, Mannheim proposed that the generation unit offered a more substantial connection than the actual generation itself.

Alan Spitzer asserts, "We must all make do with something like Mannheim's distinctions whenever we wish to generalize about age-specific behavior without asserting the identity of all those within the relevant cohort."[73] He remarks that recognizing the critiques aimed at the notion of 'generation,' scholars often utilize some variant of Mannheim's generation unit to demarcate the social group or cultural phenomenon they endeavor to scrutinize in relation to birth years. He then draws attention to Febvre's counterpoint, which argues that identifying the innumerable political, intellectual, religious, economic, and social variables needed to distinguish one generation unit from another demand such meticulous and complex demarcations that the grandiose concept becomes ultimately "useless" and "parasitical."[74]

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[72] Maria Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists at Europe's Margins - Imagining Utopia, 1870s–1920s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 83.

[73] Alan B. Spitzer, "The Historical Problem of Generations," *American Historical Review* 78, no. 5 (December 1973): 1356.

[74] Ibid., 1356.

Some skeptics of the generation concept tend to adopt a stance that does not outright dismiss the surface-level implications of the notion. While Eliot acknowledges his aversion to the term "generation," he concedes the existence of a "generational mood." However, he portrays himself as removed from this prevailing mood, suggesting a certain degree of detachment or even resistance to the collective sentiments of his contemporaries: "It happens now and then that a poet by some strange accident expresses the mood of his generation, at the same time that he is expressing a mood of his own which is quite remote from that of his generation."[75] These words of Eliot were followed by his conviction that a poet must not yield to the mood or mindset of their generation.

Despite Eliot's conviction about the necessary distance or detachment, the subject matter of the present endeavor also concerns the literati, with a particular focus on the theme of generations. Distinctions may be drawn between literary generations, and significant parallels exist between these and the broader continuum, a topic to be further explored in subsequent chapters. Literature and politics were often perceived as inextricably intertwined. One of the memoirists, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, once remarked that during the reign of Abdülhamid II, politics exerted a magnetic allure on all conscious thinkers: "All talents and intellects gravitated towards politics. Physicians transformed into poets and diplomats; agriculturists enlisted in the political committees."[76] In the present compendium of memoirs under examination, a considerable portion unsurprisingly emanates from the pens of individuals engaged in political pursuits. Refik Halid echoes a similar sentiment with Hüseyin Cahit, mentioning that there was a time when, "instead of possessing a profession, an art, a

[75] John Guillory, "The Ideology of Canon-Formation: T. S. Eliot and Cleanth Brooks," *Critical Inquiry* 10, no. 1 (1983): 182. T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, in A Norton Critical Edition, edited by Michael North (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 244.

[76] "Bütün kabiliyetler ve zekalar dönüp dolaşıp siyasete geliyorlardı. Doktorlar şair ve diplomat oluyor, ziraatçılar siyasi komiteye giriyorlar. Siyaset uyanık müfekkirelerin hepsi üzerinde bir mıknatıs tesiri gösteriyor." Yalçın, *Tanıdıklarım*, 185.

stable and productive occupation," everyone could readily "become politicians, partisans, komitadjis, or even brigands."[77]

Politics and literature have long been domains for generational expression and exploration, though it is likely contended that the present era of the twenty-first century offers other avenues for expressing such themes. In examining the rhetoric of Pierre Nora, who asserts, "Since generation implies conflict and self-conscious self-proclamation, what better arenas for self-expression could any generation find than politics and literature,"[78] one must ponder if this assertion still holds true in the current epoch. Indeed, Pierre Nora's once rhetorical statement can now be contemplated as an earnest inquiry with multiple responses. This line of thought leads one to embrace Spitzer's simple but perceptive adage: "Each generation writes its own history of generations."[79]

Upon careful contemplation of the historiographical endeavor, it becomes allegeable that each generation partakes in the task of delineating its own interpretation of the generational theme. The moment at which generational impact materializes is mutable, with scholarly discourse and ideological interpretation shaping the contours of this process. A generational constitution is not solely the prerogative of the youthful populace. Youth and formative years have often been perceived as the nucleus of generational influence; however, distinct notions have emerged that highlight the significance of early childhood experiences, such as the postwar tribulation of fatherless offspring.[80] This particular experience has led to the retrospective ascription of a collective identity to a generation, defining it as a generation of victimhood.

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[77] "Bir zamanlar, önüne gelen, bir meslek, bir sanat, devamlı, feyizli, ciddi bir iş sahibi olacağına politikacılık, fırkacılık, komiteciIik, hatta çetecilik ederdi." Refik Halid Karay, *Üç Nesil Üç Hayat*, compiled by Aslıhan Karay Özdaş (İstanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi, 2009), 225.

[78] Nora, 514.

[79] Spitzer, 1353.

[80] Abosede George, Clive Glaser, Margaret D. Jacobs, Chitra Joshi, Emily Marker, Alexandra Walsham, Wang Zheng, Bernd Weisbrod, "AHR Conversation: Each Generation Writes Its Own History of Generations," *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 5 (December 2018): 1512.

Distinct phases, with their unique challenges and triumphs, contribute to the concatenation of experiences that forge a generational identity and, in turn, shape the historiographical narratives weaved. In this thesis, Young Turk's memoirs are examined, encompassing works written and published across diverse temporal spans and phases of the memoirists' life cycles. Some authors, in their elderly years, reflect upon their erstwhile standing as "Young" Turks. A persistent endeavor to construct or interpret generation pervades these texts. This retrospective aspect underscores that, although youth may be deemed the dominant determinative moment for this generation, the process of generational constitution transcends the confines of that singular phase.

As conduits for generational subjectivity, memoirs hold a crucial position in historical inquiry. Dina Gusejnova scrutinizes former Russian senator Baron Taube, who, reflecting on the tumultuous decade following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, remarked on the peculiar times he found himself in.[81] Former ministers, field marshals, and dethroned monarchs, who once held considerable power, were now “putting the work they had been trained to do to rest in order to put to paper in haste” their experiences in those "happier days."[82] Albeit, akin to Taube, numerous memoirists under question emphasize the inclination to pen memoirs, a substantial contingent regards the memoir literature, especially “written by the first rank,” in Turkey as relatively deficient. Among these dissenters is Münevver Ayaşlı, who, within her own memoirs, concurs with the sentiments of Yusuf Ziya Ortaç: "A bountiful memoir literature exists in the West. We are clueless in this regard too."[83] Subsequently enumerating

[81] Dina Gusejnova, *European Elites and Ideas of Empire, 1917–1957* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), xxiv.

[82] Taube, however, questioned the reliability of these "subjective witnesses of the first rank," as they were likely seeking to expiate themselves through their recollections. That was not a total distrust in the genre, Gusejnova shows, as Taube believed his own memories of the events he dubbed the "Great Catastrophe" held greater public value. He perceived the Great War, that "Great Catastrophe," as “a personal, an imperial, and a generational disaster.” See, ibid., 154.

[83] "Batı’da zengin bir hâtırat edebiyatı vardır. Biz bu yönden de züğürtüz." Münevver Ayaşlı, *İşittiklerim Gördüklerim Bildiklerim* (Istanbul: Timaş, 2014), 9.

several notable figures who departed without bequeathing a memoir, she inquires, "Why cannot these individuals wield the pen?"[84] She contends that numerous intertwined rationales exist, yet the preeminent cause must be indolence. Two additional significant factors pointed by her encompass adiaphory predicated upon the aphorism *après moi, le déluge* and the trepidation of suffering persecution.

A peculiar paradox materialized, even amidst the epochs characterized as harboring "memoir booms:" Some authors decried the dearth of memoirs while others extolled their profusion. Too, the scholarly discourse, embroiled in a quest for the genre's "true potential" or, as Harry Haroutunian phrased for the theme of modernization theory, "a developmental Archimedean point,"[85] remained an exiguous realm of divergent perspectives, inside and outside the Turkish contexts. Albert Hourani's observations of Rashid Rida, the early-twentieth-century Egyptian reformer, shows that Hourani accentuated the rarity of Arabic autobiographies: "He has left us something which is rare in Arabic, a fragment of autobiography which in fact is a history of his intellectual and spiritual formation during the first thirty years or so of his life." However, the notion that autobiographical writings were nearly nonexistent in Arabic literature found itself unmoored, for as Dwight Reynolds shows, in the 1983 revised edition of Hourani's book, an alteration emerged: "He has left us something which is *not so rare in Arabic as was once thought*, a fragment of autobiography."[86] This recalibrated perspective exemplifies the ever-evolving understanding of memoirs and autobiographies.

There is also a tendency to classify memoirs according to the strategies they deploy. As İlhan Tekeli delineated, authors employ diverse strategies when crafting their memoirs. The first strategy, he says, the "lineage strategy," emphasizes the author's distinguished heritage, grounding

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[84] "Neden bu kimseler kalemi ele alamıyorlar?" Ayaşlı, 10.

[85] Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), xvi.

[86] Dwight F. Reynolds, ed., *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft2c6004x0/.

their prestige in their family's legacy. The second, the "self-making strategy," foregrounds personal achievements as the primary source of the author's social standing. Lastly, the "defensive strategy" centers on the author's noble intentions behind failed endeavors, casting them as well-intentioned victims of uncontrollable circumstances.[87] Though a certain memoir may appear to predominantly exhibit a singular strategy, it is not uncommon for texts to participate in multiple stratagems, rather than belong exclusively to one, in a manner analogous to what will be discussed later with regards to memoirs and genre theory.

It is necessary for the purposes of the present endeavor to state that the intensity of strategies deployed by the memoirists may assist in the disclosure of their vantage point concerning the matter of generational thinking. Practitioners of lineage strategy can easily be recognized as concentrating on the vertical aspect of the generation concept or subscribing to the fathers-and-sons paradigm of generation theory. Lovell, in his “From Genealogy to Generation: The Birth of Cohort Thinking in Russia” sagaciously alerts the reader to the potential peril of presuming a particular comprehension of the term "pokolenie", Russian term meaning "generation," solely due to its heightened prevalence in the texts.[88] The clarion call resonates with undeniable pertinence when considering the memoirs under scrutiny. The term "generation" permeates these texts, occasionally alluding to familial lineage or, as evidenced by Şevket Süreyya Aydemir’s recollection of his tangled emotions during a raid, encompassing broader temporal epochs: "I felt some strange and wild emotions rising inside me, emotions that had been passed down to us from our ancestors for generations and generations but which had remained numb under the external influences of society and upbringing."[89] He

[87] İlhan Tekeli, "Bireyin Yaşamı Nasıl Tarih Oluyor," *Toplumsal Tarih* 16, no. 95 (2001): 13-20.

[88] Lovell, 590.

[89] "[...] içimden garip ve vahşî birtakım duyguların kabardığını hissettim. Nesiller ve nesiller ötesi atalarımızdan bize gelen, fakat toplumun, terbiyenin sathî tesirleri altında uyuşup kalmış olan duygular hep birden ayaklanıyordu." Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Suyu Arayan Adam* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2021), 108.

invokes a primitive proclivity towards violence, tempered by civilization's veneer yet resurgent amidst the tumult of war.

The memoirists employ "generation" with its many functions. Its reference to familial links does not preclude an encompassment of social dimensions, as these need not be dichotomous. "After all," Todorova posits, "generation implies relations in time."[90] This affiliation thrusts taxonomy to the forefront of our theme, a matter to be expounded upon in subsequent chapters. Addressing the term's constricted or parochial connotations, Marc Bloch opined, "A generation is nothing more than a relatively brief phase. We call the longer phases civilizations."[91] The nexus between civilization and generation assumes particular importance for the present analysis. It is attributable to the fact that the memoirists under consideration were often perceived and self-perceived as pivotal figures in a protracted civilizational transition, as they were frequently depicted as the "decisive" generation due to their trailblazing role in the said shift.

The assertion is made that the notion of a generation possesses an inherent adaptability. This elasticity can be extended considerably, yet it retains finite limits. Anchoring this notion is Martin Rintala's perspective that "no shared destiny is more fundamental than that of members of the same generation,"[92] as mortality offers a unique and primal link to members of a generation, a link that defies the bonds of other social structures such as class or nation. Such defined existential confines also underline Martin Heidegger's viewpoint: "The fact of living in and with one's generation concludes the drama of human existence."[93] The wanderers lost

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[90] Todorova, 81.

[91] Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft: Reflections on the Nature and Uses of History and the Techniques and Methods of Those Who Write It*, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: 1953), cited in Abosede George, Clive Glaser, Margaret D. Jacobs, Chitra Joshi, Emily Marker, Alexandra Walsham, Wang Zheng, Bernd Weisbrod, "AHR Conversation: Each Generation Writes Its Own History of Generations," *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 5 (December 2018): 1538.

[92] Martin Rintala, "A Generation in Politics: A Definition," *Review of Politics* 25, no. 4 (October 1963): 509.

[93] Quoted in Nora, 507.

in time, those who encapsulate an archetype of a faded era, still exist, often adorned with labels alluding to their relations with time, such as a living anachronism. However, they are not offered membership in the extinct generation since the concept of generation is rooted in biology, no matter how abstract or analogous the exploration might get.

Contrasting this perspective, and constituting a focus of this thesis, involves the connection between notions of generation and utopia. Varied generations could potentially establish a shared identity under the banner of a "utopian" generation. This observation is notably important in the case of the Young Turk generation, who not only claimed a generational perspective for their generation but also introduced certain utopian generations with that many future generations identified. What they fostered was a specific generational lexicon that would serve as a reference for subsequent generations.

3

The Old and Foresight

§ 3.1 Successors

The discourse surrounding "future generations" gained momentum and underwent revisions during the Second Constitutional Period, with a significant influence on education. Zafer Toprak highlights an example - Rehber-i İttihad, a 48-page treatise penned by Müstecâbîzade İsmet in İzmir, aimed at guiding the education of children. The treatise preambles with İsmet's words that "considering the fact that they will constitute the future generation of *Osmanlılık*, it can be confirmed that children should be subjected to a proper upbringing."[1] Attempts at defining and directing a future or utopian generation punctuated the works of Young Turks, and this narrative will discuss three such instances.

[1] "[...] Osmanlılığın nesl-i müstakbelini teşkil edeceklerini nazar-ı dikkate alınırsa çocukların ne kadar metin usul-i terbiyeye tâbi olmaları lâzım geleceği tasdik olunur." Quoted in Zafer Toprak, "80. Yıldönümünde 'Hürriyetin İlânı' (1908) ve 'Rehber-i İttihad'," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 42, 1988, pp. 157-173.

The first instance brings forth the label of "revolutionary generation," a term with which Haydar Rüştü[2] associated.[3] Yahya Kemal, too, associates with this term in his *Siyasi ve Edebi Portreler* where he reflects on a 1912 meeting with Refik Halid's father Mehmed Halid, who "clad in his robe and furs, with his pronunciation, his way of eating and enjoying himself, and his way of dealing with people, made it clear that he was a commoner, and that he was deeply resentful of the Unionists, and more generally of the whole revolutionary generation."[4] Several other accounts, however, perceived the "revolutionary generation" as one yet to come. Given the expansive implications of this label and its progressive connotations, it is unsurprising that multiple generations found resonance with this hypothetical generation. Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, for instance, includes Mustafa Kemal in the ranks of the "revolutionary generation"[5] in his memoir. However, Aydemir's characterization of this generation is somewhat nebulous and unresolved. He expresses in a 1932 writing that as the individually valuable and original ideas and theoretical aspects of their revolution are progressively explicated, "these principles would form the touchstone for the revolutionary generation,"[6] giving rise to a new, standardized revolutionary archetype. Analogously, Yakup Kadri

[2] Haydar Rüştü Öktem, "Kapı Dışarı," *Anadolu,* 20 Aralık 1938, cited in Murat Kaya, "Gazeteci ve Siyasetçi Olarak Haydar Rüştü Öktem" (Master's thesis, Akdeniz Üniversitesi, 2018), 158.

[3] A 1951 text titled "Our Great Loss," appearing in the *Anadolu* newspaper after his passing, echoes a similar sentiment: "Haydar Rüştü was among the most outstanding and devoted faces of the revolutionary generation." See "Büyük Kaybımız," *Anadolu,* 12 August 1951, cited in Zeki Arıkan, "Haydar Rüştü'nün Ölümü," in *Mütareke ve İşgal Anıları* by Haydar Rüştü Öktem (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991), 22.

[4] Yahya Kemal, *Siyasi ve Edebi Portreler* (İstanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 2022), 42. I used Christine Philliou's translation in Philliou, 21.

[5] Aydemir, *Suyu Arayan Adam*, 506. Similarly, he extends this categorization to Falih Rıfkı, stating, "Falih Rıfkı, it can be suggested, was the most keen-eyed and, consequently, the most open-minded writer of the revolutionary generation" See Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, "Falih Rıfkı ve Son Eseri," *Kadro*, Sayı:9, 1932, s.44., cited in Funda Selçuk Şirin, "Bir Gazeteci ve Aydın Olarak Falih Rıfkı Atay (1893-1971)," *Vakanüvis* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2017), 260-61.

[6] Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, "Kadro," *Kadro*, no. 1, p. 3, cited in Ozan Örmeci, "The 'Kadro' movement: an intellectual movement in the early Republican period (1932-1934)," *International Review of Turkish Studies*, Spring 2011, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 20-36, p. 34.

speaks of an "idealist excitement," a sentiment that draws deeply from the profound significance of their revolution. He posits this source as so profound and vast that it will shape the consciousness and morality not only of his own generation but also the future generations.

Another term that continues to dominate the discourse and identity even in the twenty-first century is the "republican generation." Falih Rıfkı invoked this concept in a 1925 writing to reference the founding generation, born and raised in the era of the empire, and transitioned into the republic. He stated, "The brave and heroic republican generation, which has overturned centuries of untruths, must equate science and art - the sole tools for propagating and maintaining their beliefs and convictions - with the most vital needs."[7] The term is frequently employed later to denote a generation that exclusively experienced the Republican era. This perspective is exemplified in Yakup Kadri's novel *Ankara* where he explores the contrasting experiences of two generations; one who transitioned from the late Ottoman period to the Republican era and another born with the Republic. The crux of this difference is based on the faculty of memory. When the female character asks her male partner the reason behind him claiming a generational difference between himself and a woman who is thirteen years younger than him, the answer dwells upon memorialization:

> She does not remember anything from the times in which I grew up, studied, opened my eyes, and knew myself. She has no idea about the fez, the cage, the veil. She does not know the old letters. The stories of the times when gold and silver were a means of exchange seem like prehistoric tales to her. If you ask her what a country with sultans and caliphs would be like, she says, 'Isn't it l

[7] "Asr-dîde butlânları köklerinden söküp atan cesur ve kahraman cumhuriyet nesli, kendi iman ve kanaatlerini sevdirmek ve devam ettirmek için yegâne vasıta olan ilim ve sanatı en hayati ihtiyaçlarla bir tutmak zaruretindedir." Falih Rıfkı, "İnkılâbın İlmi ve Sanatı," *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye*, 15 July 1925, cited in Halil Özyiğit, "Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e geçiş sürecinde basında resim eleştirisi," *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 27 (2017): 174-196, p. 188.

> ike Baghdad in the time of Harun Rashid?' How much more can time divide two people?[8]

When the female character refrains from endorsing the superiority of the new generation over their own, instead asserting that the new generation owes them "its existence and all the things that lend value to this existence," the male character responds, "Indeed, we contemplated, we dreamed, we longed, yet our contemplation materialized as their reality, our dream manifested as their actuality, our longing became their will."[9] He identified a significant shift so momentous that it could relegate the events of a few decades past into prehistory. Nevertheless, the aftermath of this shift witnesses the actualization of the dreams born from that so-called prehistory.

Literature is a fruitful ground for sketching further abstract generations. The third instance to be brought forth is from Mehmed Akif Ersoy's work *Asım*. Mehmed Akif presents three distinct generations in this text. One character, Hocazade, reputed to represent Mehmed Akif himself,[10] reproaches the preceding generation, embodied by another character, Köse İmam, for their pessimistic demeanor. In Hocazade's perspective, his generation, *nesl-i hazır*,[11] emancipated the older ones from despotism and endowed them with a freedom as precious as “diamonds,"[12] thereby undeserving of reproach. He chastises Köse İmam's generation for perpetuating a climate of pessimism among the youth. Guided by optimism

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[8] "[…] benim içinde büyüdüğüm, tahsilimi yaptığım, gözümü açıp kendimi bildiğim devirlere ait hiçbir şey hatırlamıyor. Ne fese, ne kafese, ne peçeye dair bir fikri var. Ne eski harfleri biliyor. Altım, gümüşün bir mübadele vasıtası olduğu devrin hikâyeleri ise, ona, birer tarihöncesi masalları gibi geliyor. Padişahlı, halifeli bir memleket nasıl olur, diye sorsan, Harun Reşit zamanında Bağdat gibi değil mi? diyor. Zaman iki insanı, birbirinden daha ne türlü ayırabilir?" Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, *Ankara* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1987), 223.

[9] "Evet, biz düşündük. Biz, tahayyül ettik, biz, istedik. Fakat bizim düşüncemiz onlarda vaka; bizim hayalimiz onlarda hakikat; bizim isteğimiz, onlarda irade oldu." Ibid., 224-225.

[10] M. Orhan Okay and M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ, "Mehmed Âkif Ersoy (1873-1936)," *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 28 (Ankara: İSAM, 2003), 432-439, p. 437.

[11] Mehmet Akif Ersoy, *Safahat,* compiled by Necmettin Turinay, edited by Selçuk Karakılıç (Ankara: TBMM Yayınları, 2021), 744.

[12] Ibid., 797.

and hope, Hocazade influences Asım, the character symbolizing the future generation, in a hopeful direction. Hocazade envisions that the Islamic world will break free from inertia through tenacity and resilience, with salvation to be achieved by Asım and his generation. While Asım, as a veteran of Gallipoli, is located within a specific temporal context, Mehmed Akif employs this character to paint a utopian generation representing the future of the Islamic world. There is no major conflict but a discernable difference in demeanor between Hocazade and Asım, as, after Asım returns from the war wherein he lost numerous friends, he resorts to brute force despite his "good intentions." Hocazade persuades Asım to further his education, suggesting Europe as the ideal destination. The narrative culminates with Asım journeying to Germany with his peers to pursue scientific studies for the benefit of all Muslims. This narrative resonated with numerous groups, political leaders, and youth organizations, leading to contemporary identification with "the generation of Asım"[13] or emphasizing the aspiration to actualize this hypothetical generation.All three theoretical depictions share a common trait – an inherent hegemonic tendency. The conceptual portrayals of these generations do not originate from a major disharmony with the Young Turk generation. Instead, they are based on the notion that these hypothetical generations will further actualize the dreams and convictions of the Young Turk generation, despite the variance in these aspirations and convictions themselves. What this text implies with hegemony aligns with what Ortega called "cumulative epochs," the times of the old. It is previously contended in this thesis that the Young Turk generation orchestrated a transition from a cumulative epoch to an eliminatory one and subsequently spearheaded the shift back. This generation continued to exert considerable influence over the political and ideological environment during the formative years of subsequent generations. Moreover, they also propagated a generational vocabulary

[13] For the versatility in the application of affiliation with this generation, see: Ayşe Çavdar, "Köse İmam, Hocazade'yi kovdu: Asım'a ne olacak?" *Birikim* 347 (March 2018): 13-23.

that shaped and influenced the narrative and discourse of the following generations.

Memoirs, providing robust competition to other literary forms, yield valuable insights into the experiences of past generations. Rather than offering speculative narratives about future generations, memoirs give an account of what has transpired, which, although limiting their capacity to outline utopian generations, makes them uniquely positioned to probe the quiddities of discord between the Young Turk generation and its predecessors and also, contingent on the memoirists' age on the dates of composition, its successors. Although speculations about future generations do arise occasionally, these conjectures primarily concern how subsequent generations will perceive the memoirists' generation. The initial task is to set forth a framework suitable for such memoirs.

§ 3.2 Memoirs

What could be the underlying impetus that drives a distinguished warrior or a solitary artisan, a reticent reserve officer, a prominent journalist, a diligent introvert, a politically ostracized female intellectual, or a self-taught career bureaucrat to pursue this relatively avant-garde form of expression? Do memoirs constitute a unique and independent medium, or do they encompass a finite array of expressive channels? Fortuitously, most of the memoirs in question do not abandon the inquisitive mind, as they willingly proffer some insights. It is not that these revelations can be accepted unquestioningly, but rather that the proposed explanations may hold truth, serving not only as potential interpretations but also as actual reflections, if not for the authors themselves, then for the archetypes of their respective eras. Inherently necessitating an extroverted exertion, a memoir invariably gravitates toward a shared objective of crafting a compelling narrative. This motive pervades memoirs, regardless of whether the underlying purpose is to absolve oneself of perceived guilt, trumpet one's accomplishments while silencing one's

transgressions, stake a claim to a role in significant events, offer apologies for one's absence therein, and/or bequeath a chronicle of one's existence to future generations.

Three dimensions of the memoirs examined: Firstly, the author and the central figure are one and the same individual. Secondly, while these texts may be characterized by episodic elements, they exhibit a retrospective endeavor that interweaves and distills content. Thirdly these works embody not only the foundational underpinnings of the author's intent but also a "theoretical regimen of reception."[14] The manifestation of these qualities does not confer strict adherence to the genre; rather, it indicates participation within the genre. Within the panoply of genres the texts engage in, memoir prevails as the dominant form. Nevertheless, not all readily embrace the memoir designation. A significant portion of the memoirs scrutinized brim with a considerable effort to delineate their nature, their raison d'être, and the appropriate manner in which they ought to be interpreted. The initial appraisal, concerning their essence, infrequently deviates from an examination of their affinity to adjacent genres, the most prevalent among these being the novel, diary, and history.

The novel and historical narrative possess a perplexing interplay, further intensified within the ambiguous territory inhabited by the genre of the historical novel. Certain memoirs regard the novel as a form to aspire to, and in doing so, explicitly underscore their distinction from novels. Bezmi Nusret (Kaygusuz)'s text exemplifies this approach, bearing the appellation "Like A Novel."[15] Editors and reviewers likewise extol specific memoirs as fluid, engaging, and immersive, drawing analogous comparisons by asserting that the memoir "reads like a thrilling adventure novel."

The safe ground of analogy is occasionally ruptured, with several memoirs erroneously categorized and published as novels.[16] Authors

[14] Emma Pustan, "Schreber's Memoirs: the Crisis of the Autobiographical Pact and the Ethics of Taxonomy," *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory* 2, no. 2 (2016): 135. Also see Paul De Man, "Autobiography as De-facement," *MLN* 94, no. 5 (1979): 919-930.

[15] Bezmi Nusret Kaygusuz, *Bir Roman Gibi* (İzmir: İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 2002).

[16] Ali Birinci, "Roman mı, Hatırat mı?" *Türk Yurdu* 153-154 (May-June 2000): 88-91.

effortlessly draw comparisons between their work and novels within metaphorical confines; however, they tend to be more elaborate when endeavoring to situate their writings relative to historical accounts. Some authors modestly deny their texts the distinction of history, and a majority within this group also refrain from labeling their work as memoirs. İsmail Müştak Mayakon offers an exemplary case, stating that his work is neither a political history of the Hamidian era nor the political memoirs of a diplomat who lived in Yıldız: "At best, it is a penning voyage taken on the traces of my observations from twenty-five years ago. An unpretentious and simple voyage."[17] Falih Rıfkı Atay presents his work as "neither a history nor a memoir: in these pages, you will read a series of unordered and haphazard notes that attempt to portray an era."[18] Ali Fuad Erden puts forth a more unconventional perspective, noting that his book is "not intended to be a history of the Fourth Army. Nor is it a 'memoir' that has nothing to do with what happened in the war. Nor does it consist only of anecdotes and stories related to the war. It is a collection of events, anecdotes, and stories." By differentiating between history and memoir based on content, he later asserts that "it is a few pages of our recent history."[19]

Zekeriya Sertel asserts, "I am not writing a history book. I content myself with writing my own life and opinions that belong to me," before cautioning that "the life of a journalist is the life of the country."[20] Although most texts cautiously reject the label of history, their connection to historical events is consistently underscored. İsmail Müştak aims "to illuminate a particular aspect of a particular history."[21] Hüseyin Kazım Kadri draws a nuanced distinction between "document of history" and

[17] "Bu yazılar ne Abdülhamid devrinin bir tarihi siyasisîdir, ne de Yıldızda yaşamış bir diplomatın siyasî hatırâtı... Bunlar olsa olsa yirmi beş yıl evvele aid müşahedelerimin izleri üstünde bugün yapılmış bir kalem gezintisidir. İddiasız ve sade bir gezinti." İsmail Müştak Mayakon, *Yıldız'da Neler Gördüm?* (İstanbul: Sertel Matbaası, 1940), 10.

[18] Quoted and translated in Selim Deringil, *The Ottoman Twilight in the Arab Lands* (Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2019), 2.

[19] Ibid., 93-94.

[20] Zekeriya Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım* (İstanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1977), 9.

[21] Mayakon, 10.

"history," stating that the publication of Cemal Pasha's memoirs emboldened him to write his own. He notes that his perception of Cemal's work as factoid and concern that the public could receive it as unparalleled document of history spurred his intention "to serve history."[22] This reciprocal aspect holds true for numerous memoirs. İsmail Müştak differentiates his writing from this trend, stating that his work is "neither a response to anyone nor a provocation and intervention written to create a bone of contention."[23] By refusing to contribute to the trend, he alerts the reader to its existence. Published in the CUP-backed *Tanin* in 1911, Mayakon's memoirs fuel and fortify the anti-Hamidian rhetoric that gained momentum after the 1909 Counterrevolution[24]; moreover, by arguing that only palace officials could write credibly about the Sultan,[25] Mayakon subtly validates and strategically situates his narrative.

Many memoirs cite "preventing the truth from being lost" as the primary motivation behind their creation. Authors make it clear that they only share their thoughts, yet they also assert that their propositions reflect the truth. Bezmi Nusret bases his writing on "truth, sincerity, and [his] own opinion alone," with the "sole purpose" of commemorating the past and preserving "some precious values and truths that are about to be forgotten."[26] Kazım Karabekir, speaking of the independence war, emphasizes that "if its creators do not write it, its history will become a

[22] Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyete Hatıralarım* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2018), 262-263.

[23] "Başlamadan evvel söyliyeyim ki, bu yazılar ne bir kimseye cevab ve mukabeledir, ne de çıban başı koparmak maksadıyla yazılmış bir tahrik ve müdahaledir." Mayakon, 10.

[24] For a review of another critical work in this discourse, see this commentary on Yervant Odyan's novel *Abdülhamid and Sherlock Holmes*: Mehmet Fatih Uslu, Benzersiz Bir Roman: Abdülhamid ve Sherlock Holmes, January 21, 2017, http://mefuslu.blogspot.com/2017/01/benzersiz-bir-roman-abdulhamid-ve.html. I extend my gratitude to Ramazan Hakkı Öztan for directing my attention to this subject matter and the cited review.

[25] Mayakon, 37.

[26] Kaygusuz, *3*.

fairytale."[27] Haydar Rüştü unambiguously states that his writing is "the truth free from illusions and exaggerations," revealing that Michael Rodas' memoirs, the then Greek press manager in İzmir, compelled him to write.[28] Any memoir could bear historical significance for a historian to scrutinize, but this reciprocal aspect and historical consciousness are not typical at every stage of history. These authors intertwine group interests with the subjective thread, as they closely relate the remainder of their lives to their actions during the pivotal moments detailed in their memoirs. This holds true regardless of whether the author enjoyed a lengthy political career or experienced political ostracism. Interacting with other memoirs is not limited to contesting their factuality; many also reference collaborative efforts alongside their own contributions.

Haydar Rüştü acknowledges that by publishing his memoir, Rodas "has fulfilled his duty to his nation and history,"[29] and expresses a desire for similar fulfillment: "I insist on attaching special importance to the memories of every citizen who participated in the battle and insurgency, which will be based on the documents, and I repeat my wish that these memories will be published."[30] Celal Bayar solicits answers from Haydar Rüştü for his own historiographical work of the period, regarding this as "a national duty."[31] Bezmi Nusret, participating in a broader document-

[27] Quoted and translated in Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building*, 22. Similar remarks regarding the potential "fairytalization" of history are mirrored in Falih Rıfkı's commentary on (the competitor-narrative) *Nutuk*: “If the history of the Gazi were left in obscurity, what would our situation be? (…) This book will serve the function of an amulet in times when fables and fairy tales are fabricated, it will save you from all accidents both visible and invisible.” Quoted and translated in Hülya Adak, "Who is Afraid of Dr. Riza Nur’s Autobiography?," in *Autobiographical Themes in Turkish Literature: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Olcay Akyıldız, Halim Kara, and Börte Sagaster (Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 2016), 134.

[28] Öktem, 43-45.

[29] "[…] kendi milletine ve tarihine karşı vazifesini ifa eylemiştir." Öktem, 44.

[30] "[…] cidal ve kıyama iştirak eden her vatandaşın vesikalara istinad edecek hatıralarına bir ehemmiyet-i mahsusa atf etmekte ısrar ediyor ve bu hatıraların neşr edilmesi temennisini tekrar eyliyorum." Ibid., 45.

[31] Bayar’s letter is quoted in Zeki Arıkan, "Haydar Rüştü’nün Ölümü," in ibid., 26-28.

based trend, appends to his memoir the letter he sent to Bayar, signifying his eagerness to contribute to Bayar's endeavors.[32]

The armamentarium of this memoir pact is evidentiality.[33] Authors take pride in their chronological records and value their ability to maintain a detailed account of events. A widespread inclination toward documentary evidence prevails. Authors either strive to provide chronological details, albeit not always infallible, or adopt an apologetic tone. The latter approach often involves expressing regret for not having kept diaries. They cite the "hectic times"[34] as a reason for not maintaining daily notes, yet still regard this lack as a "failure and defect."[35] The emphasis on this defect is intrinsic to the memoirs' inner truth regimes. Kazım Nami Duru states, "I write about these events by trusting the grace of my memory. The chronological classification will be out of my hands. I regret that I did not take note of them in time," and he adds, "However, I can say that what I have written is nothing but the truth."[36] This coupling is remarkably similar for Bezmi Nusret and Haydar Rüştü. Haydar Rüştü does not claim

[32] Kaygusuz, 246.

[33] Not only the choices of authors but also the reception of specific memoirs underlines this aspect. These memoirs, when perceived as deficient in evidence, face criticism: "He fails to produce any document or evidence in favor of his claims." See, Zeki Arıkan, "Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Hatıralarım," *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1, no. 2 (2018): 376. A direct link between memoirs and history is asserted: "He does not provide any documents or evidence to support his assertions. His claims stand unsupported; he introduces no new documents(...)His approach is merely postulation(...)This fundamental legal principle ought to be applied to history as well: The responsibility of proof lies with the claimant." See, Turgut Özakman, *Rıza Nur Dosyası* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2009), 30-31. Both of the memoirs that have been criticized in the cited texts are notably recognized for their critique of *Nutuk*. For *Nutuk*'s "narrative monopoly," see Hülya Adak, "Who is Afraid of Dr. Riza Nur's Autobiography?," in *Autobiographical Themes in Turkish Literature: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Olcay Akyıldız, Halim Kara, and Börte Sagaster (Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 2016): 125-142.

[34] Öktem, 58.

[35] Ibid., 136.

[36] Kazım Nami Duru, *Hatıralar: İttihat Terakki/Cumhuriyet Devri Makedonya Hatıraları* (Ankara: Altınordu Yayınları, 2017), 27.

to be able to identify all incidents completely, yet he pledges that "what is written is the truth."[37] Bezmi Nusret also acknowledges memory gaps due to the lack of daily notes, with his assertion that he writes the truth following suit.[38]

The authors lamented the absence of daily records, as the presence of these records could facilitate a chronological and more detailed narrative order, directly enhancing evidentiality. Nevertheless, they refuse to concede any ground regarding their writings embodying the truth. This group is not entirely representative of the larger group, as keeping daily notes was "part of a common social custom of the educated elite in Istanbul since their early youth."[39] Numerous memoirs, including those of Mustafa Abdülhalik Renda and Kazım Karabekir, are founded on reworked notes.

Additional dissonance exists among the memoirs. Zürcher emphasizes that "in some cases, we are dealing with verbal accounts or notes which have been turned into a book by the protagonist himself or by one of Turkey's many popular historians or journalists." These works are "generally unsupported by documents and meant as a form of entertainment for a large public. They should therefore be used only with the utmost caution."[40] Furthermore, while some memoirs present comprehensive life narratives, others cover only a specific era, with the latter group displaying considerable divergence. The preferred mediums also vary—while contemporary newspapers serialized some memoirs, others were written and published as books.

The medium's influence on content categorization undeniably adds a distinctive layer to the memoirs. Those serialized in newspapers naturally exhibit a higher density of subheadings. Books reworking notes also reveal this propensity. In contrast, others generally employ broader

[37] Öktem, 58.

[38] Kaygusuz, 3.

[39] Yasemin Ipek, "Autobiography and Conservative-Nationalist Political Opposition in Early Republican Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 19, no. 1 (2018): 157.

[40] Erik J. Zürcher, "Young Turk Memoirs as a Historical Source: Kâzım Karabekir's İstiklâl Harbimiz," in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building* (London: IB Tauris, 2010), 18.

segmentation and opt for subheads like "During Abdülhamid's Reign," "During Constitutional Period," often combining these with more personal ones like "In Civil Service Academy" or "In Trade." Authors focusing on a relatively shorter period or those who had not experienced significant shifts in their professional career put their role or profession at the forefront of their narrative. Others prefer a more abstract way of interpreting their lives: Bezmi Nusret repeatedly sees himself as "a standalone person,"[41] while Abdülhalik Renda identifies as a man of "duty."[42] Serialized memoirs, often written in fragments, embody a more fragile concinnity. Additionally, the dynamic nature of this medium may have prompted content and stylistic metamorphoses over time.

New national timelines are interwoven, giving rise to three distinct 'memoir boom' periods identified in the literature. Given the memoirs' unique reciprocal aspect and their connection to historiography, it is not surprising that the authors embody both the historian and the historical subject. Consequently, these texts tend to reach audiences during periods of favorable political climates. Doğan Gürpınar highlights the first memoir boom occurring between 1908-1913, attributing the rarity of memoirs before 1908 to Hamidian censorship and the genre's immaturity. The period between 1913-1918, under the CUP, was relatively quiet, with a new boom emerging between 1918-1922. This period saw Unionists and anti-Unionists dueling "in the shadows of the British occupation and the resistance in Ankara."[43] The last boom took place much later, in the 1950s and 1960s, with the end of the single-party regime. The early decades of the republic represent another period of silence under the narrative monopoly of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's *Nutuk.*

Periods may become muted, and so can memoirs. Fikriye Karaman examines the memoirs of five Arab intellectuals born between 1865 and 1888, underscoring their silence on the "concept of the (failed) Arab caliphate," a contentious issue among Arabs during the first quarter of the

[41] Kaygusuz, 89, 94.

[42] Renda, 56, 76-77, 115, 245.

[43] Doğan Gürpinar, "The Politics of Memoirs and Memoir-Publishing in Twentieth Century Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 13, no. 3 (2012): 539.

20th century.[44] Tasos Kostopoulos emphasizes the silence in IMRO (The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) memoirs published during the interwar years by the Macedonian Scientific Institute of Sofia, particularly concerning the organization's agrarian policies. He concludes that this negligence "must be attributed to the specific conditions that dictated both their compilation and publication,"[45] a point worth bearing in mind when reflecting on memoirs. Mustafa Kemal's *Nutuk,* the narrative of which initiates in the year 1919, has been interpreted as evincing a deliberate silence, suggesting that preceding events hold no remembrance value.[46] A counter-perspective posits that since he had already explored his prior experiences in a separate work, reiteration was not mandated. Even if a memoirist's narrative spans from their early years to the time of penning the memoir, given that most of these memoirists in question are also writers, other mediums and their works within these can shape what is revealed and concealed in their memoirs. Thus, recognizing such silence is crucial and instructive, though the interpretations derived should be approached with caution.

There also exist memoirs that consciously omit particular subjects or epochs, acknowledging this silence directly. Ali Kemal's *Ömrüm* exemplifies this practice. Within this memoir, Ali Kemal notes the intimate nature of his relationships with his friends during his early youth, a state of affairs that did not persist. At times, he says, death intruded, but he found himself estranged from the living "by circumstances more devastating than death," attributing this to "the plague called Union and Progress," which caused an irreparable rift between him and them. Decisively

[44] Fikriye Karaman, "Arab Intellectuals Under The Young Turks: A Comparative-Historical Analysis On Memoirs (1908-1918)" (unpublished thesis, İstanbul Şehir University, 2013), 65.

[45] Tasos Kostopoulos, "'Land to the Tiller': On the Neglected Agrarian Component of the Macedonian Revolutionary Movement, 1893-1912," *Turkish Historical Review* 7 (2016): 134-166, 152.

[46] Hülya Adak, "National myths and self-na(rra)tions: Mustafa Kemal's Nutuk and Halide Edib's Memoirs and the Turkish Ordeal," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2 (2003), 515-516.

concluding that "it is better to close that chapter altogether,"[47] the narrative concludes at the age of 27.

§ 3.3 Predecessors

Ali Kemal's memoir is also noteworthy for its early focus on his father, whom he lost at a young age. His text commences with a section devoted to delineating his father's persona.[48] Three discernible tendencies emerge in the depiction of fathers within the memoirs under review. Some opt for silence; others portray good interactions with a living father, while the third group grapples with the implications of a dead father. The memoir of Ali Haydar Midhat is intriguing in this regard, as it frequently contains lamentations about the perceived lack of respect and recognition he received, despite the great efforts his late father, Midhat Pasha, made for the constitution. He often conveys this sentiment through the opinions of others, with which he ultimately agrees. He cites, for instance, an article from the "Matin" newspaper that described the journey of a train returning from Salonica and its passengers following the restoration of the constitution. The reporter notes that while leaders of the CUP were lauded at each station, Ali Haydar, also on board, was largely overlooked, with his "curtains firmly closed." As people were celebrating the reinstatement of the Kanun-i Esasi, the reporter asked, "Why is the reputation of Mithat Pasha, the architect of this system, glorified everywhere, while his son is met with such indifference!" and added, "Is this how we

[47] "O zaman arkadaşlarımla aramızda böyle bir samîmiyet mevcut idi. Fakat, heyhat, o ânın te'nîsiyle dünya dedikleri bu aşağı muhitte o mehâsin, o meâlî yaşar mı? Günler, seneler geçtikçe o muhabbet, o safvet de azaldı. Bazen ölüm araya girdi. Fakat yaşayanlardan ölümden daha fena hâllerle, hâilelerle ayrıldık. İttihad Ve Terakkî dedikleri veba, âfet nasıl kardeşi kardeşten bile bazen ayırdı ise, kısmen onları da benden öylece uzaklaştırdı. Ne ise... Lâl olursun dinlesen bir safha tâb-ı sîneden. O faslı büsbütün kapamak daha hayırlıdır." Ali Kemal, *Ömrüm*, compiled by M. Kayahan Özgül (Ankara: Cümle Yayınları, 2016), 124.

[48] Ali Kemal, 23-28.

treat the son of a man of such stature as Mithat Pasha, who propagated constitution and gave his life for this cause?" Ali Haydar corroborates this "unfortunate" experience, stating that "the reality was precisely this."[49] He also presents a letter from a British diplomat who, following Ali Haydar's appointment to *Ayan*, the assembly of provincial notables, wrote to him, "You are now convinced that your father's immortal great work has been sanctified by another generation."[50] He says that his appointment was met with criticism by the CUP, primarily due to his young age, and he recalls Abdülhamid II saying, "On the one hand, they heap praises on your father. Then they think it is too much even to appoint you to *Ayan*. What kind of absurdity is this?"[51] There are numerous other instances in his narrative relating to the positive and negative attention he garnered due to his father's name, making it a recurring theme throughout his memoir.

As it is frequently noticed in the literature, generational subjectivity also "draws on relationships with the dead."[52] The instance introduced, the opening section of Ali Kemal's memoir, where he describes his father, is entitled "A Man of Old Times." As with future generations, memoirs at times reveal speculations about those no longer living. Ali Kemal suggests that his father, this "man of old times," "probably would not have appreciated these new ideas about freedom and constitution."[53] This archetype of the "man of old times" also finds resonance in Refik Halid's work *Üç*

[49] "Bugün, Kanunu Esasiyi ilân etmekle Türkiye bayram yapıyor; bunun mucidi olan Mithat Paşanın namı her yerde göklere çıkarılıyor, oğluna ise bu soğuk muamele neden icap ediyor!... Bizde olsa, böyle bir kanunu ilân eden ve bu uğurda hayatını veren Mithat Paşa gibi büyük bir adamın oğluna karşı böyle mi hareket ederdik? [...] Malesef, hakikat aynen bu merkezdeydi." Ali Haydar Mithat, *Hatıralarım* (İstanbul: Güler Basımevi, 1946), 202.

[50] "Babanızın ölmez büyük eserinin başka bir nesil tarafından takdis olunduğuna, şu suretle olsun siz de kanaat getirmiş oldunuz." Ali Haydar Mithat, 204.

[51] "Bir taraftan babanızı göklere çıkarıyorlar. Sonra, sizi Âyana tâyin etmemi bile çok görüyorlar. Bu ne mantıksızca harekettir?" Ibid., 203.

[52] Abosede George, Clive Glaser, Margaret D. Jacobs, Chitra Joshi, Emily Marker, Alexandra Walsham, Wang Zheng, Bernd Weisbrod, "AHR Conversation: Each Generation Writes Its Own History of Generations," *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 5 (December 2018), 1524.

[53] "Herhalde hürriyete, kanun-ı esasiye dair o yeni fikirleri hiç beğenmezdi." Ali Kemal, 28.

Nesil Üç Hayat, where he sketches the experiences of three distinct generations, each designated by the names of distinct eras: “Aziz Devrinde” (The Abdülaziz Era), “Hamit Devrinde” (The Hamidian Era), and “Şimdiki Durum” (The Current Situation) respectively. He narrates key anecdotes reflecting different generations' divergent perspectives on shared subjects, and in one of those he describes a scene from the Hamidian period involving naming a newborn baby. The child is named Ahmed Niyazi, prompting a woman to comment that she had expected the name to be Mehmet Enver, with both secondary names echoing the CUP members who emerged as "heroes" during the Second Constitutional period. Another woman interjects, creating a stereotypical image akin to the "man of old times" portrayed by Ali Kemal. She claims that the baby's "grandfather did not approve of any of these names” but they managed to persuade him to accept Niyazi: “You know, he does not appreciate these names symbolizing freedom; he is old-fashioned."[54]

Describing the father of a friend from Mekteb-i Sultani, Rıza Tevfik states: “This was a man whose temperament could be characterized as old Ottoman. His knowledge was limited.”[55] In this depiction, he establishes a demarcation between the old and the new using knowledge as the defining parameter. This pattern resonates with the writings of the previous generation. Ebüzziya Tevfik, in an article penned in 1900, remarks that during his youth, there had been sparse resources available for individuals like himself, who were keen to understand the world's unfolding events. For the section of society that did not dedicate themselves to studying a particular field of knowledge, the only available literature were romance stories, each constrained and shaped by a set of conventional tropes. He cites a letter by Akif Pasha detailing a boat ride, that was deemed print-worthy, mainly for the relative novelty of its depiction, as

[54] "Büyükbabası bu isimlerin hiçbirini istemiyordu, ama zorla Niyazi'yi kabul ettirebildik. Malum ya hürriyet isimlerini sevmiyor; eski kafalı..." Karay, 10.

[55] "Bu zat eski Osmanlı denilebilecek mizaçta bir adamdı. Pek malumatlı değildi." Rıza Tevfik, *Biraz da Ben Konuşayım,* compiled by Abdullah Uçman (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), 353.

it marked a rare instance where a narrative escaped the commonplace to preserve the distinct traits of an experience.[56]

Rıza Tevfik pivots towards that knowledge gap as the critical demarcation, rather than perspectives on freedom, when distinguishing two generations. His observations on his pursuit of freedom stand out, framing it as a personal mission steeped in his mother's experiences. The Young Turk generation is frequently self-perceived as the harbingers of freedom. Drawing from Mehmed Akif's work, Hocazade, a character representing the Young Turk generation therein, argues that his generation gifted freedom to their forebears. However, a unique depiction materializes in Rıza Tevfik's narrative. He reveals that his mother, like his close friend Ali Kemal's mother, was a Circassian women sold into slavery.[57] He contends that the root motivation for their quest for freedom stemmed from a deep-seated desire to redress their mothers' enslavement. Thus, he mentions a facet distinct from conventional notions of tyranny, emphasizing slavery.

Retribution on behalf of a parent is a theme also encountered in other memoirs. For instance, Ali Haydar recalls how he had pinned his hopes on the death of Abdülhamid II, but history took a peculiar turn, enabling him to return to Istanbul while Abdülhamid II was still in reign. Hearing from Abdülhamid II expressions of "regret—regardless of their sincerity—"for the harm inflicted upon his father gave Ali Haydar a sense of vindication, for which, he claimed, "there could be no greater revenge in this world."[58] Hüseyin Kazım's memoir stands out among those examined, particularly in its comments concerning his father. Much like Ali Kemal, he dedicates a portion of his memoir to his father's life.[59] However, unlike Ali Kemal's account, Hüseyin Kazım's memoir is replete with extensive remarks, in this sense, drawing closer parallels to Ali Haydar's

[56] Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 265.

[57] Rıza Tevfik, 222-224.

[58] "Benim için, bu dünyada bundan daha büyük bir intikam olamazdı." Ali Haydar Midhat, 198.

[59] Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyete Hatıralarım*, compiled by İsmail Kara (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2018), 78-100.

narrative. Yet his memoir also stands in contrast to that of Ali Haydar, as Hüseyin Kazım does not fixate on the influence of his late father's reputation on how others perceive him. In the segment where he recounts his father's story, it becomes apparent that other individuals engage him in conversations to express their worries and comments about his father's professional work.[60] The segment devoted to narrating his own story, however, is not laden with extensive commentary on how his father's legacy affects his perception by others, something that dominates Ali Haydar's narrative.

Hüseyin Kazım steers away from crafting a strictly individual narrative, stating that “a substantial portion of” his memoir relates to “the personal life and personality” of both his father and himself.”[61] Themes such as implementing the lessons learned from his father[62] in professional life and resolution of his father's debt[63] also feature prominently in this memoir. Bezmi Nusret stands in contrast when it comes to the latter aspect. His memoir repeatedly acknowledges the financial assistance he received from his father. As the narrative time progresses, he starts uttering phrases such as, “Once again, I found myself leaning on my father's support"[64] However, only a modest section of this memoir is allocated to illuminating his father's persona.

Contrasting with the focus on perception of others based on paternal legacy in Ali Haydar's work, Hüseyin Kazım's narrative centers on the portrayal of his father and the identification of continuities between them. What is seen in Mustafa Abdülhalik’s and Bezmi Nusret's works, interpreting their personal stories through sequential abstract constructs such as a "man of duty," and "standalone person," is mirrored in Hüseyin Kazım's account of his father. He frequently encapsulates his

[60] Ibid., 85-86.

[61] "Hatıratımın büyük bir kısmı, pederimin ve benim hayat-ı hususiye ve şahsiyemize ait olmak itibariyle […]" Ibid., 77.

[62] Ibid., 125.

[63] Ibid., 84.

[64] "Yine babamın sırtında kaldım." Kaygusuz, 221.

father's life with the phrase "a just despot."[65] He refers to a British tabloid that posthumously published his father's photograph, and in its description, used what could be construed as coarse language, referring to his father as "the last of the supporters of justice and order by means of the stick."[66] Hüseyin Kazım refutes this characterization and states that "in Siroz, the most important center of Macedonia," he did not hesitate to "implement the form of governance" represented by his father and he "witnessed its numerous benefits." The assertion of continuity is not enforced by others but is self-initiated.

A sense of disappointment with elders is largely expressed in the memoirs, and the encounter with the sultan provides an intriguing facet in some life narratives. Hüseyin Kazım recounts his meeting with Sultan Reşad, to whom he previously held a favorable influence, after his appointment as the Deputy of Manisa. Upon his return to Istanbul from Thessaloniki as a deputy of Manisa, Sultan Reşad granted him an audience, expressing his pleasure in seeing Hüseyin Kazım in his current role. However, Hüseyin Kazım describes his shock when Sultan Reşad followed these words with the question, "Is Manisa in Albania?" He says he was taken aback and at a loss for words: "Eventually, I replied, 'Manisa is in Anatolia and on the Izmir side. It was the ancient capital of your ancestors.'" He recalled that the sultan then queried, "Yes, isn't that the place where melons grow?"[67] which made him conclude that, even though he might support the concept of a sultanate, he could not endorse such ignorant and unaware sultans.

Refik Halid's account of his first encounter with Abdülhamid II is another interesting perspective on disillusionment. His description of

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[65] "adil bir müstebit" Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, 86.

[66] "[…] sopa ile temin-i adalet ve tesis-i asayiş taraftarlarının en sonu idi!" Ibid., 125.

[67] "Selanik'ten Manisa mebusu sıfatıyla İstanbul'a avdet ettiğim sırada beni nezdine kabul eylemişti: 'Siz Manisa mebusu olmuşsunuz, pek mahzûz oldum. Bu Manisa Arnavutluk'ta mı?' dediği zaman kendimi kaybettim ve ne cevap vereceğimi şaşırdım. Nihayet, 'Manisa Anadolu'da ve İzmir tarafındadır. Ecdad-ı izâmınızın kadîmen payitahtları idi' diyebildim. Bunun üzerine; 'evet, şu kavun çıkan yer değil mi?' dedi. Saltanat taraftarı olsam bile bu kadar cahil ve gâfil padişahları iltizam edemezdim!" Ibid., 285.

seeing the sultan not only changes his view of Abdülhamid II himself, but also alters his self-perception. At the tender age of 14, he was taken by his father to the palace to extend Eid greetings to the sultan. Prior to the meeting, he says, the emotion dominating his thoughts was not reverence for the sultan, but rather fear. His self-perception of being diminutive further amplified his apprehension: "I felt like an ant about to be squashed [...] I have transformed into 'Keloğlan' from 'The Seven Dwarfs.'" He describes how his father hoisted him by the waist, while another person lifted him by the legs, thus enabling him to get a glimpse of the sultan. Upon laying eyes on the sultan for that fleeting moment, he is astounded by the sight of a "frail, degloried old man." The sight of the sultan in this state profoundly altered Refik Halid's self-image: "So, this is the sultan? When I was placed back on the ground, I no longer felt as small as I had previously felt."[68]

When Refik Halid recounts the occasion of this visit, he emphasizes that he did not proceed to the palace like some of the children he knows from his school, Mekteb-i Sultani, who were accompanied by their *lala*s. These children were made dressed in gilded attire to be taken to the palace. He says, "I too had a uniform behind me, but it was merely the official school dress with yellow buttons."[69] In the context of school, certain students who seem to receive favoritism due to their fathers' reputation or their relationships with those in power are mentioned with reproach in several memoirs. This highlights a disappointment in the elders who show such favoritism. Ali Kemal mentions Binbaşı Tevfik Bey, known among the students as "Cadı Tevfik", who was one of the teachers that he and his peers particularly liked. Reflecting on why they liked him, Ali

[68] "[...] daha ufalmış, şaşırmış 'Yedi Cüceler'deki Keloğlan'a dönmüşüm. İri bir sütun yanındayız; babam belimden kavradı, bir başkası da bacaklarımdan yukarıya doğru kaldırdı: 'Bak orta yere,' dediler, 'işte taht üzerinde oturan, zatı şâhanedir!' Bir lahza görebildim: Muayedeye gelen devlet adamlarının çoğuna benzeyen sakallı iri burunlu, çelimsiz, hatta oldukça şansız bir ihtiyar [...] Demek, hünkâr bu? Yere indiğim zaman artık kendimi eskisi kadar küçük bulmadım." Karay, 207.

[69] "Filvaki benim de arkamda bir üriiforma vardı ama o, sadece mektebin sarı düğmeli resmi elbisesinden ibaretti." Ibid., 205.

Kemal narrates an incident where this teacher tested a student who was commonly considered a "fool" but was also the son of a high-ranking statesman, hence often the recipient of teachers' fawning. When the student failed the test, Tevfik Bey harshly reprimanded him. Ali Kemal states that, although he regrets it later, he and his peers found this incident quite amusing, as it felt like a form of revenge against the other teachers' unfair adulation towards that student.[70]

A significant setting for exploring relationships with elders and figures of authority lies within the realm of education. Numerous memoirs offer rich details about interactions with teachers and administrators. This space broadens the scope of generational concept, moving it towards a more horizontal understanding. Authors, in these instances, do not simply present their attitudes towards older authority figures from an individual standpoint, but rather, reveal wider connections with their peers. When they reflect upon their relationships with their fathers, the vertical aspect of generational dynamics becomes more pronounced, often revealing personal narratives that underscore continuities or divergences. However, school experiences expand this understanding, situating the concept of generation further within a two-dimensional framework.

[70] Ali Kemal, 103.

4

Education

The Young Turk generation, as captured in various accounts, was profoundly influenced by the educational reforms enacted during Abdülhamid II's reign. The narratives of the Young Turks provide compelling testimony to the seminal role education played in their formative years. The expansion of Western-oriented schools and an upsurge in student enrollment signaled a cultural transition that left deep imprints in the memoirs explored. This transition was not confined merely to the imparted knowledge; it extended to school spaces and extracurricular activities, encompassing a more comprehensive educational experience that left an indelible impression on these minds. An outcome of these educational transformations, the ascent in the bureaucratic ranks and military cadres of the Empire, is another recurring theme in these accounts. The post-graduation repercussions of education, particularly its impact on professional careers, will be one of the focal points of the succeeding chapter. However, at this juncture, how education is often perceived as a rite of passage associated with gaining seniority will be the starting point, shedding light on the perception of generational dynamics.

The potential outcomes of educational reforms had already become a matter of critical contemplation before the Young Turk generation emerged on the educational scene. With the expanding educational landscape, apprehensions began to surface regarding the potential roles and

spheres of influence these increasing numbers of graduates could or would inhabit within the societal structure. Ismail Kemal recollects an incident in 1870 after his strenuous efforts to initiate public education in Dobrudja. The grand vizier Ali Pasha offered congratulations for the outcomes garnered, yet his words were tinged with a potent strain of sarcasm that instilled unease in Ismail Kemal: "In the current state the country is in, what will emerge from these educated people, will they all become lawyers or idlers akin to those in Greece?"[1] Such stories of disputes concerning the tangible outcomes and prospects post-graduation for students are prominently featured in memoirs.

Within these narratives, Ali Kemal's account reserves special commendation for his teacher Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem's "insightful tales," recounting an anecdote he heard from Ekrem: A council member solicits Fuat Pasha's foresight regarding the future of those graduating from a particular school. Fuat Pasha's response is succinct and unwavering, "They will become men."[2] As the inquiry is rephrased, probing further into what exact roles these graduates might occupy, Fuat Pasha, unfaltering in his resolve, reiterates, "They will become men." Upon the third utterance of this steadfast declaration, the assembly is engulfed in silence: "They apprehended the profound suggestion enfolded within those two words, understanding that the objectives of the school extend beyond cultivating government officials."[3] Narratives of maturity inherited from the preceding generation aligned with contemporary discussions among the Young Turk generation on the broader nuances of education, entailing the scaffolding it furnished for appraising self-worth, the shared identification among the ballooning student population based on a common

[1] "Ülkenin bulunduğu bu durumda tahsil gören tüm bu insanlardan ne çıkacak acaba? Yunanistan'daki gibi ya avukat ya aylak mı olacak hepsi?" Sommerville Story, ed., *İsmail Kemal Bey'in Hatıratı*, trans. Adnan İslamoğulları and Rubin Hoxha (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2016), 41.

[2] "Adam olacaklardır." Ali Kemal, 72.

[3] "[…] o iki kelimenin ihtiva eylediği mana-yı bülendi takdir eylerler, mektepten maksud sırf hükumet memuru yetiştirmek olmadığını anlarlar." Ibid., 72.

spatial experience, and the comparisons drawn from the expanding educational offerings, which, in turn, influenced self-perception.

§ 4.1 School as a Venue

In his *The New Generation in Meiji Japan: Problems of Cultural Identity, 1885-1895*, Kenneth B. Pyle asserts that "the decisive experience in demarcating the new generation was (…) attendance in the new schools of higher learning. Nowhere did youth feel so deeply the impact of the converging forces of change as in these Western-oriented schools."[4] This hypothesis finds its echo in the memoirs of numerous Ottoman contemporaries. A pertinent example is Ali Kemal, who recounts his enrolment at Mekteb-i Mülkiye and the transformation it catalyzed within him: "From the moment I stepped into that school, I became a completely different person; I began to see the world in a different way, to think, and - both intellectually and spiritually" - to truly "live."[5] He expounds on the young minds nurtured during that era at that school, highlighting their excellence in various branches of knowledge. He attributes the genesis of this intellectual revival to the transformative environment — an environment "gradually awakening [their] consciousness, broadening [their] perspectives."[6] He underscores the influential role of the school as a space, a motif he mirrors while referring to several other spaces, including the palace. According to his observations, most officials of that era, notably the key figures in the palace, embodied mercy and hospitality. However, he observes an anomaly, that is, the emergence of ruthless decisions from the palace secretariat, and this observation brings him to a conclusion: "The influence of the environment, even on the individual nature and

[4] Kenneth B. Pyle, *The New Generation in Meiji Japan: Problems of Cultural Identity, 1885-1895* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969), 10.

[5] "O mektebe girdiğimden itibaren büsbütün başka bir insan oldum; alemi başka bir nazarla görmeye, düşünmeye, fikren, ruhen yaşamağa başladım." Ali Kemal, 39.

[6] "[…] o muhit ki, bizi yavaş yavaş uyandırıyordu, fikirlerimizi açıyordu." Ali Kemal, 58.

morals, is substantial."[7] Highlighting the importance of the school as a space, he accentuates its capacity to foster unity. He reminisces about a period when the school was shuttered during the summer, a circumstance he found particularly unfavorable, as the despotic regime dissuaded him and his peers from convening outside the school.[8]

Cemil Topuzlu deliberates on the significance of this space and its location from the vantage point of the authority, discussing the relocation of his school. As a student of the Military Medical School (*Mekteb-i Tıbbiye-i Şahane*, hereafter *Tıbbiye,*) he describes the institution as a bastion of ideas advocating liberty. He further notes that the Sultan regarded this school as a "hotbed of insurrection,"[9] a point that is also echoed in other memoirs. Abdülhamid II considered displacing Tıbbiye to quell any potential insurrection. The possible destinations ranged from a location beyond the castle gates to an overseas site. Ultimately, the school was moved to Haydarpaşa. Cemil Topuzlu observes that the students of Tıbbiye had persistently held aspirations for freedom and stood in opposition to the palace. Consequently, “not only the students but also the school administration was exiled,"[10] he remarks. Similarly, Rıza Tevfik expresses his disappointment over the missed chance to be under the tutelage of Ekrem in the Civil Service Academy (*Mekteb-i Mülkiye*,) an opportunity available to his senior by only one year, Ali Kemal. He elaborates on the broader implications, suggesting that the Sultan, alarmed by the palace informants who painted an overzealous picture of the "splendor of that brilliant period of culture,"[11] felt threatened. Consequently, he "extinguished that hearth of wisdom" by reassigning the Mekteb-i Mülkiye teachers to other civil service roles.[12]

[7] "Eşhasın fıtratine, ahlakına bile muhitin tesiratı bu derece ziyadedir." Ali Kemal., 188.

[8] Ibid., 154.

[9] Cemil Topuzlu, *80 Yıllık Hatıralarım* (İstanbul: Halk Kitabevi, 2022), 156.

[10] "[…] talebeden başka mektep idaresi de sürgüne uğramıştır." Ibid., 125.

[11] "[…] o parlak kültür devrinin şa’şaasından" Rıza Tevfik, 216

[12] "[…] o irfan ocağını söndürmüştü." Ibid., 217.

Cemil underscores a notable consensus among his peers at Tıbbiye. During the period he was at this school, he narrates, the tenets of "Young Turkism and liberty" were starting to permeate the society. Nearly all his classmates, "in fact, the entire student body," advocated for liberty, equality, and justice, drawing inspiration from the French Revolution.[13] The establishment of a shared arena of challenges and interests took root in an environment that was not only educational but also residential. Living arrangements for boarding students saw senior-year pupils accommodated in rooms of four or five beds. These rooms, grouped into wards, became hubs of nighttime gatherings. The students engaged in clandestine activities, writing and circulating articles criticizing the Sultan. Being the youngest in the class, Cemil was entrusted with the risky task of distributing these articles on the premise that his youthful status might spare him severe punishment. However, this operation did not go unnoticed, and he was apprehended by a *hafiye* (spy,) narrowly evading dire consequences.[14]

Numerous memoirs describe a period of intense unease prevailing in the schools, a time indelibly marked by the shadowy presence of *hafiye*s. Kazım Nami Duru offers an account of his time at *Harbiye* (School of War,) admitting his lack of political awareness or involvement at that time, yet, he recollects the sudden, unexplained disappearances of fellow students. Inquiries about their whereabouts met vague and ambiguous responses, only for them to later discover that these peers had been imprisoned or exiled. This unease was interpreted as "a reign of terror," casting a heavy pall of fear over the school and breeding a climate of distrust among the students: "No one was safe from anyone."[15] However, despite this pervasive insecurity, a horizontal bond among students endured.

The fear-laden environment, far from stifling the students' spirits, further distanced them from the Abdülhamid II administration. Nevertheless, it did not ensure ideological accord or the feeling of trust within the student community. Schools demonstrated variation in this aspect

[13] Topuzlu, 121.

[14] Ibid., 122.

[15] "Kimsenin kimseye emniyeti yoktu." Duru, 10.

too. Being a Harbiyeli, Kazım Nami suggests that an organization centered around the school was not viable, since the loyalty that school-based friendships and vocational fraternity could foster was essentially "left to random chance,"[16] leading him to consider external solutions for initiation. This part of the narrative culminates with the formation of the Ottoman Freedom Society, although school camaraderie still had a part to play: Kazım Nami begins the backstory with his desire to connect with İsmail Canbulat, whom he had known and loved as a younger brother from their initial year at Harbiye.[17] Following multiple encounters with ten individuals, not in their residence, but in various other homes and at different instances, the society came into existence, as per Kazım Nami's account.

Despite acknowledging the difficulty of building an organization based on school ties, he himself underscores that the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress was established with a significant influence and participation of the Tıbbiyeli students. Tıbbiye, despite its military school designation, exhibited several distinctive traits that set it apart from comparable institutions. Şükrü Hanioğlu identifies the curriculum's divergence and its materialistic approach as notable differences[18], while Oya Gözel Durmaz turns her focus to organizational aspects, noting several unique features.[19] Chief among these was the school's comparatively autonomous approach, which could be traced back to its pre-1890 director—a physician, not a military officer—who governed the school for nearly two decades[20]. Tıbbiye, functioning as a tuition-free boarding school, was a magnet for students from all over the empire, including

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[16] "Mektep arkadaşlığının, meslek yoldaşlığının sağlayabileceği bağlılık ise, tesadüfün lütfuna kalmış bir şeydi." Duru, 17.

[17] Ibid., 17.

[18] Şükrü Hanioğlu, "Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion, and Art," in *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy,* edited by Elisabeth Özdalga (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005).

[19] Oya Gözel-Durmaz, "The Rise of the Ottoman Military Medical School as the Centre of Anti-Hamidian Opposition," in *Current Debates in History and Politics,* ed. Oya Gözel-Durmaz, Abidin Çevik, and Günay Gönüllü (London: IJOPEC, 2017), 7-20.

[20] "*Hür fikirli nazırımız bu olayı da diğerleri gibi örtbas edip kapattı*." See, Topuzlu, 122.

Russia and Iran, linking the constitutional movements in these nations. Factors such as the extended period of education and life in dormitories, especially for the upper classes as shown in Cemil's account, also played a significant role in the school's unique position.

As conveyed in Cemil's narrative, the distinct position of the school was well-recognized by the Ottoman administration. Later, the school underwent modifications, such as the appointment of military officers to lead the administration. Following this, strict military discipline akin to that in other military academies was enforced at the Tıbbiye, and the special rooms for the upper classes were shut down. However, as highlighted by Gözel, "the CUP was already established by 1889 and the number of its members has already exceeded one hundred within two years."[21] Beyond its outside-world implications like the already-guaranteed presence of CUP, it should be underscored that this fact was important not merely for the school's influence on the external realms, but also for its contribution to establishing a specific tradition within the school. This phenomenon was not unique to Tıbbiye. The concept of *mekteb ananesi*[22] or "school tradition" became a recurring theme in various accounts, highlighting its broader relevance.

The shared adversity schools provided seemed to foster a sense of unity, if not in ideological outlooks, then certainly in navigating the same "problem space." In a notable anecdote, Ali Kemal recounts an episode involving their French teacher, Gaetan Efendi: The students were assigned to read from Pélissier's most acclaimed works, one of which featured a poem mentioning a dog named "Sultan." As Gaetan Efendi read the poem aloud, he was uncomfortable upon realizing the implications of the words he was uttering. He abruptly stopped, blushed, and hastily turned the page to another section. However, he seemed unable to avoid the discomfort and prematurely ended the class to go straight to the principal's office. Ali Kemal says, "We were now in high spirits, reciting that poem over and over." Before the class was formally concluded, teachers

[21] Gözel-Durmaz, 16.

[22] Ali Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi ve Mülkiyeliler*, Vol II (Ankara: Mars Matbaası, 1968-1969), 850-851.

hurriedly collected the books from the students. Such stories indicate that the experience within the school environment, beyond personal encounters with elements indicative of the regime, provided students with a shared platform to confront and navigate these elements collectively. When Ali Kemal reflects on the episode mentioned, he states that "such events were immensely eye-opening" for the students as they illuminated "the reality of that regime."[23]

As frequently highlighted in memoirs, these educational establishments offered ample avenues for student communication. The scope of these interactions extended far beyond the bounds of organized and planned exchanges, as shown in the instance Ali Kemal provided. Schools wielded the power to transform even the simplest of incidents into meaningful communal experiences. This phenomenon was inadvertently driven by the actions of teachers and administrators, against whom students found a shared sense of unity, even without explicit coordination or planning. Another illustrative instance of this bonding is narrated in a 1918 writing by Mustafa Satı Al-Husri, who studied at Mekteb-i Mülkiye approximately ten years later than Ali Kemal. He notes that Abdülhamid II was consistently eager to underline his patronage over that school by adding "Şahane" to the school's name. The sultan's pride was palpable on numerous occasions, not least during the ceremonial distribution of candies during the Eid in 1898. The school principal Hacı Recai Bey, who led the school for 14 years pre-1908, orchestrated a grand ceremony amidst the escalating tensions in Crete and gathered the students for the event. After the distribution of candies, he called upon everyone to offer prayers for the wellbeing and prosperity of the Sultan, who he presented as a benevolent guardian looking after all their needs, even down to the provision of the candies. However, in a twist of events, the students did not respond to his call. Mustafa Satı states that the reaction was not the result of a deliberate conspiracy, but rather a spontaneous act of opposition that took everyone, including the principal, by surprise. He remarks that the

[23] "Böyle vakalar fevkalade gözümüzü açıyordu, o idare-i müstebidenin hakikatini fikr-i intibahımıza sokuyordu." Ali Kemal, 109.

non-negotiated nature of the event is what truly imbued it with its force: "In fact, there is no doubt that if such a discussion had taken place, there would have been no shortage of people who would have voiced the potential risks of such a course of action."[24]

He observes that this general rebellion was sudden, without negotiation and without alliance. Every individual, in unison yet independently thought, "'If I don't shout, who will notice!' Since this was a sentiment shared by everyone without exception, the invitation was met with nothing but a profound silence."[25] When the principal, aghast and perturbed at the silence, reiterated his call, he was met with the same resounding silence. Flustered and unsure of what to do next, he made a hurried exit, leaving the students behind, basking in the glow of their sudden victory. The apex of the incident arrived when a student, in a display of audacious defiance, threw away his candy, announcing his refusal to cheer for such trifles, which became a symbolic act that prompted all others to follow. The events of that day, which started as a simple ceremony and later incited a mass act of rebellion that filled everyone "with unbounded courage," lasted until every candy was reduced to fragments.

Conflict with teachers and the administrative cadre is a prominent theme within these memoirs. Mustafa Abdülhalik recounts an incident[26] from his school days when, on the eve of receiving his high school diploma, he and his classmates were unjustly given a two-week suspension by the school's chief officer. Unwilling to accept this punishment, he approaches the vice chief officer, other members of the administrative cadre, and even the school principal to plead his case, asserting the unfairness of their treatment. However, all these figures refuse to intervene, maintaining that only the chief officer can revoke the suspension.

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[24] "Zaten şübhe yok ki, öyle bir müzakere vuku'a gelmiş olsaydı, bu yolda hareketin tehlikelerinden bahsedecekler az olmıyacakdı." Quoted in Ali Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi ve Mülkiyeliler*, Vol III (Ankara: Mars Matbaası, 1968-1969), 852.

[25] "Herkes içinden 'Ben bağırmasam kim farkına varacak!' demişdi. Bunu bila istisna herkes söylemiş olduğu için, vuku' bulan da'vet umumi bir sükut'dan başka bir mukabele görmemişdi." Ibid., 853.

[26] Renda, 40-42.

Students banded together to express their shared worries, and when those concerns were dismissed, what began as a vertical conflict transmuted into a shared, horizontal unease, unifying them in their collective discomfort.

Mustafa Reşat Mimaroğlu narrates an instance during his time at the same school, Mekteb-i Mülkiye, where almost thirty of the forty graduating students had to repeat a course. This predicament stemmed from a peculiar regulation that dictated that graduates could not receive a salary as a provincial civil servant until reaching the age of twenty-five. Simultaneously, the policy allowed those aged between eighteen and twenty-two to be admitted to the school. The students' repeated pleas to vice principal Ali Nazima Bey for the amendment of this inequitable provision were met with reassurances of submitting the issue to the principal Hacı Recai Efendi. However, the vice-principal says the principal dismissed the concerns outright, asserting that "students should not meddle in such matters."[27]

This figure, Hacı Recai Efendi, is recurrent in several narratives, including those by Mustafa Satı, Mustafa Abdülhalik, and Mustafa Reşat. İsmail Müştak offers yet another example when he recalls being summoned by Hacı Recai six months post-graduation, an event that invoked feelings of fear. Despite the passage of time, İsmail Müştak rationalizes this fear by describing Hacı Recai as a person capable of "catching 'those acting against the Almighty's consent' even six years later," and delivering them to Abdülhamid's political headquarters. He suggests that Recai Efendi's role at Mülkiye was to "infiltrate the minds and consciences of the students," and refers to this man's frequent statement, "We do not need a sheep with horns." According to Recai Efendi, "any student who thought independently, who expressed criticism or opposition, and who had any form of connections with Europe was considered a horned

[27] "[…] talebe böyle şeylere karışmaz." Quoted in Ali Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi ve Mülkiyeliler*, Vol II (Ankara: Mars Matbaası, 1968-1969), 829-830.

sheep," and he possessed a keen skill for "breaking such horns,"[28] says İsmail Müştak.

§ 4.2 Fleeing to Europe

Even with esteemed educator figures revered by students, a significant number of teachers and administrators draw criticism, not merely for their comportment but, importantly, for perceived deficiencies in their domain knowledge. At times, the elders' refusal to listen to these young people resulted in this generation making a decisive choice, that is, to leave for Europe. Cemil Topuzlu recounts a post-graduation experience that led him to Paris for further medical education.[29] After acquiring a doctor's diploma[30] and beginning his practice in 1886 with the rank of captain, he desired to operate on a patient in critical condition due to an abscess. However, his plans were rebuffed by an elder, whom he refers to as "Makridi Pasha, the most capable surgeon of that time (!)."[31] The older surgeon dismissed his concerns, saying, "My son, you are too young, do not interfere in such significant matters,"[32] and contended that the abscess would heal on its own, saving the patient. Tragically, the patient

[28] "[...] Recai Efendi 'rızayı âliye mugayir harekette bulunanları' altı yıl sonra da yakalayıp Abdülhamid'in siyasetgâhına götüren bir adamdı. Mülkiye mektebinde onun yegâne vazifesi talebenin fikir ve vicdanlarına sokulmaktı. İkide bir: 'bize boynuzlu koyun lâzım değil' derdi. Recai Efendiye göre boynuzsuz koyun demek, mektebe gözü kapalı girip yine gözü kapalı çıkan talebe demektir. Serbest düşünen, muhalefet ve tenkid yapan, Avrupadakilerle münasebet veya karabeti olan her talebe boynuzlu koyun sayılırdı. Böyle boynuzları kırmak hususunda onun şeytanca bir mahareti, ve bunu yapmak için de Sarayla sıkı fıkı bir münasebeti vardı." Mayakon, 13.

[29] Topuzlu, 127-128.

[30] There was a pervasive trend, that saw newly graduated professionals, including American doctors, travelling to Paris, which became a "center to ‘complete’ their education." See Ceren Gülser İlikan Rasimoğlu, "The Foundation Of A Professional Group: Physicians In The Nineteenth Century Modernizing Ottoman Empire (1839-1908)" (Ph. D. Diss., Boğaziçi University, 2012), 162.

[31] "[…] o zamanın en muktedir cerrahı(!) olan Makridi Paşa" Topuzlu, 127.

[32] "Oğlum, sen çok gençsin, bu gibi mühim işlerde acele etme." Ibid., 127.

passed away two days later. This incident solidified Cemil's decision to travel to Paris to study the antisepsis method, which had just been introduced in Europe, and to gain an understanding of modern surgery.

Halil Menteşe's narrative unfolds another dimension of the reasons behind leaving for Europe. After his secondary education in Izmir, he went to Istanbul to study law and established a residence in Sirkeci. Unbeknownst to him, a stranger took up residence in the room opposite, gradually becoming a regular guest in Halil's room. One evening, this individual spoke critically of the Sultan and casually dropped names of prominent Young Turks. He offered to provide Halil with dissident newspapers. This encounter, Halil Menteşe confesses, was his first brush with a *hafiye*, a realization that precipitated his decision to escape to Europe at the earliest opportunity. In the final months of his second year, he seized the opportunity to flee to Europe, to further his studies in Paris. His escape route, however, was far from straightforward. Menteşe had to detour via Milas to the island of Chios, then onward to Marseilles, and finally to Paris. He tactfully spun a tale for some of his friends he encountered on his route, making it appear that he had embarked on a different journey entirely. Despite the strict prohibitions on the youths seeking passports and traveling to Europe during Abdülhamid II's reign and the menace of *hafiye* trailing those who dared to do so, Menteşe managed to flee. Notably, he did not have a passport, but his path was unimpeded in both Greece and Marseille. He reflects on this paradox: "What free days those were."[33]

Cemil Topuzlu mentions a specific aspect of the restrictions during the sultanate, emphasizing the ruler's reluctance to permit young individuals - particularly doctors - to leave the country. Despite this, Cemil's aspiration to study in Europe consumed his thoughts, such that he was "burning with this desire and could not even sleep at night."[34] Hüseyin Cahit's reflections on the restrictions are exposed in his clarifications

[33] "Ne serbest günlermiş o günler." Halil Menteşe, *Osmanlı Mebusan Meclisi Reisi Halil Menteşe'nin Anıları* (Ankara: Altınordu Yayınları, 2019), 11.

[34] "[…] bu arzu ile yanıp tutuşuyor, geceleri uyku bile uyuyamıyordum." Topuzlu, 128.

about his linguistic choice, favoring "flee" over "go"[35] to characterize his group's dreams.

Ali Kemal employs the phrase "departures for breath" to refer to such periodic visits to Europe. This term powerfully underlines the stifling climate they sought to evade. This sentiment echoes Bezmi Nusret's account as he equates the regime with a sensation of being "strangled," saying, "It was as if I could not breathe."[36] This portrayal of their stifled aspirations foregrounds the urgent need to break free, which was then equated with fleeing to Europe. That was what Bezmi Nusret too, concocted alongside two friends, intended to do. He reveals a dual ambition, with the latter encapsulating the entanglement of education and anticipated maturity prevalent in their minds: to uphold the defense of their homeland while simultaneously "settling down in a school and becoming a man."[37] However, Bezmi Nusret's devised plan went awry, and the two young men he had confided in absconded with the resources he had gathered through the sale of his possessions. Their unexpected departure led to an unnerving encounter with their worried fathers, who had discovered documents confirming Bezmi Nusret's involvement with their absent sons. This incident pushed Bezmi Nusret to abandon Izmir, an environment he perceived as increasingly hazardous, and seek refuge in Istanbul.[38] This abrupt relocation was enabled once he convinced his father to enroll in a higher educational institution in Istanbul.

§ 4.3 Enrolling in Schools

As corroborated by several memoirs, the decision to enroll in a particular school typically hinged on the elders' approval, familial expectations, and societal norms. However, there was room for negotiation, especially concerning higher education. Fleeing to Europe often occurred

[35] Yalçın, *Edebiyat Anıları*, 61.

[36] "Sanki nefes alamıyordum." Kaygusuz, 14.

[37] "[…] bir mektebe yerleşip adam olacaktık." Ibid., 14.

[38] Ibid., 15.

without paternal consent, as illustrated by Bezmi Nusret's friends' predicament. İsmail Müştak brings up a similar scenario concerning his elder brother in his memoirs. He confesses withholding information about his elder brother's "presence" from Tahsin Pasha during his palace employment interrogation. Much like Bezmi Nusret's friends, his elder brother had also left for Europe without seeking their father's approval. However, their father, possessing what İsmail Müştak calls an "enlightened"[39] perspective, reacted positively to his son's unsanctioned departure since he interpreted this act of desertion as a conscious decision in favor of furthering education.

The influence of familial dynamics on educational decisions emerges in an additional light in Mustafa Abdülhalik's narrative. He describes an extended period of contemplation concerning his options for higher education. It was a deliberation precipitated by witnessing rampant corruption among civil servants, which left him dubious about the merits of attending Mekteb-i Mülkiye, the prestigious institution known for cultivating civil service cadres. Despite these initial misgivings, he eventually chose to enroll in that school. However, he discloses that during his time of contemplation, the idea of attending Harbiye had held considerable appeal. His cousin - who had recently transferred from Manastır to Harbiye - opposed his consideration of the same educational trajectory and argued that the family's interests would be better served by diversifying their professional domains, rather than clustering in a singular profession. Renda found this argument convincing and ultimately favored his cousin's counsel.[40] His account reveals how decision-making in this context was a nuanced process, replete with considerations that incorporated wider familial and societal interests.

Cemil Topuzlu's narrative is also insightful about the impact of the broader family on educational decisions. He mentions that he and his brother were enrolled in a French school in Beirut by their father. This initiative elicited outrage from their brother-in-law, Halit Bey, a military

[39] Mayakon, 22-23.

[40] Renda, 41.

accountant based in Damascus and the father of Ahmet İhsan, who founded the journal *Servet-i Fünun*. He expresses that this degree of prejudice against foreign education is emblematic of the time. Halit Bey, leveraging his influence over their father, managed to unroll the brothers from the French school and relocated them to Damascus, where Cemil was enrolled in the final year of the military *rüşdiye* (middle school) in the city.[41] Seeking to pursue his interest in military medical education after graduation and his return to Istanbul, Cemil, with his father's accompanying presence and support, endeavored to register in the relevant institution. Here, however, he encountered resistance not from a family member but from a representative of the bureaucratic machinery.

Upon meeting Ethem Pasha, the head of the school, Cemil found his language skills brought into question. After learning of Cemil's fluency in French, Ethem Pasha sought to divert him from his chosen path, proposing he instead become a military officer and enroll in the military *idadi* (preparatory school) at Kuleli. Cemil reiterated his aspirations to become a doctor, to which Ethem Pasha responded by instructing him to secure his license and leave. Armed with his license, Cemil visited the principal of the medical school. When the envelope was opened, however, the principal insisted that Cemil had approached the wrong institution, as the document suggested instead that he should enroll in the military idadi. This answer prompted another visit to Ethem Pasha, who stood by the contents of the letter of authorization. Cemil's persistent protestations eventually led to that exasperated man ordering a change.[42] The story illuminates the inner workings of the bureaucratic machinations of the time, accentuating the initial minimal agency granted to the youth and the potential of negotiation to induce changes. These mechanisms appear largely arbitrary and informal. Additionally, the narrative offers an intriguing dimension about the role and influence of family: The beginning of this story was marked by the visible presence of Cemil's father, who accompanied him to the idadi. However, as the story progresses, the father's

[41] Topuzlu, 113.

[42] Ibid., 115.

presence is absent. His resistance or assistance in this negotiation is not mentioned, suggesting that Cemil carried out the negotiation process independently.

Cemil also shares anecdotes from the educational trajectories of his two siblings, adding further insight into the complexities involved in decision formulation. At the time Cemil was studying at the aforementioned school, his brother, Nebil, was a student at Lycée de Galatasaray (Mekteb-i Sultani,) while his sister, Mukbile, was enrolled in the American College for Girls (ACG, or Amerikan Kız Koleji) in Üsküdar. Another brother-in-law, Kazasker Seyfeddin Efendi, was determined to unroll Mukbile from the ACG, leading to a confrontation with Cemil's father. Cemil notes that while their father resisted initially, Seyfeddin Efendi escalated the matter directly to Sultan Abdülhamid II, thereby stirring his involvement. Consequently, an *irade-i seniye* (imperial decree) was issued, calling for Mukbile's immediate withdrawal from the school, a command their father acquiesced under pressure.[43]

Bezmi Nusret's narrative offers further insights regarding the involvement of Abdülhamid II. After he arrived in Istanbul from Izmir, he found himself without a diploma, having left Izmir's idadi before completing his fifth year. His admission to any school seemed reliant on the sway of favoritism, a power he claimed he did not possess. Following a failed examination attempt and the closure of other schools' enrollment processes, an acquaintance advised him to apply to the *Muhacirin* (Migrants) Commission, leveraging his Cretan heritage. Puzzled by the relevance of the Commission to his situation and thus having little hope, he penned a petition requesting admission to the *Ticaret Mektebi*, a school of commerce and a less prestigious institution not highly sought-after at the time. A few days later, a palace aide delivered an envelope to him. Bezmi Nusret presented the envelope at Ticaret Mektebi, where, upon opening it, the principal kissed it thrice before placing it on his head. The principal then asked him which class he wished to join, adding that he could be admitted to the final year. It was only later that Bezmi realized that Sultan

[43] Topuzlu, 114.

Abdülhamid was the chair of the Muhacirin Commission and that the letter he had brought was, in fact, an irade-i seniye.[44]

Ali Kemal's enrollment in Mekteb-i Mülkiye was also marked by preferential treatment. He conveys his educational life at the rüşdiye in Gülhane, marked by frequent absences, culminating in his inability to graduate due to prolonged truancy. Consequently, he was employed by his father, marking a stark diversion from his educational path. However, his mother's persistence for him to continue his education was instrumental in reshaping his trajectory. With the assistance of his uncle, who served as a private clerk to a key official in the palace, he enrolled in Mekteb-i Mülkiye, circumventing typical prerequisites due to the influence of recommendation by this man. He reflects on this instance, "Thanks to that recommendation, the principal Abdurrahman Bey never asked me which high school I came from or what I was,"[45] shedding light on the informality of administrative mechanisms.

When Mülkiye began to accept students based on examinations, there were still students who enrolled through the route of irade-i seniye. Zeki Mesud Alsan recounts that a distinction existed between *müsabakalı* and *iradeli* students. He remarks that those who had gained entrance through *müsabaka*, the competitive route, viewed each other as equals due to their similar social class backgrounds. The same regard, however, was not given to the *iradeli* students who entered through the sultan's decree. They were often seen as potential informants (*jurnalci*.) Despite their superior external status, these iradeli students were marginalized, and "treated as pariahs" within the school, as the müsabakalı students were in the majority. As the understanding of seniority shifted, the competitively-placed students felt a sense of 'revenge.' Zeki Mesud further notes that the minority of professors opposed to the regime were also wary of the iradeli students. They did not consider the possibility of a student informant among the müsabakalı ranks, and even if they did, they did not give it significant attention. Over time, it became clear that not all iradeli

[44] Kaygusuz, 15.

[45] "O tavsiye sayesinde Müdür Abdurrahman Bey artık bana hangi rüşdiyeden çıktığımı, ne olduğumu hiç sormadı." Ali Kemal, 38.

students were to be feared and some were integrated into the broader student groups, says Zeki Mesud. He speaks of a cohesion that gradually developed over the school years, which he attributes to the the school environment (*mekteb muhiti)* and the Mülkiye tradition (*Mülkiye ananesi.)*[46]

§ 4.4 Comparing Schools

Education in Europe forms a prominent topic in these memoirs, with comparisons frequently drawn between it and the Ottoman educational offerings of the era. The memoirists, in addition, routinely draw parallels and dissect disparities between educational institutions within the Empire itself. One such narrative by Kazım Nami discusses his time in Thessaloniki in 1905. He notes the schools in this city and their features and then reflects on his early career as a teacher. Serving as a Turkish language teacher at the high school of the Mission Laique Française, he significantly enhanced his proficiency in the French language, and his role as an educator in the city ignited his interest in pedagogy. Despite the absence of subjects such as anatomy and physiology in his military training, Kazım Nami sought to fill this educational gap on his own, following the advice of his French colleagues that these subjects were integral to understanding psychology and, consequently, pedagogy. To clarify the necessity of these details in a memoir he named "İttihat ve Terakki," he pauses the story and asks, "These are the points of my personal biography; so why am I writing them?"[47] He then positions these insights not as isolated anecdotes but as revealing windows into the prevailing educational ethos of the period and emphasizes the role of individual agency in self-directed learning. Stating that he writes to illustrate the power of ongoing and continuous work, he says, "We are mostly autodidacts."[48]

[46] Quoted in Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi ve Mülkiyeliler*, Vol II, 850-851.

[47] "Bunlar, hal tercümeme ait bahislerdir; o halde niçin yazıyorum?" Duru, 16.

[48] "Biz, çoğunlukla otodidaktız." Ibid., 16.

Here, the autodidact is not as previous generations knew him. Kazım Nami, himself a product of formal education, did not cast it aside. In his words, it was the young, educated officers of the army who held the unique capability "to establish liberty and constitutionalism."[49]

In dissecting the weight of formal education, a nuanced approach could be adopted, articulated through the interpretative lens of the narratives of İzzet Derveze and Ali Kemal. İzzet, despite having no formal higher education, shares about gatherings he had with friends who had the opportunity to study abroad. He would engage them in intellectual discourse during their vacation periods in Nablus, his hometown. There was an undercurrent of frustration and defeat stemming from his confinement to Nablus. Despite these constraints, he states that he showed determination and invested significant effort to keep pace with his contemporaries. He often found himself on an equal footing with these friends, which filled him with pride.[50] Thus, even for a relatively more conventional autodidact like İzzet, the benchmark of formal education served as a reference point in constructing self-perception. In other words, even outside the confines of formal educational institutions, the influence of these structures played a significant role in shaping the individual's sense of intellectual self-worth.

In recollection of his days spent in rüşdiye in Gülhane, Ali Kemal refers to the school as merely an "ornament." His comparisons between his entourage and the diligent students at the rüşdiye further elucidate this view. He identifies that despite their different educational experiences, both groups emerged comparably equipped in terms of knowledge and wisdom once they joined Mekteb-i Mülkiye. His time in Gülhane is characterized by an evident lack of enthusiasm for school, and his deep-seated mistrust of the quality of the teachings, captured in his statements: "We did not understand our lessons, we did not like our teachers." He says that they did not fill their heads "with such a half-wrong,

[49] "Osmanlı ülkesinde, hürriyeti, meşrutiyeti kurmak için, elde bulundurulabilecek biricik kuvvet ordudaki genç mektepli zabitlerdi." Duru, 34.

[50] İzzet Derveze, *Osmanlı Filistininde Bir Posta Mamuru*, trans. Ali Benli (Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2007), 202-203.

incomplete, misconceived wisdom in our early years."[5152] Recollections of violence enacted by teachers further taint his memories of this period. A similar tone pervades his reflections of his earlier days at the local mekteb, with his learning progress—captured in mastering a surah of the Quran—being received with undue celebration, despite its actual insignificance according to him, as he notes that what he "had learned in months, even years," was only that.[53] His broader narrative suggests a somewhat linear progression in the quality of his educational experiences. These evaluations, occurring retrospectively, are not confined to their original time frame but are informed by the accumulation of educational experiences that followed. Despite the predominance of adverse reflections on his experience at rüşdiye in Gülhane, Ali Kemal intriguingly introduces this school, the third he attended, as "not bad," noting that some of the instructors "were partly excellent"[54] after he initially addresses the first two schools.

In his cited analysis of Meiji Japan, Pyle posits, "One finds this concern with self-direction, self-reliance, and self-respect expressed repeatedly in the writings of the new generation."[55] This sentiment also finds resonance in the memoirs examined in the present study. Education is consistently esteemed, yet numerous memoirists recount how they negotiated their options within the given educational offerings. These ranged from those who ventured to Europe for further learning to those who switched schools within the Ottoman educational system. However, these memoirists construed their individual choices as part of a more significant trend, thus claiming to paint a portrait of the era. Bezmi Nusret, for instance, reflects on his decision to leave trade school - a place where the curriculum did not align with his inclinations - to pursue his education at the law school. He poses the rhetorical question, "Shouldn't I have

[51] "[…] derslerimizi anlamazdık, hocalarımızdan hoşlanmazdık." Ali Kemal, 35.

[52] "[…] kafamızı öyle nakıs, meşkuk, mağşuş bir irfan ile yarımyanlış dolduracağımıza" Ibid., 36.

[53] Ibid., 31.

[54] Ibid., 32.

[55] Pyle, 14.

finished it after I registered here?"[56] and then remarks that, during that period, the emphasis was placed by the youth on the acquisition of knowledge, and the value of a diploma was downplayed.

Cemil Topuzlu, as mentioned before, was afforded the latitude to assess his educational trajectory critically. This evaluation encompassed interludes of disrupted school engagement and choices made after his graduation, informed by a noticeable lack of theoretical grounding or practical exposure. Cemil drew insightful comparisons between the Ottoman institutions he attended and their Parisian analogs. He recounts the material inadequacies within Tıbbiye, noting that before 1908, the school had merely two microscopes for the entire student body. It was even more strained during his time, as they had access to just one. They would vie for the opportunity to use this single microscope, and the instructor could only show them blood cells, "as his knowledge was similarly limited."[57] Cemil also mentions a scarcity of resources for practical lessons and recalls that his class had access to only four cadavers for practice. Being the class sergeant, he worked on one while the remaining three were shared amongst nearly a hundred students. Consequently, the ability to dissect proficiently was a rare skill among graduates.

The narrative of Ali Kemal offers additional insight regarding the comparisons of schooling, not merely comparing the educational institutions he attended but also examining how his self-perception evolved with each of these enrollments. As previously noted, he held a high regard for Mekteb-i Mülkiye. He shares some of the literary works he composed at that school, though in retrospect, he deems these pieces weak. However, in a self-reflective tone, he expresses, "This progress was marvelous for me; what was I two years ago when I was at Gülhane; what had I become this time?" In just a span of three years, he observes a remarkable transformation within himself - from a "mischievous pupil" of the rüşdiye in Gülhane to an "independent, capable young man."[58]

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[56] "[…] buraya girdikten sonra bitirmekliğim icap etmez mi idi?" Kaygusuz, 33.

[57] "Çünkü kendi de başka bir şey bilmezdi." Topuzlu, 123.

[58] "Bende üç sene zarfında büyük bir tahavvül meydana gelmişti. Gülhane'nin o haylaz, ümmi şakirdine bedel, artık muktedir, serbest bir genç tavrı aldımdı." Ali Kemal, 61.

In pursuit of enhancing his French language skills, at the age of 17, he enrolled in a French school in Istanbul, where his classmates were noticeably younger. Despite being recognized as part of the literati in his neighborhood at that young age, his self-perception stood in contrast when immersed in the environment of that French school. Returning to Mekteb-i Mülkiye after a two-month French immersion, he retained the impactful lessons he had learned from that brief yet transformative experience. Reflecting upon this phase, he notes, "I said to myself, consider yourself a saint in this world and be a humble servant in the other; this is the difference between the East and the West."[59] Referencing his later educational experiences in France, he draws comparisons with his peers. Notably, he discusses a friend's experiences in a Parisian school of political science. His friend struggled academically, attempting to stand out "by ranting and raving to the teachers,"[60] which was what the young man successfully had done at Mekteb-i Mülkiye and a method that proved unsuccessful in this new environment.

§ 4.5 The Younger Cohort

Another reflection on the students educated in France comes from Mehmet Arif Ölçen, recounting his time as a captive in Russia during World War I. A component of the captives' routine was that each officer was expected to share his specialized knowledge through teaching a class. Mehmet Arif began giving classes on topography to his peers, starting with basic principles of land formation and progressing to the interpretation of contour lines on topographical maps and calculations of elevation differences. During one of his classes, he noticed a fellow laughing. The man was an officer who had received his education in France and "had boasted of it." When questioned about his laughter, the officer stated

[59] "Beride eazımdan geçin ötede a'ciz-I ibad ol, işte Şark ile Garb'ın farkı dedim." Ali Kemal, 118.
[60] Ibid., 127.

that the material Mehmet Arif was teaching was "what they teach in elementary school."[61]

The narratives of younger memoirists born in the 1890s and at the turn of the century often underscore the profound impact of the World War I , which resulted in many premature ends to formal education. Zekeriya Sertel's narrative unfolds an anecdote about how he and his friends, with their education interrupted, were compelled to return to Istanbul as the war unfolded.[62] Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar states, "Our generation comprehends the enormity of a national catastrophe. We were more nurtured by it than by any school."[63] Memoirists involved in the army also provide insightful narratives. Şevket Süreyya provides a notable account of meeting Russian reserve officers during the armistice period. He finds an intriguing commonality with them, particularly with one officer of the same age who had a similar experience of being drafted into the army "before completing his exams." The memoirist recounts the day this officer introduced the books he always carried with him. Şevket Süreyya says he found the familiarity exceptional—geometry cases, geographic maps, physiology diagrams, and even the chemical formulas were all recognizable to him: "If our conversation had not been limited to the five or ten words of French that the schools had given us, I would almost have opened my books and started discussing our lessons."[64]

Reflecting on the implications of the war, Şevket Süreyya expresses a grim acceptance of the inevitable, stating that his generation had mentally prepared themselves for the prospect of death. He further adds, "At

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[61] Mehmet Arif Ölçen, *Vetluga Memoir: A Turkish Prisoner of War in Russia, 1916-1918,* trans. and ed. Gary Leiser (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995).

[62] Sertel, 64.

[63] He continues to elaborate that this familiarity with catastrophe aligned him with the sentiments of the French poet Louis Aragon, (1897-1982): "Bizim nesil, millî felâket nedir, iyi bilir. Mektepten daha çok onun dizinde yetiştik. Onun için Aragon'u anlamıştım." Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, "Yılbaşında Düşünceler," Ülkü, 1 January 1945, no. 79, cited in Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Yaşadığım Gibi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Kültür Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1970).

[64] "Eğer konuşmamız, mekteplerin verdiği beş on kelimelik Fransızcamıza kalmasaydı, neredeyse ben de kitaplarımı açacak ve derslerimizin müzakeresine başlayacaktık." Aydemir, *Suyu Arayan Adam*, 186.

that time, our generation was a generation that did not think of anything for itself."[65] This fatalistic outlook was not alien to him as he had older brothers who had followed a similar path. "The time came; they enrolled me in a military school. My older brothers had also completed their schooling in this way in the past, and one by one, they joined the ranks of the army and went away to the borders of the country."[66] Mehmet Arif recalls being frequently questioned during his time in Russia by the people around him who would ask indirectly, subtly hinting at the assumed inevitability of his situation, probing whether he had not anticipated the possibilities of death or captivity in his capacity as an officer. He remembers remarking to a Russian commander that just two years prior, he was leaving school, contemplating his future prospects, only to be abruptly thrust into a war. This left him "with little time to truly understand the value"[67] of his own life. Though diverse, these reflections underline a glaring absence: The possibility of a negotiable career path after graduation or after choosing to leave school independently - spurred by self-attrition or less universal obligations - is conspicuously missing in this younger cohort, indicating a distinct generational context. The elder cadre did not encounter such a void.

[65] "O zaman bizim neslimiz, kendisi için hiç bir hak düşünmeyen bir nesildi." Aydemir, *Suyu Arayan Adam,* 78.

[66] "Vakti geldi, beni bir askerî rüştiye mektebine yazdırdılar. Büyük ağabeylerim de vaktiyle bu yoldan sırasıyie mekteplerini tamamlayarak, birer birer ordu saflarına karışıp, memleketin sınırlarına doğru uzaklaşmış, gitmişlerdi." Ibid., 43.

[67] Ölçen, 42.

§ 4.6 Outside the Classroom

The memoirists born between the 1860s and 1880s present divergent narratives surrounding the non-completion of education. Rıza Tevfik states that he was expelled from Mekteb-i Mülkiye for "rebellious and unruly behavior."[68] A different trajectory is seen in the case of Haydar Rüştü, who voluntarily terminated his schooling to assume a more proactive role following the restoration of the Constitution in 1908.[69] The memoirs are replete with accounts of contemporaries who either could not, or elected not to, complete their education. Such instances illuminate the varied motivations and contingencies that affected educational outcomes within this cohort.

It was common practice at the schools to use the threat of expulsion as a disciplinary measure. İbrahim Süreyya Yiğit relays an incident that occurred mere days before their final school term was about to conclude. He and his classmates had wanted to commemorate their time together with a group photo, a seemingly harmless endeavour. The administration, however, was alert to even small congregations of four. Assembling in small groups at different times, they managed to secure a booking at a photography studio, only to be politely redirected to another. Their subsequent visit, however, lacked the same level of discretion. Upon learning of their endeavour, the principal, Hacı Recai, accused İbrahim Süreyya of spearheading this venture and threatened him with expulsion. İbrahim Süreyya, writing about this experience half a century later, in 1946, observes that the then-new generation would find it hard to grasp the severity of their 'crime'. Even though Hacı Recai did not act on his threat, the photographic memento that İbrahim Süreyya sought post the constitutional revolution was found to be in a state of disrepair.[70]

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[68] Rıza Tevfik, 217.

[69] "Büyük Kaybımız," *Anadolu,* 12 August 1951, cited in Zeki Arıkan, "Haydar Rüştü ve Anadolu Gazetesi," in *Mütareke ve İşgal Anıları* by Haydar Rüştü Öktem (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991), 2-3.

[70] Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi ve Mülkiyeliler*, Vol III (Ankara: Mars Matbaası, 1968-1969), 832-833.

Despite the capacity for suspension and expulsion within the educational system, memoirs frequently highlight an overarching lack of consistent discipline. Cemil Topuzlu's narrative, for instance, underscores the conspicuous lack of discipline at Tıbbiye. He characterizes this establishment as a "medical school hotel,"[71] highlighting how students routinely hosted friends and acquaintances from various provinces in their rooms. The restricted but possible movement was not just limited to non-students gaining access to the institution but also extended to the enrolled students who could abandon the premises. He recalls that if an attractive play were performed at the Manakyan theater, almost all the students would leave the school to attend the performance. Consequently, the theater would be inundated with students from the institution, and after the play's culmination, they would swarm back to the school, forcing their way back in.[72] As hinted at earlier, the unique administration of the school had a significant role to play in this. However, similar episodes of student desertions were not uncommon across other institutions, and their administrative prowess fell short of curbing such occurrences.

Ali Kemal also narrates a theatre instance[73] where the performance of the play "Atala," translated by their teacher, Ekrem, stirred excitement among him and his classmates at the Mekteb-i Mülkiye. This occurrence is particularly insightful as it showcases the negotiations taking place within the broader context of education, encompassing not only the formal, curricular aspects but also the significant extracurricular ones. Although this play was primarily literary, it became a symbolic event for most young individuals in that school. Ekrem, who was "not particularly politically inclined and was more in line with the prevailing norms of his era,"[74] was a member of an earlier generation that the students held in high regard. However, the students imbued the play with additional significance that transcended its original context. Their decision to attend the performance was not merely an act of appreciation for Ekrem's work;

[71] Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi ve Mülkiyeliler*, Vol III., 122.

[72] Ibid., 123.

[73] Ali Kemal, 109-111.

[74] "[…] öyle siyasiyat ile pek uğraşmazdı, zamaneye az-çok uyardı." Ibid., 109.

they also saw it as an opportunity for "demonstration." Thus, the students' shared decision to attend the play underscored their solidarity and demonstrated their capacity to communally recontextualize certain symbols to reflect their own interpretations and concerns. Upon their return from the theatre and faced with an inquiry by the administration, Ali Kemal recounts how they were reminded of the consequences of desertion. They confronted this challenge, expressing that they had initially sought permission but were denied. It was made clear that they did not want to miss this intellectual treat offered by their respected literature teacher, and to their interrogators, they asked, "Isn't theatre also a school?"[75]

During this exchange, Murat Bey (Mizancı) was present, and Ali Kemal notes that his subtle gestures suggested his agreement with this sentiment.[76] This elder Young Turk and a teacher of Mekteb-i Mülkiye is generally highly esteemed in the memoirs of Mekteb-i Mülkiye students. It should be noted that he is also a largely criticized figure due to the former splits within the group. However, his former students who reflect on their school years held him in high regard. A dissident of the CUP, Mehmet Selahattin tells his readers that the sound characteristics of this man "would be confirmed by his former students at Mekteb-i Mülkiye,"[77] thus implying a shared tendency. Dates of composition and publication significantly impact memoirists' recalling of prominent figures. Hüseyin Cahid recalls penning a harsh critique against Murat Bey in the newspaper *Tanin* following the restoration of the constitution. Looking back to this incident in his later memoirs, he admits with regret and understanding that his younger self might have been wrong, acknowledging that there could have been extenuating circumstances justifying Murat Bey's

[75] "Tiyatro da mektep değil midir?" Ibid., 111. The act of equating theatre and school, as elucidated in Ali Kemal's account, is not isolated but can be traced back to the perspectives of prominent figures from the preceding generation. These individuals espoused the view of theatre as a conduit for societal education, a perspective encapsulated in Namık Kemal's characterization of the theatre as the most useful form of entertainment. See, Namık Kemal, "Mukaddime-i Celal," in *Celalettin Harzemşah* (İstanbul: Hareket Yayınları, 1972), 16-17.

[76] Ali Kemal, 112.

[77] Mehmet Selahattin, *Bildiklerim* (Ankara: Vadi Yayınları, 2006), 161.

actions. He states that his former preference reflects "the tendency of youth"[78] to view issues from a singular perspective, prone to quick, polarized assessments that overlook the exigent aspects of the situations faced.

§ 4.7 Chosen Predecessors

Despite the varied sentiments of respect and disappointment directed towards Murat Bey and Ahmed Rıza, the slightly older members of Zürcher's "first generation" of Young Turks, it is evident that both figures are represented as elders and tutors within the memoirs of those born between the 1860s and 1880s. This cohort of memoirists deeply respected the Young Ottomans, particularly Namık Kemal, who could be interpreted as their "generational father." Hüseyin Cahit describes him in his memoirs as "the greatest spiritual educator and mentor of me and my generation."[79] Rıza Tevfik states that Ali Kemal, originally named Ali Rıza, adopted the name Kemal in homage to Namık Kemal,[80] indicating the extent of his influence.

Memoirists frequently cited pieces from Namık Kemal's writings to express their sentiments, both within the texts of their memoirs and in their letters, which were also referenced in their memoirs. The period when they first encountered Namık Kemal's works is given special significance in these narratives. Kazım Nami recalls that he had "already begun to read"[81] Namık Kemal's works while studying at the idadi in Manastır. The reverence was not reserved for Namık Kemal alone but also enveloped anyone with a nexus to him. Kazım Nami mentions a friend, Giritli Arif Hikmet, whose literary style mirrored that of Namık Kemal, leading him to be respected by the other students.[82] Hüseyin Cahit speaks highly of his young uncle who, having spent his exile in Rodos under the tutelage

[78] Yalçın, *Edebiyat Anıları*, 48.

[79] "[…] benim ve kuşağımın en büyük ruhsal eğitimcisi, yol göstericisi odur." Ibid., 47.

[80] Tevfik, 156.

[81] Duru, 10.

[82] Ibid., 10.

of Namık Kemal, acquired the status of a "prophet" in his personal pantheon.[83]

Ali Kemal underscores the influence of Mekteb-i Mülkiye in introducing him and his peers to the writings of the Young Ottomans. Later, recounting his return from Geneva, he details how he shared information about the student organizations he had encountered there with his peers back at Mekteb-i Mülkiye. Emboldened by these revelations, they endeavored to establish a similar organization in the name of their school. However, their initial attempts at assembling were discovered, leading to their arrest. During the subsequent interrogations, the officials challenged their hero worship of Namık Kemal and Ziya Pasha, aiming to discredit these figures in the students' eyes. Ali Kemal responded, "No matter what you say, our love for Kemal Bey is eternal,"[84] which made him rebuked for his audacity and disrespect. In an attempt to admonish him, one interrogator, Hasan Pasha, exclaimed, "Oh child, what a good man your father was; he was Hajj al-Harameyn; why did you become such an apostate?"[85] The accusation of apostasy had them all laughing, only to realize later that this label was inspired by a piece of free verse about Jean-Jacques Rousseau found among the confiscated documents.

After recalling this event, Ali Kemal states that a notable shift was observed not only within the student body but also within the Ottoman press. The influence of (Muallim) Naci, while still present, had started to wane. Several poets disappeared from the literary landscape, and Ahmed Midhat re-entered the scene in this atmosphere. He began to write again, penning works on science, history, and philosophy, inspiring young writers. Select among them was Beşir Fuad. Though not much was known to Ali Kemal or his entourage about the origins or aspirations of Beşir Fuad, the writer's command over French, German, and English was well-acknowledged. He distinguished himself through his radical belief in the vacuity of poetry and answered criticisms from poets with dismissive

[83] Yalçın, *Edebiyat Anıları*, 45.

[84] "[…] ne söyleseniz Kemal Bey'e muhabbetimiz ezelidir. " Ali Kemal, 151.

[85] "A çocuk, senin baban ne iyi bir adamdı, hacü'l-haremeyn idi, sen niye böyle mürted çıktın?" Ibid., 151.

ripostes that underscored the superiority of science. Ali Kemal notes that in the new press environment, “even” he and his friends became a part of this initiative: “Despite our lack of substantial resources, we were able to contribute our half-formed ideas derived from courses like principles of finance, scribbling articles to *Tercüman* and getting them published."[86]

The news of Beşir Fuad's unexpected suicide relayed through the same newspaper in which their texts were published, left Ali Kemal and his contemporaries in disbelief. Born in Istanbul in 1852, Beşir Fuad was a former Harbiyeli and military officer turned materialist writer. He was one of the preeminent distributors of German *Vulgärmaterialismus*. As Şükrü Hanioğlu shows, this strand of materialism had a substantial impact on the outlook of the Young Turk generation. Hüseyin Cahit extols Beşir Fuad's considerable influence “over the generations of that period,” highlighting how he "freed young people from the shackles of conventional theologians”[87] through his propagation of Ludwig Büchner's thoughts.

Büchner served as the chief materialistic inspiration for the late Ottoman materialists, despite their borrowed ideas often presenting an inconsistent fusion, thus "further vulgarizing"[88] *Vulgärmaterialismus*. As Hanioğlu observes, the scientistic vision was strongly tied with the idea of a future society, shedding light on the ease of utopian-generation-formation discussed earlier in the present text. Büchner's best-seller, *Kraft und Stoff*, was translated by Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil. Baha Tevfik’s influence not only spanned his own generation but also was predicted by Abdullah Cevdet - another pioneering materialist and a founder of the CUP - to extend to generations to come. Abdullah Cevdet acclaimed that his translation of Büchner's work, which had instigated a “formidable

[86] "Elimizde o derece sermaye yok iken, usul-i maliyye gibi bazı derslerimizden iktitaf edebildiğimiz semerelerle yarımyanlış makaleler karalayarak *Tercüman*’a gönderiyor ve dercettirebiliyorduk." Ali Kemal, 115.

[87] "[…] gençleri bizim klasik Tanrıbilimcilerimizin zincirlerinden kurtararak" Yalçın, *Edebiyat Anıları*, 46.

[88] Şükrü Hanioğlu, "The Scientism of the Young Turks," in *Atatürk, An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011)

revolution in the mind of the entire world, was reason enough for future generations to remember his name."[89] Abdullah Cevdet himself served as a translator of the French sociologist Gustave Le Bon whose great impact on the Young Turks is largely noted in the literature. *Kraft und Stoff*'s translation of Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil was a second-hand translation derived from the French rendition of the original German work, but the authors noted that they also "examined the 18th edition of the German original."

The acquisition of French and engagement with French literature held an important place in the educational endeavors of the time. However, the proficiency imparted by the schools in this language is frequently evaluated as lacking.[90] As a response, certain memoirists sought external avenues to supplement their language education. Hüseyin Cahit states that the more they grasped the contents of these readings, the more their enthusiasm for further reading swelled. He remarks on his grandiose translation work he financially relied on at school. He felt the need to underscore their persistent dedication to French, suggesting that the books of Namık Kemal and sporadic pamphlets on freedom "did not deter them"[91] from their French readings.

Despite the widespread interest among the group for the texts of the Young Ottomans, several memoirists embrace a selective recounting of history that seemingly dismisses the early endeavors, casting them into the shadow of the constitutional revolution of 1908. Halil Menteşe traces back the genesis of the movement to "adopt Western civilization" to the reign of Sultan Selim III. He asserts that while various groups advocating liberty emerged, none managed to meet their goals and that the one that succeeded in the 1908 revolution was the CUP, which was founded in Paris

[89] Hanioğlu, *Blueprints*.

[90] Ibid. 108, 117 Also see, Yalçın, *Edebiyat Anıları*, 52.

[91] Yalçın, *Edebiyat Anıları*, 48.

and merged with the Ottoman Freedom Society founded by Talat Bey and his friends in Thessaloniki and gave that its name.[92]

A supplementary interpretation is offered by Bezmi Nusret, who hints at a burgeoning cohesion across the society favoring constitution. However, he downplays the significance of antecedent organizations, contending, "There is no need to dwell on the Fedailer (1859), Yeni Osmanlılar (1865), Ali Suavi and Kleanti Skalyeri (1878) committees, whose main aim was to have the sultan changed and whose activities did not yield any positive results."[93] Kazım Nami posits that the initial Ottoman Union and Progress Society was established in Istanbul between the years 1888 and 1990, with the majority of its founders being students of Tıbbiye (*Tıbbiyeliler*.) He states, "Prior to this, the Young Ottomans Society was formed, but it appears to have dissolved before it was able to conduct any significant activity."[94]

Drawing from Lovell's observation of the flexibility of generational ancestry, one sees a clear inclination of the Young Turk generation towards a route that is malleable. The forthcoming discourse will delve deeper into the choices of lineage in the post-constitution period. What is discernible so far is the crucial role schools played in presenting an unprecedentedly widespread chance to experience a communal presence, scrutinize the chains of seniority, gauge self-worth, and ponder future paths. Even with a spectrum of freedoms in different schools, the prevailing sentiment was that the "*mekteb* athmosphere" was less grim and

[92] "Payidar olan 10 Temmuz 1324 (23 Temmuz 1908) ihtilalini başaran, hürriyet rejimini kuran ve yaşatan cemiyet Paris'te kurulan ve Selanik'te Talat Bey ve arkadaşları tarafından teşkil edilen Osmanlı Hürriyet Cemiyeti ile birleşen ve ismini ona veren İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti'dir." Menteşe, 15-16.

[93] "Asıl gayeleri Padişah değiştirtmekten ibaret bulunan ve faaliyetleri müsbet bir netice vermeyen Fedailer (1859), Yeni Osmanlılar (1865), Ali Suavi ve Kleanti Skalyeri (1878) komiteleri üzerinde tevakkufa lüzum yoktur." Kaygusuz, 29.

[94] "Ondan önce de Genç Osmanlılar Cemiyeti kurulmuş ise de esaslı bir faaliyet gösteremeden tarihe karışmış olsa gerektir." Duru, 9.

burdensome than the world outside its gates.[95] To use Ali Kemal's terms that distinctly set the school apart, it was a "sanctuary for youth."[96]

[95] Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi ve Mülkiyeliler*, Vol II (Ankara: Mars Matbaası, 1968-1969), 850.
[96] "Mektep melce-i şebab olduğu için [...]" Ali Kemal, 60.

5

Age Meets Era

§ 5.1 Rivalry and Valorization of Youth

As unfolded in the preceding chapter, the era signaling the arrival of the Young Turks was distinguished by an unbridled effusion of youths swelling the educational establishments. This period, defined by the burgeoning of students, was synonymous with overhauling and bolstering educational infrastructures, a prominent feature in the examined memoirs. The memoirs detail transitions within an evolving education system prompted by a rising student population and the consequent opening of new schools. Also, these narratives teem with references in minute detail to the authors' positions within the scholastic hierarchy, affording a view into the intensifying competitions of the era. Particularly, works born of revised notes mention the minutiae of the respective memoirist's triumphs and those of their classmates in specific courses or evaluations. The theme of competition, an undercurrent, persisted among the youths later in their trajectories, and it was twofold: intragenerational and intergenerational.

The period bore the hallmark of an inflated student populace and evolving admission criteria, fostering an environment ripe for competitiveness. However, this aspect was novel enough that the outcome—

specifically, the students' future trajectories—was full of great possibilities. Acutely aware of their worth and indispensability, the memoirists understood they wielded substantial bargaining power. The competition did not diminish their self-esteem or importance. The correlation between "new" and "young" assumed a towering strength, becoming part and parcel of many discourses, particularly those accentuating the demands of this fresh era.

A prevalent locution underscored that every epoch required its bespoke cadre of human resources. This maxim was also a relic of eminent figures advocating "freedom" from the preceding period, such as Reşid Pasha. In the face of those who chastised him for entrusting youthful, newly educated individuals with positions of authority, he defended his choice, stating, "A new administration needs completely new and young elements."[1] This conviction was echoed and explicitly supported by Ali Haydar in his memoirs. His pronouncement was chiefly aimed at the post-revolutionary administration in Istanbul, warning that the foundational tenets and strategies of an absolutist rule would prove inadequate in fostering the growth and success of a constitutional government. He held that every epoch called for its own unique set of minds. While the memoirs resonate with praise for the virtues of youth, their support for youthful supremacy was not without stipulations. Amidst the rising tide of competition within his generation, Ali Haydar claimed to have exhibited a putative confidence, viewing the swell of contenders not as a challenge but as an enriched pool of talents ready to serve the country. However, he added that for him, a deep-seated affection for the country took precedence over mere youth adulation. The valorization of youth was not always straightforward.

The endorsement for youthful ascendancy held a distinct pragmatic undertone, evidenced by the same proponents contradicting this stance in different contexts, which was indicative of the competition and societal perception of youth. A prime example is provided by Mehmet Talat, who, despite his stated belief that a man is mature at twenty, held an adverse

[1] "Yeni bir idare için tamamile yeni ve genç unsurlar lazımdır." Ali Haydar Mithat, 53.

stance towards Enver and other Unionist officers, whom he deemed too young and thus unfit for the role of Minister of War post the establishment of full CUP control.[2] This incongruity in his stance illuminates the situational attitudes towards the idea of youthful leadership. Such assertions were not always unassailable; instead, they vacillated between the demands of specific circumstances and the personalities involved. Tunaya portrays Mehmet Talat's perspective that establishing a cabinet is an act of bravery as debatable. However, he says, what seems less arguable is Mehmet Talat's reluctance to shoulder the duties of cabinets that were set up beyond his immediate influence. The notion that he would distance himself from the accountability of cabinets overseen by the CUP, even to the point of compelling their resignation, seems to "challenge common political understanding."[3]

More circumstantial than principled were the views on the youthful command. Mustafa Abdülhalik recounts the moment he received a telegraph which, to his chagrin, informed him of his appointment as the governorship of Aleppo. The news prompted a bout of introspection, leading him to a conversation laden with concern with Mehmet Talat. Mustafa Abdülhalik, to elucidate his reservations, pointed out Aleppo's traditional preference for "old and elderly" governors. Talat, however, portrayed Abdülhalik's foray into Aleppo, not as mere happenstance but "a necessity," thereby sealing his journey to the city.[4]

Nevertheless, the signature trait of this epoch was its capacity to entertain such pragmatic views and decisions, given that youthful command was not merely a distant ideal—it was a tangible reality that one could rally behind, cast doubt on, or oppose. While the Young Turks refrained from completely dismantling the existing structure, they did not shy away from overhauling and substituting various governmental segments as and when they saw fit.[5] In the post-revolutionary period, the

[2] M. Talha Çiçek, *Syria in World War I: Politics, Economy and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 29.

[3] Tunaya, 36.

[4] Renda, 167.

[5] Philliou, 49.

CUP sculpted a parallel government in the capital and provinces, and often wielded more significant clout than cabinet ministers or the grand viziers.[6]

The memoirs examined often radiate shared aplomb, not confined to the sole author but extended to a broader cohort, especially those from similar educational or career trajectories. The sentiment mirrors Kamishima Jiro's insight on the Japanese setting, dubbed *tai gunshuteki* - individual self-assertion toward the group: "It was not a self-sufficient individualism but one which depended on the group's existence, since it was primarily a desire to secure recognition and admiration from the group and power within it."[7] Drawing from Mizancı Murat's phrase, which translates to "the coming summer is evident from spring,"[8] Ali Kemal amplifies this sentiment for his classmates at Mekteb-i Mülkiye, suggesting from their school time discipline, endeavors, and bravado that they were poised for illustrious roles in the future. Similarly, Kazım Nami extolls the "young, educated officers,"[9] a cadre he was part of. İbrahim Temo, a Tıbbiyeli himself, reserves similar encomiums for his fellow Tıbbiyeliler in his memoirs and dedicates the text to them.[10] Beyond their face value, such predilections hint at the era's simmering competition. Pervasive contentions, both within distinct groups and between them, characterized it. Literature to date marked the internal discords within the CUP and the broader political spectrum, the schisms between the “impatient” and the “professional,”[11] or between *alaylı* and *mektepli*[12] officers. Several of these confrontations carried a generational nuance.

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[6] Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Preparation For A Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 280.

[7] Pyle, 15.

[8] "Gelecek yaz ilkbaharından bellidir." Ali Kemal, 53.

[9] Duru, 34.

[10] İbrahim Temo, *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyetinin Teşekkülü ve Hıdemat-ı Vataniye ve Inkılâb-ı Millîye Dair Hatıratım* (Mecidiye: n.p., 1939)

[11] Şerif Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasi Fikirleri: 1895-1908* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1994)

[12] Şerif Mardin, *Religion, Society, and Modernity in Turkey* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 189.

The memoirists' self-pride occasionally emerges from discerning a scarcity of refined educational backgrounds. Ali Kemal reflected on this, noting that he beheld his former students in prominent roles upon his return from exile during the constitutional period. The scene evoked a deep sense of pride in him, heightened by his belief that during those times in Aleppo, it would have been a tall order to find another educator with as much dedication to language, literature, and history as he possessed.[13] They often reserve a parallel reverence for their revered elder figures, sensing a profound void in the absence of such personas. The void is not necessarily rooted in education, but often in the youthful vigor, wisdom, and ideas of freedom they brought to their entourage. Mizancı Murat's popular receptions by his students, for instance, echo this sentiment. Ali Kemal perceived Murat Bey as a beacon for the youth, with every facet of the latter's conduct radiating freedom of thought[14] — even in the most mundane interactions. Amidst an era characterized by constraints, Murat Bey's spontaneous joining in youthful frolics, such as a simple snowball game, underscored the deep impression he left on the youths of the time.[15]

The youthful vigor is highly stressed in the memoirs. Ali Kemal's narratives, replete with the term "young-minded,"[16] extend their essence beyond mere age, encapsulating elder figures embodying youthful spirit. Recounting his tenure as a civil servant, he illuminates a unique Gemeinschaft formed of the genuinely young and those older "young-minded" civil servants.[17] This Gemeinschaft stood in sharp contrast to the broader Gesellschaft, delineated not by age but by shared ethos. The essence of this ethos unmistakably resonates with youthful tenets. Haydar Rüştü, in a parallel vein, characterizes the proponents of judicious deeds as "the young and the sane."[18]

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[13] Ali Kemal, 220.

[14] Mardin cites analogous examples from other texts. See., *Jön Türklerin Siyasi Fikirleri, 77.*

[15] Ali Kemal, 42.

[16] Ibid., 79, 211, 229.

[17] Ibid., 211.

[18] Öktem, 71.

Depending on one's stance, "youth was something to be celebrated or denigrated."[19] While memoirists often champion the merits of the young, they simultaneously depict criticisms launched at them by the older generation. This association further intertwines the concepts of "new" and "young," as critics are often depicted as adversaries to all that is “youthful or novel.”[20] The memoirs often wield 'youth' as a flexible badge, with a consistent inclination to see anything non-conforming as unconventional. Deviations from this mold are viewed as anomalies. Ali Kemal recounts a figure who, "although young,"[21] found no favor in his eyes. Muhittin Birgen describes a young man who, "even though young,"[22] blamed the "CUP revolution" for the empire's misfortunes.

The memoirs make abundantly clear that generational dissonances are not merely tethered to the ticking of the chronological clock but are inextricably linked to the complex layers of seniority, casting otherwise commonplace life markers such as graduation or military service in an unaccustomed hue. Context wields the chisel that sculpts the significance of such markers, and Mustafa Abdülhalik's reminiscences stand as a testament of that and of intergenerational rivalry: Upon his bureaucratic appointment in his natal Yanya, he was ensnared in a quizzical quandary. Those acquainted with his early years and bureaucratic rise grappled with a disconcerting verity. Numerous held designations, yet the commensurate pecuniary rewards eluded them. The dissonance of beholding a once-known youth not merely paralleling their financial intake but perchance overshadowing it evoked discernible discomfort manifested in their conspicuous demeanor. Only upon an ensuing episode, wherein a court he sidestepped the governor's anticipations in favor of championing a just cause, did the elders acclaim him, heralding, "He is the man!" He states that it was then that his elders, having cognizance of his stance,

[19] Whelehan, 935.

[20] Yalçın, *Tanıdıklarım*, 199.

[21] Ali Kemal, 169.

[22] Muhittin Birgen, *İttihat ve Terakki'de On Sene* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2017), 713.

acknowledged his "departure from boyhood,"[23] thereafter extolling his virtues far and wide.

The era's stratifications did not solely stem from the older generation's discomfort towards rising youth. Instances abound where the youth, in turn, expressed palpable discontent with equivalences drawn between them and their elders, despite glaring disparities in stature. This sentiment finds representation in Cemil Topuzlu's quest to distinguish himself from the conventional "surgeon." "Half a century ago," Topuzlu recounts, practitioners addressing surgical maladies and those tending to various wounds were ubiquitously termed "surgeons" - a title scarcely held in esteem. Eager to disassociate from this generalized bracket, Topuzlu sought a change from Hasip Pasha, the Chief Medical Officer, rebranding himself as an "operator."[24]

Upon his return from Paris to serve at Haydarpaşa Hospital, he initiated a sweeping change by substituting the "elderly, incapacitated" staff with "young, agile" soldiers. His narrative also casts light on the then-prevalent perception of surgeons. Many bearing this designation had roots either in barbering or grooming, professions not necessarily steeped in the medical practices of the day. This older generation of surgeons, Topuzlu recounts, not only lacked a fundamental grasp of antisepsis but were outrightly skeptical of its merits and innovations in modern surgery. Such was his stance on upholding medical standards that he firmly kept these traditionalists "out of his wards."[25]

The discussion of youth was further accentuated and accompanied by non-biological political periodization. The decision to keep figures from the old regime "out of the wards" sparked significant discussion. Despite the newfound self-regard and expanding opportunities for the youth, a recurring theme in the literature, along with many memoirists themselves, suggest that the Young Turks were cognizant of their incapability to rule and of society's reluctance to accept them as rulers at the dawn of

[23] Renda, 58.

[24] Topuzlu, 138.

[25] Ibid., 141.

the constitutional period.[26] According to accounts from Zekeriya Sertel's memoirs, the Unionists operated without a distinct agenda and were driven by apprehension. This purported fear influenced their decision to rely on and elevate officials and pashas from the preceding era to positions of significance.[27] In a parallel sentiment, Hüseyin Cahit underscores that these Unionists handed over the mantle of executing their ambitions to the very figures of the system they had toppled. In his critique of Sait Pasha, he commends the latter's impressive ability to acclimate to the constitutional era, seemingly to its utmost limit. Contemplating the idea of surpassing that boundary, he ponders, "To whom can we rightfully expect the impossible?"[28]

Hüseyin Cahit intensifies this sentiment regarding another figure, the Grand Vezir Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa. Even someone of Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha's seasoned background seemed out of his depth when exposed to the constitution's mechanisms. It was not that he lacked intelligence or fervor, but instead that he had not imbibed this rejuvenated era's spirit, zeal, and ideals, Hüseyin Cahit implies. Despite Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa's experience and evident capabilities, he says, the Pasha appeared tentative and unfamiliar under the new regime: "It has once more been understood that every epoch requires men emerging from its core."[29] This viewpoint was not isolated.[30]

A case in point is the debate surrounding the "relics of istibdat," notably encompassed İbrahim Hakkı Paşa - the successor to Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa - who became the Grand Vezir in 1910. Hüseyin Kazım's lament over his earlier endorsement of the Pasha springs from a belief that the figures from the "istibdat" era would not seamlessly transition into or be effective within the new constitutional framework. Hüseyin Kazım, though

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[26] Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 28.

[27] Sertel, 37.

[28] "Gayrı mümkünü kimden istemekte hakkımız olabilir ki ondan isteyelim?" Yalçın, *Tanıdıklarım*, 116.

[29] "Her devrin kendi içinden çıkmış adamlara ihtiyacı olduğu bir kere daha tahakkuk etmiş oldu." Ibid., 120.

[30] See, Duru, 58.

later retracting his support, says he once dubbed the Pasha, like many others, "the representative of youth."[31] It was not merely Hakkı Paşa's relative youth setting him apart from his predecessors of the constitutional phase, but the gravitas he accrued from over two decades of teaching experience at prominent institutions that further burnished his legacy. Echoing this sentiment, Halil Menteşe, in a legislative assembly, emphasized Hakkı Paşa's profound impact at the Law School (*Mekteb-i Hukuk*,) where he was deeply revered by the young. This admiration was a testament to his authority and stemmed from his progressive pedagogical approach. Thus, Halil Bey claims, any attempt to label the Pasha as a mere relic of the istibdat era, both historically and during the constitutional period, seems ill-conceived.[32]

Critics zeroed in on the relationship between Hakkı Pasha and the CUP when scrutinizing the cabinet. Allegations arose, suggesting that the reins of governmental control had been transferred to a privileged circle – of the committee - beyond the parliamentary realm. Lütfi Fikri stood out amongst these critics. Having asserted his early allegiance to the CUP, he soon distanced himself after entering the parliament. Subsequently, he played foundational roles in both the Moderate Liberal Party (Mutedil Hurriyetperveran Fırkası) and the Entente Liberale (Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası, or the Freedom and Accord Party.) Hüseyin Cahit's portrayal of Lütfi Fikri offers a window into the era's dynamics. He reflects that when the parliament was convened, Lütfi Fikri emerged as one of its prided young and intellectual members, and "it was from such European-educated, enlightened, and patriotic youths that true service was anticipated." Arguably, Hüseyin Cahit says, "These youths held even more intense expectations, showing a pronounced eagerness to prove their mettle and secure influential roles."[33] In discussions about the Unionists' ascent to critical

[31] Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, 110.

[32] Tunaya, 68.

[33] "[...]asıl hizmet böyle tahsil görmüş, Avrupa'da okumuş, münevver ve vatanperver gençlerden bekleniyordu. Galiba o gençler de bunu daha büyük tehalükle bekliyorlardı ki kendilerini göstermek ve bir mevkie geçmek hususunda pek isticale kapılıyorlardı." *Tanıdıklarım*, 173.

positions, one of the detractors of such a perspective, Kazım Nami, argues that they did not chase after roles; instead, "these roles found their way to them."[34] Irrespective of the lens, the newly emerging political horizon was full of great possibilities.

§ 5.2 La Belle Époque?

It is said that the unfolding political scene was replete with immense possibilities for the youth in the Ottoman context. The memoirists delve into the sentiments evoked by this evolving backdrop. Hüseyin Cahit mentions that the unexpected rise of a few young ministers, seemingly from obscurity, heightened this zeal and ambition. However, he says, it also "intensified the pain of shattered dreams to a more palpable level."[35] The theme of shattered dreams is also present in the memoirs of the younger cohort. Şevket Süreyya, for instance, states in his memoirs that his generation harbored both indebtedness and resentment towards the leaders of the CUP:

> Our indebtedness arises from their audacious act of toppling an utterly decayed, cumbersome, primitive administration devoid of any dignity, instilling a sense of pride and hope for the future in the young generation. Our resentment, on the other hand, arises from the disappointment they imposed on our generation regard ing the hope they had kindled.[36]

[34] "Onlar mevkilere koşmadılar, mevkiler onların ayaklarına geldi." Duru, 50.

[35] "[…] fakat diğer taraftan, hayal sukutlarının acısını da daha çok hissedilecek bir dereceye çıkarıyordu." Yalçın, *Tanıdıklarım*, 173.

[36] "İttihat ve Terakki liderlerine bizim neslimiz hem borçlu, hem de kırgındır. Borcumuz, en bayağı şekilde çürümüş, hantal, iptidaî ve her türlü haysiyetten yoksun bir istibdat idaresini cesur bir hamleyle çökertmelerinden ve genç nesle bir benlik gururu, bir gelecek ümidi aşılamalarından gelir. Kırgınlığımız ise, uyandırdıkları bu ümit için, bizim neslimize verdikleri hayal kırıklığındandır." Aydemir, *Suyu Arayan Adam*, 302.

The anticipation of hope and grand expectations is often spotlighted as capturing the era bridging the nineteenth century's concluding decades and the next's onset. In the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment paradigm celebrated human progress rooted in rationality, a perspective Carlton J. H. Hayes observed as evolving by the nineteenth century's unfolding decades. Nonetheless, persistent optimism shifted its emphasis from the capacities of individual reasoning to the collective evolutionary progression of humanity. This shift underscored a profound belief: the inexorable advancement of the human race, undeterred by individual constraints. Hayes astutely identified a "generation of materialism,"[37] capturing the prevailing sentiment that transcended individual regions.

Rather than a mere simulacrum that compartmentalized views might suggest, Ottoman modernity resonated profoundly with the broader dialogue of nineteenth-century militarism and progress.[38] The epoch teemed with great expectations, particularly amongst the youth, propelled by the multifaceted challenges and opportunities of an increasingly globalized world. The period was often romantically christened with sanguine labels like "belle époque," or "gilded age," evoking an age of luminous prosperity. However, as Alp Yenen and Ramazan Hakkı Öztan highlighted, there are often-overlooked vicissitudes of this time: while the "belle époque" might have been hailed as an epoch of peace, it was, in the fullness of time, also a period of intricate challenges, especially on the imperial frontiers. Demographic pressures, global economic fluctuations, and conflict-induced refugee crises recalibrated normative political trajectories, casting a shadow over the serene portrayal of the belle époque, making it a somewhat more turbulent chapter than the common locution suggests.[39]

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[37] Carlton J.H. Hayes, *A Generation of Materialism, 1871-1900* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

[38] Provence, 13.

[39] Ramazan Hakkı Öztan and Alp Yenen, "Age of Rogues: Transgressive Politics at the Frontiers of the Ottoman Empire," in *Age of Rogues: Rebels, Revolutionaries and Racketeers at the Frontiers of Empires,* eds. Ramazan Hakkı Öztan and Alp Yenen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 50-51.

Paris, the capital of la belle époque, held not merely the lure of formal educational opportunities for the Young Turks but broader, more encompassing intellectual offerings. Hüseyin Cahit illustrates the ambitions his contemporaries harbored, desiring to immerse themselves in the Parisian cultural milieu, "to visit their theaters, their libraries, to read the newspapers and books we want."[40] Memoirs also stress the resentment stemming from the expectations and the number of people fleeing there. İbrahim Temo's memoir documents Ahmed Rıza's exasperation at what he deemed an unnecessary exodus: "I do not endorse the desertion of a bunch of useless people to Europe. They are a burden on the committee."[41] Ali Kemal was disenchanted in Paris with his circle, who seemed more consumed by personal indulgences than genuine learning: "I gradually realized that I would not find the friendship I was looking for in Süleyman Bey. My intention was to study in Paris, to learn, to make something of myself. He was busy with his whims."[42] Beyond the allure of la belle époque, Paris stood at the forefront of the fin de siècle debates on degeneration, decadence, and societal decline. Drawing on the contrasting moods of the time, Walter Loqueur comments, "Very few people read Le Décadent but every Parisian saw the Eiffel Tower every day, a symbol of French industry and technical know-how," indicating that this was not so much a "triste époque," but an era marked by "considerable achievements and great optimism."[43]

Regardless of the grand periodization attempts, a consistent and undeniable theme in the Young Turks' works is "the talk of optimism." Referencing back, Mehmet Akif's character Hocazade notably censured the former generation for their "pessimistic outlook." Several memoirs

[40] "[…] tiyatrolarını, kitaplıkları dolaşmak, istediğimiz gazete ve kitapları doya doya okumak" Yalçın, *Edebiyat Anıları*, 61.

[41] "İşe yaramayan bir takım efradın Avrupaya firarine hiç razı değilim. Cemiyete bar oluyorlar." Quoted in İbrahim Temo, 80.

[42] "[…] Süleyman Bey'de o aradığım arkadaşı bulamayacağımı yavaş yavaş anladımdı. Benim niyetim Paris'te okumak, öğrenmek, bir baltaya sap olmaktı. O ise hevaiyat ile meşgul idi." Ali Kemal, 124. Also see., ibid., 129.

[43] Walter Loqueur, "Fin-de-Siècle: Once More with Feeling," *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 1 (1996): 5–47, 21.

resonate with a pronounced optimism rooted in the era's promise and a resolute belief in the trajectory of progress. Muhittin Birgen comments that it was not allowed to be pessimistic, which made him silent on questions at times.[44] An acute sense of the times and a subtle trust in progress are presented in İbrahim Temo's memoir. He also relays a letter penned by Hasan Arif initiating with an assertion of the age – "Although we are in the nineteenth century" – and contrasting it with a somber reflection, "there is no trace of the word of humanity,"[45] reflecting both the aspirations attached to the era and progress and a concurrent sense of disappointment with its realities.

Reflecting on the "new generation's" ethos, Sürur Cemal penned an article after the constitutional revolution, stating that each generation charts its course of progression. He viewed the Hamidian epoch as stagnation in this journey, emphasizing the need for the new generation to double their pace.[46] The urgency was a defining trait of the Young Turk generation. Even as critics challenge them, they too highlight the very same notions of immediacy and speed, saying that they were overwhelmed by the velocity of their times.[47]

The sense of urgency is often cited as a potential dividing factor, intensifying the perceived chasm between the CUP abroad and the action-focused officers. Nader Sohrabi challenges the premise of a strict division and emphasizes the "global waves" when interpreting the preference towards a revolutionary instead of an evolutionary turn. He posits that the CUP abroad had already inclined towards a revolutionary approach before allying with the activist officers. The rapid modernization of Japan after its constitutional revolution, the local repertoire of the Young Ottomans and siding with the invented tradition of their predecessors to find the roots of constitutionalism within the Islamic tradition, the constitutional movements in Iran drawing on and justifying the same invented

[44] Birgen, 392.

[45] "On dokuzuncu asırda olduğumuz halde insaniyet sözünden eser yok." İbrahim Temo, 90.

[46] Avner Wishnitzer, *Reading Clocks, Alla Turca: Time and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 170.

[47] Tanpınar, 21.

traditions, and the lessons from revolutionary movements in Russia and local uprisings all contributed to the CUP's strategic blueprint. Such influences solidified the CUP's belief in the value of collective participation, leading to a nuanced revolutionary strategy that integrated top-down directives with mass momentum. Balancing insights from global revolutions with local repertoires, Sohrabi says, they crafted a distinct approach that aligned them with the early twentieth-century surge of constitutional movements.[48]

Sohrabi also evaluates the post-revolutionary actions of the CUP, mainly choosing to remain a semi-secret organization rather than transition into an open political party. He counters the popular narrative emphasizing that the ideologues premeditated this decision before the revolution and it was not a result of naivety, hypocrisy, or a shift in mindset. Through a study of other revolutions, the ideologues discerned that the effectiveness and longevity of the Ottoman Chamber depended on the looming presence of a secretive body acting as a perpetual check on the government. This realization thus bridged the gap between the ideologues' strategic planning and the officers' subsequent actions.

The statements made by the Young Turks back Sohrabi's perspective of studying the other revolutions. Enver, who joined the ranks of the Ottoman Liberty Society in 1906, explicitly noted in an interview the profound influence of other revolutions on their strategies. He especially held in high regard the Internal Organization of the Macedonian Bulgars, which served as a significant inspiration.[49] In his memoirs, Kazım Nami speaks of his directive to monitor the "Cercis çetesi,"[50] a group that sprang up in Albania around the same time.

As previously outlined, the formative influence of the invented traditions, inspired by the Young Ottomans and local narratives, cannot be denied in the evolution of Young Turk organizations. İbrahim Temo's

[48] Nader Sohrabi, "Global Waves, Local Actors: What the Young Turks Knew About Other Revolutions and Why It Mattered", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 1 (2002): 45–79.

[49] Öztan and Yenen, 21.

[50] Duru, 17.

memoirs not only reflect the deep inspiration drawn from the Young Ottomans but also highlight the significant reception and connection felt by others. During a gathering when the CUP was taking its first steps, an elder discreetly pulled Temo aside, acknowledging that their discussion was more profound than mere pleasantries. He subtly compared their intentions to those who plotted against Sultan Aziz and extended his good wishes for their mission.[51] Carefully curated historical samples influenced the very genesis of the CUP. Temo shared an anecdote of the CUP's inception, where he relayed to his three *Tıbbiyeli* peers the achievements of the "uninformed youth" behind the Ethniki Etaireia (Filiki Eteria,) the secret revolutionary Greek organization, remarking on their swift success. He asked a rhetorical question: if such raw, uneducated youth could make waves, why couldn't they, four erudite medical students well-versed in the world's intricacies, achieve that success?[52]

Young Turk contemporaries frequently employed such historical examples when critiquing the post-1908 conduct of the CUP. In an extended segment of his memoirs, Bezmi Nusret critically assessed political parties, drawing analogies from various historical models. He then criticized the CUP for its *komitadji* approach, equating it with the adage *La fin justifie les moyens*.[53] The alacrity with which the CUP made decisions stands out in the writings of the Unionists too. Kazım Nami reflected on that rapidity, stating, "Every action we Unionists undertook was shaped by pressing imperatives. Measures crucial for the country were often determined within a few hours and then set into motion immediately."[54] Bar

[51] İbrahim Temo, 21.

[52] "Arkadaşlar, Türkiyemizin başına bela kesilerek, Yunanistanın istiklalini kazandıran Etniki Eteria komitesini teşkil edenler kimdi bilir misiniz? Rusyanın Odesa şehrinde, ticaretle meşgul bir meyhaneci ve bir bakkal çırağı ile amcası zengin bir tüccarın yeğeni üç rum çırağı idi. Tekamül etmemiş bu cahil gençler pek az zaman zarfında buna, bu büyük emellerine muvaffak oldukları halde, bizim gibi ali tahsil görmüş, dünyanın germü sermini görüp çıkmış dört tıbbiyeli niçin muvaffak olamasınlar?" Ibid., 18.

[53] Kaygusuz, 97.

[54] "Biz ittihatçılar birlikte yaptığımız bütün hareketlerimizde, ani ihtiyacın tesiri altında bulunurduk. Memleket, millet için yapılması zaruri görünen hareketler, çok defa birkaç saat içinde kararlaştırılır derhal de işe başlanırdı." Duru, 62.

the political commentary, none of the memoirs belonging to the Young Turk generation challenges the spirit of action and speed, and equating youth with energy and perseverance becomes evident.

§ 5.3 Dynamism

The Young Turk generation was captivated by one overarching quality: dynamism. The emphasis on it did not arise in a vacuum. Instead, it was a timely response, calibrated to an era of global acute time consciousness. The discourse on productivity and the value of time, initially nurtured in Young Ottoman circles during the 1860s and 1870s, found its way into the broader cultural milieu through novels and other literary conduits. By the 1890s, this dialogue had not only captivated the public imagination but had also secured propagation by the official educational agenda.[55] In a world where inertia was increasingly denigrated, dynamism emerged as the imperative.

The lexicon of progress became self-referential. This form of self-referentiality functions as a versatile lattice; in it, elements like speed, agility, youth, energy, punctuality, and hard work are not fixed points but rather variables in equations, capable of being rearranged to simultaneously make the arguments stressing, for instance, youth's dependence on energy and energy's reliance on youth. Bezmi Nusret's memoirs introduce one of his articles titled "The Minute Hand of the Clock is Broken."[56] Here, he likens education to the minute hand of a clock, suggesting a systemic malfunction in the core engine of societal progress. Time, speed, action, and mobility themes resonate across the memoirs studied, forming narratives that matured into their own reflective sphere. Youth, vibrant and imbued with dynamism, is held in high regard. Bezmi Nusret paints youth as a boundless force, one that resists

[55] Wishnitzer, 95.

[56] "Saatin Zenbereği Bozuk." Kaygusuz, 145.

"confinement" and yearns to "expand and manifest" its potential.[57] Already in 1868, Ziya Pasha made similar remarks and depicted liberty as a force as natural and inevitable as youth itself. "Since the present century is the time of humanity's youth," he asserted, "the idea of liberty is spreading through the world like a river which has overflown its banks."[58] To him, this fervent wave of liberty could not be curtailed, even by the most draconian of tyrannical interventions.

Inherent qualities ascribed to youth resonate throughout these texts, with "active" (*faal*) standing as a favored descriptor. Bodily strength and vitality are integral to this discourse. The idea of dynamic forces in power was not novel. İsmail Kemal, reflecting on an instance in his memoirs, opines, "It must have been disappointing for the Arabs of Hejaz to see a paralyzed man at the helm of a country that needed a vigorous man who could run from one place to another."[59] The distinctive trait of the new generation was the expansive new horizons for and the newfound horizontality sense of the youth, which intensified and popularized this emphasis. Physical debility, inertia, and idleness were cast as the afflictions of an older era from which the youth were to distance themselves, collectively.

"I was so saddened by the dilapidated and exhausted state of this prince who was to succeed Abdülhamit that I forgot why I had even gone there and left the Palace in thought,"[60] Hüseyin Cahit says, reflecting on his encounter with Mehmed V Reşad. In recounting his audience with this sultan, Refik Halid portrays the ruler as "decrepit" (*çürük*), his hand lifted with "neither strength nor lifelessness when he bows in his carriage."[61] Against this frail figure, Refik Halid saw himself as "both great and alive,

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[57] Ibid., 145.

[58] Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 352.

[59] "Oradan oraya koşabilecek dinç bir adama ihtiyacı olan bir ülkenin idaresinin başında felçli birisini görmek, Hicaz Arapları üzerinde hayal kırıcı bir tesir bırakmış olmalı." İsmail Kemal, 143.

[60] Tunaya, 153.

[61] "[…]ne kadar eski çürük! Arabasında etrafa selam verirken eli ne güç ne cansız kalkıyor" Karay, 208.

full of substance and ready to rise against not just this sultan, but the potentates of the entire globe."[62] The portrayal of elders, and old age itself, was often marked by an absence of energy, with those who defied this portrayal being regarded as remarkable outliers.[63] As politically savvy elders were celebrated for their 'young minds,' those elders who exhibited notable energy or initiative were described as "like a youth" or as possessing "the fortitude"[64] or "fervor"[65] of a youth.

Physical training began to gain popular prominence during the second constitutional period. While civil schools and high schools, with the exception of Lycée de Galatasaray,[66] had rarely offered physical training courses, memoirs of the Young Turks reveal narratives of physical strength that predate the Constitution. Mustafa Abdülhalik, for instance, narrates his days at the idadi in Istanbul, recalling, "Apart from classes, I was very busy with gymnastics."[67] This dedication bore fruit, he says, when he transitioned to a role as an educator in Rodos. While teaching a French class, one notably older and bulkier student, whose demeanor he likened to a "kabadayı" – a term denoting a brash, assertive, often confrontational character – threatened him. Following a dispute, Abdülhalik describes how he summoned the student and decisively pulled him down, a move that solidified his athletic skills in the eyes of the other students. He further mentions that there were no gymnastic courses at the idadi then, which inspired him to volunteer to introduce such a program at that school and at a local Rum school.[68]

Ali Kemal recalls his truancy during his time at Gülhane Mektebi. Instead of attending school, he and his companions chose a different path,

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[62] "Kendimi büyük buluyorum; hem büyük, hem de dipdiri, cevherli ve yalnız ona değil, bütün dünyadaki hükümdarlara meydan okumaya hazır!" Ibid., 208.

[63] Temo, 116.

[64] Yalçın, *Tanıdıklarım*, 127.

[65] Ibid., 115.

[66] Demet Lüküslü and Şakir Dinçşahin, "Shaping Bodies Shaping Minds: Selim Sırrı Tarcan and the Origins of Modern Physical Education in Turkey", *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 3 (2013): 195–209, 201.

[67] "Derslerden başka jimnastik ile çok meşgul oluyordum." Renda, 43.

[68] Ibid., 47.

engaging in long walks, swimming, and playing strength-based games. He contrasts his group of friends, "a regiment of mischief-makers," with those who attended school diligently. Nevertheless, he believed that this seemingly wayward period was not wasted; it provided him with invaluable physical training. He asserts, "We had an excellent physical training in that age," which he deemed superior to receiving "half-baked, misconceived knowledge." Upon reuniting with his Gülhane School friends at Mekteb-i Mülkiyye, he observed no difference in their knowledge but noted that he was "more vigorous both intellectually and physically."[69]

Another figure of the student type who had not played by the rules was Selim Sırrı Tarcan. As Demet Lüküslü and Şakir Dinçşahin emphasize, Selim Sırrı admitted that he was "never a good student" and harbored a critical perspective towards the conventional "good student," whom authorities depicted as "docile, silent, and idle." Despite this critique, Selim Sırrı was not a passive rebel; he was animated and engaged, particularly excelling in his physical education classes at Lycée de Galatasaray. Characterizing his own demeanor as "fidgety," he was a student who perpetually resisted stillness. This restive nature persisted even after he left Galatasaray for financial reasons and enrolled in the Military School of Engineering. There, amidst a regime of stricter discipline, Tarcan's lively disposition remained undiminished. As Lüküslü and Dinçşahin articulate, "Throughout his life, he made a connection between physical restlessness and political posture."[70]

Manifestation of restlessness and "hyperactivity"[71] is also discernible within the group known as the *fedaiin*, as delineated by Benjamin Fortna. Fortna shows that the members of the group infamous with their criminal activity had already been entangled in such conduct during their formative years. Kuşçubaşı Eşref, for instance, found himself switching schools after an expulsion that followed his involvement in a physical altercation. His extra-legal conduct continued to escalate as an officer. Prior to the 1908 revolution, he had already begun working under Enver in the

[69] "[…] gerek fikren, gerek cismen bende daha ziyade zindelik vardı." Ali Kemal, 36.

[70] Lüküslü and Dinçşahin, 200.

[71] Fortna, 320.

Balkans. The members of this group, which formed a neat cohort born in the 1880s revered Enver as their leader, and for them, leveraging personal connections was paramount in securing forgiveness for their unruly conduct. As time went on, this group experienced internal strife and violence. Fortna posits that this internal turmoil might have been "a logical outcome of a system that, despite its military rigour, granted a considerable degree of latitude for unpredictable behaviour."[72] He cites Eşref's description of the Hamidian era, characterized by the perpetual promise of "one last pardon." However, as Fortna demonstrates, this leniency was not as forthcoming in the Unionist era, unless one's patronage networks were exceptionally robust.[73]

Selim Sırrı emerged as a central figure within the youth organizations established for the first time by the CUP in the wake of the Constitutional era. These organizations, far from being mere social clubs, assumed a distinctly paramilitary character. Their primary objectives included promoting and normalizing physical and military training, with a vision to extend this form of education to the vast majority of youths who were not engaged in formal schooling.[74]

A novel and unprecedented reformer type emerged, says Niyazi Berkes, a type of "mass educators,"[75] and adds that Selim Sırrı is a paragon[76] of it. The mass educators' impact after the constitution was

[72] Fortna, 319.

[73] Ibid., 320.

[74] Zafer Toprak, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin Paramiliter Gençlik Örgütleri", *B.Ü. Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi*, VII (1979): 95-113.

[75] Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London, Hurst & Company, 1998), 401.

[76] Rıza Tevfik emerges as another exemplary figure whom Berkes situates within this novel type of influential educator and reformer. See, ibid., 401. He was appointed to maintain public order and control the masses on the streets of Istanbul at the dawn of the constitution, a duty he describes as being "exposed to every calamity." This was a charge that he shared with Selim Sırrı. He frequently reflects on his own popularity at that juncture. He attests that he was held in high regard not only by the masses but also by the palace, symbolizing his unique ability to traverse and influence multiple spheres of society. See., Rıza Tevfik, 31-32.

distinctive and profound; they challenged traditional institutions and their educational effects. Rather than mere theoreticians, these people were educators who demonstrated their views tangibly, crafting a mass psychology that they adeptly translated into influential social movements and resonant narratives. Despite their unconventional approaches, they "skyrocketed to fame," establishing themselves as figures as popular and impactful as top politicians. Stressing their colorful personalities, Berkes asserts: "Under normal conditions, all of them would have been called eccentrics, if not lunatics. But, at no other time in Turkish history has the educator been so popular, possessing such magical powers over the crowds."[77]

In their writings, the Young Turk generation consistently showed a keen awareness of their place in time. Hüseyin Cahit, for instance, engages in a speculative exercise, placing figures of his era into different historical contexts. Regarding Ziya Gökalp, he ruminates, "Had he matured in a more ancient epoch, perhaps he would have manifested as a world traveler, one drawn to the deserts."[78] His reflections extend to Ömer Naci, for whom he states, "It would have demanded a multitude of testimonies" to convince one that Ömer Naci "was a man born of the 19th and 20th centuries."[79] Behind these speculations, Hüseyin Cahit identifies a deliberate "evasion of reality" as a recurring motif among these individuals. This theme is a persistent tension within the memoirs. The narrators do not relinquish their penchant for the dreamlike and the adventurous—a disposition they wear as a badge of honor. Nonetheless, it is this penchant for adventurism and dreaminess that ironically forms the core of the criticisms that members of this generation extend to one another.[80]

As delineated in earlier chapters, fleeing to Europe emerged as a recurrent theme, a course of action frequently undertaken individually or

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[77] Berkes, 401.

[78] "O, çok eski zamanlarda yetişse idi, belki çöllere çekilmiş bir tarik-i dünya olurdu." Yalçın, *Tanıdıklarım*, 71.

[79] "Onun 19. ve 20. Asır adamı olduğuna çok şahit isterdi." Ibid., 161.

[80] See, for example, Kaygusuz, 33.

in carefully arranged small groups with extensive premeditation. Hüseyin Kazım and Hüseyin Cahit devised their own escape alongside Tevfik Fikret. Their plan diverged from the typical trajectory towards Europe; they instead cast their eyes towards New Zealand and then Manisa, envisioning the establishment of "The Green Country," a utopian realm that had been the subject of fervent discourse during their gatherings. While this grand vision never materialized into reality, the meticulous planning and protracted preparations for its execution were undertaken with great seriousness.[81] They were, in essence, yearning for a radical new beginning.

Paul Adam observed that this was a generation desiring "to conquer time and space."[82] At an increasing speed and scope, they were mobile. There were not only voluntarily made plans but also the realities of exile and war that oblige relocation. Haydar Rüştü's own experiences illustrate this layered quiddity of their mobility; he likened his frequent relocations to being "transported from one place to another like a suitcase full of forbidden goods."[83] The subterfuges his camaraderie employed to facilitate these moves further illuminate the broader implications of such a transient existence: One friend, preparing for Haydar Rüştü's clandestine journey, delivered a hat "which was purchased for a trip to Europe," while another presented him with "colorful eyeglasses that he had used in Tripoli."[84]

[81] Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, 103-105.

[82] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1983), 111.

[83] "[…] içi memnu eşya dolu bir bavul gibi şuradan buraya nakl edilmek benim için artık alışılan bir hal olmuştu." Öktem, 87.

[84] Öktem, 78.

§ 5.4 Bookends of a Generation

A generation which alters the old ways of doing things that belong to the one preceding it and which defines the new ways for itself and its successors, is thought to form not only a new generation but also a new "generation style." Mannheim associated the emergence of such a generational style with the pace of social and cultural change.[85] If the last few centuries are marked by exponential acceleration, how can one generation distinguish itself from its predecessor as sharply as, or even more significantly than, the succeeding generation does from its own? This query has been one of the driving forces behind the present thesis.

It has not been clear-cut or predictable how measurable quantities like speed map onto societal norms. An illustration of this can be found in Anne Kriegel's work, which emphasizes that significant geographical mobility does not guarantee corresponding mobility within the labor force. The act of a generation decisively "digging its heels in" and choosing to "stay put" can emerge as a hallmark just as consequential as any visible inclination toward movement and alteration. Writing in 1978, Kriegel observed a significant shift in worker identity; she notes that membership has evolved from being tied to a specific craft or trade to being associated with a corporation. She asks how the belle époque proletarians, who held that "the pride of the worker meant that he should hand in his resignation, if not every other day, at least as often as he saw fit, to show that 'men are free in a Republic,'" would have reacted to this current where workers are often collectively referred to, even by the labor union, by their employer's corporate name.[86]

As discussed earlier, the broad strokes of periodization is contentious. Recent scholarship proposed frameworks rooted in multiple temporalities for knowledge production as a compelling alternative to linear and static periodization practices. In their "Age of Rogues: Transgressive Politics at the Frontiers of the Ottoman Empire," Öztan and Yenen situate their actors, the *rogues*, "within a world-historical setting of multiple and

[85] Mannheim, 309-310.

[86] Kriegel, 28-29.

overlapping historical processes" to propose that "the age of rogues in fact took place along with other related ages of 'empire,' 'Western domination,' 'nationalism,' 'steam and print,' 'coexistence' and 'genocide.'" The present thesis advocates for a generational framework as a fecund tool for exploring the actors navigating these overlapping ages. Such a framework encourages not rigid dividers but permeable membranes, as generations "are fuzzy around the edges."[87]

Generational references abound in Young Turks' memoirs, with literary generations being one notable category, though it remains beyond the purview of this text. It is intuitive that literature possesses a more extended capacity to broadcast generations; any literary trend can establish its identity distinct from others, devoid of biological underpinnings. Bezmi Nusret's narrative intertwines his personal experience with the broader discussion of literary generations and their reception. He recalls his relative youth and inconspicuousness among his schoolmates, linking it with seniority based on the reading experience, stating that he was the "more junior, " "less conspicuous" among them, and they had had the chance to be engaged with "Servet-i Fünun on a day-to-day basis."[88] In her cited work, Kriegel posits that generational cohesion is more deeply rooted in seniority than mere age. Turning to the Young Turks' memoirs, one is led to reengage with another intuitive assumption that seniority is more tightly interwoven with age during childhood and early youth.

The seniority structure was palpable in the early educational settings, with an age gap between students that could stretch wide. This significant age difference positioned İzzet Derveze, much like Bezmi Nusret, as a veritable child amidst his older peers, as Derveze notes: "In my senior year the rüşdiye, (...) there were students seven years older than me. I

[87] Tom Mole, *What the Victorians Made of Romanticism: Material Artifacts, Cultural Practices, and Reception History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 39.

[88] "İtiraf etmeliyim ki, ben bunların yanında çok sönük idim. Esasen yaşça da onlardan küçüktüm. Onlar, Servet-i Fünun neşriyatını vakti ile günü gününe takip etmişlerdi." Kaygusuz, 4.

was like a small child in comparison to them."[89] However, as these memoirists recount their paths into maturity, these age-based seniority distinctions blur. An instance is encapsulated in Bezmi Nusret's account of joining the Ottoman Democrat Party, a step that forged a deep bond between him and İbrahim Temo, his senior by twenty-four years, and yet who shared the badge of "youth" with him. He recalls the evolution of their relationship: "From that day onwards, a brotherhood blossomed between us. We stood ready and willing to dedicate our strength, youth, energy, and material and spiritual riches to the country."[90] Navigating in a shared political realm served not only to align them with like-minded associates but also fostered connections, albeit adversarial, with their opponents.

"O, my old friend Haydar Rüştü Bey," Bezmi Nusret intones in Izmir, "I ask you, did you inherit these newspapers from your father? You came from Trabzon via Thessaloniki, just like the people you call 'arriviste.'" The questions were not, as apparent in the quote, unprovoked. Bezmi Nusret continued to challenge his peer's rapid ascent, deeming the newcomer's way up the ladder of seniority as problematic: "When you came here, you became a journalist. You were appointed as a member of the parliament. Finally, you worked your way up to tramway director."[91] He stresses the link between the occupancy of these positions and Haydar Rüştü's political affiliation with the CUP. Both Haydar Rüştü and Bezmi Nusret studied away from home and at schools where geographical mobility was no exception. As Benjamin Fortna shows, these schools altered the older recruitment and training patterns, fostering unprecedented

[89] "Rüşdiye mektebindeki son sınıfta […] benden yedi yaş büyük olanlar vardı. Ben bu talebelere nazaran küçük bir çocuk gibi kalıyordum." Derveze, 185.

[90] "O günden itibaren aramızda bir kardeşlik teessüs etti […] Bu memleket için kuvvetimizi, gençliğimizi, enerjimizi, maddi ve manevi varımızı, yoğumuzu sarfetmeğe hazır ve amade idik." Kaygusuz, 63.

[91] "Ey benim kadim dostum Haydar Rüştü Bey, sizden soruyorum, bu gazeteleri pederinizden miras mı aldınız? Siz de türedi dediğiniz zevat gibi Trabzon'dan Selanik tarikıyla geldiniz ve İttihat Terakki'nin sayesinde o gazetelere kondunuz… Buraya gelince gazeteci oldunuz. Meclis-i umumi azalığına tayin edildiniz. Nihayet tramvay direktörlüğüne kadar irtika ettiniz." Öktem, 11.

social mobility and ethno-regional integration. However, enduring allegiances based on regional or ethnic backgrounds persisted in these schools, contrasting the grand designs of educational reformers.[92]

İbrahim Temo's account reveals a portrait of socio-cultural tension at his school, within the bustling corridors he bore witness to an ongoing discussion of regional backgrounds: The *İstanbullu*, the city's natives staged against the *taşralı*, the provincials.[93] Migration ascended beyond mere physical transit; it is transmuted into a symbolically charged marker of seniority. Despite the seemingly indelible imprints of allegiances and antecedent backgrounds, these figures, in that phase of youth, were not mere passive inheritors of these legacies. They actively engaged with, tested, and experienced seniority's manifold implications. Herein, while suggestive of seniority, the chronological marker of one's urban arrival lacked definitive power to cleave one from their generational kin.

The contours of seniority reveal themselves to be more profound, notably within the political amphitheater of the CUP. İbrahim Temo stood as an exemplar of the complex layers of seniority within the CUP, as portrayed in his memoirs. As a foundational figure of the initial CUP, his reception post-1908 was marked by a new group of Unionist figures who were, he shows, unwilling to extend a share of the revolutionary success to him. While embracing its name, these newer members endeavored to demarcate the organization from its nascent stage, closely associated with Temo and his peers. This tension made İbrahim Temo increasingly critical of the organization. However, in 1909, during the 31 March Incident—a coup that briefly sidelined the CUP from power, he was resolute in his opposition to the coup. His narrative offers a profound insight into the era's generational nuances by recounting an encounter with Mizancı Murat Bey during those turbulent days.

As discussed earlier, Murat Bey and Ahmed Rıza occupied positions as elders or forerunners within the Young Turk movement. Şerif Mardin

[92] Fortna, 50-51.

[93] Temo, 12.

characterizes Murat Bey as a valuable conduit, bridging the intellectual space between the Young Ottomans and the Young Turks,[94] a perspective with which Erdem Sönmez's previously cited analysis of Ahmed Rıza aligns. Mardin intriguingly highlights an internal generational tension between Murat Bey and Ahmed Rıza. He reports that Murat Bey's familial term of "my son" when referring to Ahmed Rıza was met with visible displeasure by Ahmed Rıza,[95] marking a distinct divergence in their rapport. The examined memoirs provide ample evidence to assert that these figures occupied a position at the edge within the Young Turk generation. In his memoirs, İbrahim Temo includes a letter from a peer, which asserts, "Murad and Riza are not the true elders of this committee; they are its two enemies."[96] This negation, far from an isolated sentiment, hints at these figures' widespread, though contested, perception as venerable elders.

Turning to İbrahim Temo's interaction with Murat Bey post-1909 coup, the implications of the narrative are twofold. Following Murat Bey's article, which attributed the coup to the CUP's missteps, Temo confronted him directly. Murat Bey, then, told an onlooker: "Sir, you do not know Dr. Temo. He is like a crone who praises and protects the Union and Progress, the thieving and naughty child she gave birth to."[97] Such familial abstractions also reverberate through other memoirs, albeit in different guises. Kazım Nami, for example, likened his and his peers' respect for the CUP abroad to that for "elder brothers."[98] The political scene reveals genealogical, rather than purely generational, nuances.

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[94] Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasi Fikirleri*, 79.

[95] Ibid., 93.

[96] "[…] bu cemiyetin Murad ve Riza, sahihan büyükleri olmadığı gibi, iki düşmanıdır." İbrahim Temo, 100.

[97] "Beyefendi, siz doktor Temoyu tanımazsınız. Doğurduğu İttihad ve Terakkiyi, hırsız ve yaramaz çocuğunu medh ve himaye eyleyen bir koca karıya benzer." Ibid., 225.

[98] " […] onları birer büyük kardeş gibi seviyorduk." Duru, 13.

6

Conclusion

Rıza Tevfik states, "I am a man who grew up in the time of Sultan Hamid."[1] What was the weight of this time for a generation? For some, it signified the ominous watch of *hafiyes*, the pilgrimage to far-off schools, the decision to forsake education, the burden of exile, a climate rife with distrust, the allure of Paris like a siren call, prohibited exits that defied lax passport checks, reign of terror, the treasure of imported journals, the echoes of distant revolutions, clandestine gatherings in scant numbers, engaging in careful parleys, or the prospect of one last pardon. While a portion of these experiences can be attributed to Abdülhamid II's regime, others represented the broader currents of an increasingly interconnected world.

All events are multigenerational, and, says Nora, "the greater their magnitude, the less simple it is to identify the groups most affected by them."[2] The wars and the "generational disasters," employing Taube's eloquent phrasing, not only forged significant transformations in mentalities but also precipitated irreversible demographic shifts, thereby sculpting a generation's destiny vis-à-vis its contemporaries for a lifetime. Thus, to neglect the consequences of these tumultuous forces on

[1] "Ben Sultan Hamid zamanında yetişmiş bir adamım." Rıza Tevfik, 31.

[2] Nora, 506.

a generation would constitute a substantial oversight. Nonetheless, the protagonists of the studied generation might exhibit a reticence to echo Tanpınar's claim—a sentiment he avers to share with Aragon—that they were "more nurtured" by these cataclysms than by any school.

The pre-war milieu had already profoundly shaped the Young Turk generation, setting them on a path replete with promise and peril. In that sense, the thesis did not second the narratives focusing on the world-maker wars as this generation's sole defining crucible. A multitude of characteristics—adventurism, dreaminess, restlessness, and self-assurance—that the members of this generation discerned within themselves or ascribed to each other can be traced back to their early, formative years. They made their initial foray into the educational landscape during a time marked by an unprecedented upsurge in student enrolment. Schools emerged as transformative arenas within this milieu, metamorphosing even the quotidian into potent collective experiences instrumental in sculpting a communal identity. While politics acted as the "magnet" attracting their contemporaries, the schools served as conduits in their sequestered halls, disseminating this magnetic pull and extending its reach.

Youths converged to perform before elder figures, figures whom they increasingly perceived not as seniors but as devoid of the newly popularized essences of youth. The tensions arose from the perceived knowledge gap, differing perspectives on freedom, and divergent interpretations of the "new." Thus, the concept of generation found itself situated along a double axis. The newfound horizontality was further infused with a nascent sense of contemporaneity that extended beyond mere interpersonal connections, also aligning revolutions in a kindred temporal frame.

The actors felt themselves living in a new, distinct era, a time in which the rapid and often unpredictable pace of actions was justified and embraced, binding them to the historical forces that seemingly acted on their behalf. While adventurists, conformists, pessimists, and optimists have always existed, the sense of the historical moment, of living in an epoch of change, necessitated a shift in one's temperament to meet the demands of the times. The writings become illustrative of an individual's

life unfolding, set against the turbulent backdrop of a tempestuous age. Hüseyin Cahit depicts Hacı Adil Arda with qualities that, under more stable circumstances, would have seamlessly secured him a comfortable professorship or a distinguished position within an appellate court. However, as the narrative goes, "he came into the world at such a time, encountered such coincidences, and was dragged by such unforeseen events that he wore himself out in jobs, adventures, and disasters that were contrary to his temperament and nature."[3]

The generational identity was predominantly underscored by youth symbolism. However, such valorization of youth bore layers of complexity, often veering towards the practical. This penchant for pragmatism, alongside an inclination for expedient conclusions, manifested in various domains, underscoring a sentiment that there was scanty time to deliberate. Consequently, they fostered a self-referential lexicon of progress and a compendium of readily accepted theories, from which they selected with confidence when deemed opportune. The political fissures bore generational and genealogical subtleties, a complex web that resists simple categorization as generational divides. Further scholarly inquiry is imperative to cast light upon the delicate distinctions that lie between the youths, parsed through the lens of generation.

[3] "[…] tabii bir devirde dünyaya gelmiş olsaydı, bir profesörlük, yahut temyiz mahkemesinde, sakin ve yüksek bir çalışma içinde, rahat bir hayat sürecekti; bunun için yaratılmıştı. Fakat dünyaya öyle bir tarihte geldi, öyle tesadüflerle karşılaştı öyle tahmin edilmedik vakalarla sürüklendi ki mizacının ve yaradılışının hilafı işlerde, sergüzeştlerde ve felaketlerde kendisini yıprandırdı durdu." Yalçın, *Tanıdıklarım*, 66.

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