

DANCING MODERNITY:
GENDER, SEXUALITY AND THE STATE IN THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE
AND EARLY TURKISH REPUBLIC

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN STUDIES

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
2008

STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge my thesis committee for their ongoing patience and support: Leila Hudson, Anne Betteridge, Brian Silverstein, Linda Darling and Yaseen Noorani.

Many thanks to the staff and faculty in the departments of Near Eastern Studies for all the work they do behind the scenes: Beth Marlatt, Kathleen Landeen, and Margaret Dugan. To my language teachers, Ahmet and Greg: çok teşekkür ederim! My gratitude goes to the department of Near Eastern Studies and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies for their financial support.

The Graduate College Writing Institute gave me a forum in which to discuss my ideas and improve my writing style. For their precision and attention to detail, and their friendly critiques, I thank John, Andrea, and my small group.

I could not possibly list the name of every scholar who has influenced and inspired me, but there are several scholars I would like to acknowledge by name: Carole Woodall, for taking the time to encourage me and for sharing her work with me. Also, Arzu Öztürkmen, Karin van Nieuwkerk, Öyku Potuoğlu-Cook, Anthony Shay, Sonia Tamar Seeman, Esra Özyürek, Helene Eriksen, Elif Shafak, Elizabeth Artemis Mourat, Elsie Dunin, Joann Keali'inohomoku, and Pegge Vissicaro.

My gratitude goes to Christian, Maggy, Rebecca, Matt and Tylor for excusing me from obligations when the thesis was calling. And to the students in IYLEP – they reminded me what is truly important.

I am so fortunate to have a strong network of friends. I especially want to thank Tamara: your courage and grace in the face of adversity are great lessons to me. For coffee talk, paper revisions, and for being a great study buddy, I thank you. And to my partners in crime, Hikmet and Mark: we will be famous!

Makalani: for mountains and music and plants and water and fresh air and children.

Many thanks to my family, especially my parents, for seeing me through ALL THESE YEARS!

And finally, thanks to Chula for being a great roommate.

DEDICATION

For my Family, you always believed in me

To the memory of Mamak and Miriam, the matriarchs of my family

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ABSTRACT

Early Ottoman dance practices that took place in gender segregated spaces and allowed for a certain degree of sexual explicitness and expressions of homoerotic desire were disavowed among Turkish elites in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. “Belly dance” became associated with non-Turkish performers, while the *Tanzimat* and Young Turk state employed the theater to perform emerging ideas about ‘Turkishness’ and the ‘New Woman.’ In the early Turkish Republic, the new cadre of Kemalist military officers and bureaucrats altogether rejected its Ottoman heritage and danced the waltz in a close embrace to the music of Western orchestras.

This thesis charts significant changes in dance practices between the late Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic in order to examine the articulation of modern views of gender and sexuality. Dance played a formative role in shaping Turkish modernity and framed moral issues about gender, sexuality, and public space, reflecting and reshaping social life at the same time.

Dance when you're broken open.
Dance when you've torn the bandage off.
Dance in the middle of fighting.
Dance in your blood.
Dance when you're perfectly free.

Struck, the dancer hears a tambourine inside her,
Like a wave that crests into foam at the very top,
Begins.

Maybe you don't hear the tambourine,
Or the trees clapping time.
Close the ears on your head,
That listen mostly to lies and cynical jokes.
There are other things to see, and hear.
Music. Dance.
A brilliant city inside your soul!

-- *Rumi*

INTRODUCTION

Zsa Zsa Gabor, an American actress famous in the 1950s, recalls in her autobiography a public ball she attended as a young woman in Ankara in the early years of the Turkish Republic. She describes an enormous square room with long tables and chairs and a dance floor, and walls covered in portraits of Atatürk. She remembers a western orchestra playing while women and men arrived in evening gowns and tuxedos. Everyone stood when Atatürk entered the room. He joined some high ranking naval officers in drinking *raki*, the unofficial ‘national’ drink of Turkey, and smoking cigarettes. According to Gabor, at one point Atatürk turned to a woman sitting close by and asked her if she knew how to waltz. She apologized and said no, she did not know. So he moved through the room looking for a partner, but not a single Turkish woman accepted his invitation until he came to Gabor. He led her to the dance floor and the orchestra played a waltz for them. Gabor describes Atatürk as a good dancer, although she hints that he was drunk. When Gabor asked him why none of the Turkish women knew how to waltz, Atatürk claimed they all knew how to dance but were just deferring to their foreign guest. Gabor hints that she left the ball with the impression that although Atatürk himself was a very modern man, the other guests were just playing along.

In the ballrooms of Western Europe and the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, men and women dressed in gowns and tuxedos, dancing the waltz in a close embrace, accompanied by a western orchestra would have been considered commonplace. In fact, the “smooth” dances of earlier generations were already being replaced in that era by

faster versions and new dances being created for American jazz music. In the early Turkish Republic, however, the presence of mixed couples dressed in Western fashions and dancing to a western orchestra marked a major transition in the politics of gender, sexuality and public space.

My aim is to investigate the role of dance in shaping Turkish modernity with specific regard to gender, sexuality and public space. I map the trajectory of dance in the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic in order to trace modern political transformations and their impact on Turkish subjectivity. My historical inquiry ultimately culminates in an exploration of the Republican ballrooms of the late 1920s and early 1930s in Turkey and the role of ballroom dancing in shaping the social values of the Republican era regarding gender and sexuality. Ballroom dancing, as it was performed by the new cadre of military officials and bureaucrats, was meant to display ways of dressing and behaving ‘modern’ to the Turkish people. As will become clear, however, dancing in the early Republic did not just reflect new gender norms; dancing actually produced them. Long before Atatürk’s social reforms reached the general population and transformed everyday life, Turkish elites were waltzing through the ballrooms of the Turkish Republic. In other words, the ballroom helped to construct what it first had to imagine.

Gender and Modernity

Following Michel Foucault’s assertion that history should not be done for history’s sake but for the purposes of deconstructing the creation of our truths and how

they work,¹ I outline a genealogy of dance practices in Turkey. Foucault recognized the constructive power of academic discourses surrounding modernity and wanted to get away from the intellectual “blackmail of the Enlightenment” that told us we must either be for or against modernity.² Instead, Foucault asked ‘what do we do?’ and ‘how do we constitute ourselves?’ He argued that “human nature” is not natural at all; rather, it is constructed and implemented by institutions based on relationships of power.³ Although the social and cultural forms of European modernity have reworked the conditions of possibility all over the world, recent scholarship has argued that, rather than a “normal” way of being in the world, European modernity is only one possible construction among many. I take cues from previous scholarship on “the woman question” at the turn of the century and feminist re-readings of history that question the assumption that European modernity is inherently empowering for women⁴. My research is informed in general by discourses on gender and modernity in the Middle East and, more specifically, by work that analyzes the implications of Atatürk’s project of modernity for women in the early Turkish Republic.

Lila Abu-Lughod, and other contributors to *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*,⁵ sought to question the dichotomy between modernity and tradition, to explore the ambiguities of the programs of modernity and their hidden costs,

¹ Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 78-80.

² *Ibid.*, 45.

³ Rabinow in *The Foucault Reader*, 3-5.

⁴ Deniz Kandiyoti, Lila Abu-Lughod, Yeşim Arat, Nilüfer Göle, and others.

⁵ Lila Abu-Lughod, ed., *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998).

and to emphasize the ways that women reshaped such programs.⁶ Authors such as Deniz Kandiyoti have addressed these issues specifically to women in Turkey and the ways in which state policies and nationalist projects have shaped the politics of gender.⁷ Some scholars have claimed that modern reforms directed at women in Turkey in the late Ottoman period and early Turkish Republic were more superficial than substantial, and benefitted only a small minority of upper-class women.⁸ I explore such claims in the context of the Republican ballrooms in order to address the ways that dance contributed to processes of socialization, processes in which modern norms that dictate social behavior and modern values regarding gender and sexuality came to be embodied by a certain segment of Turkish society.

Much of the previous scholarship related to Atatürk's project of modernity and its implications for women has relied almost exclusively on textual and legal analyses and has emphasized economic and political inequalities, but has tended to overlook issues of embodiment. Deniz Kandiyoti has suggested that the less tangible effects of modernization in Turkey, specifically in the realm of identity formation and subjectivity, need more attention from scholars. She proposes that "ethnographies of the modern" that deal with the construction of gender are long overdue.⁹ Through an analysis of dance practices in the early Turkish Republic, I offer such an "ethnography of the modern" and

⁶ Lila Abu-Lughod, ed., *Remaking Women*, 3-5.

⁷ Deniz Kandiyoti, ed., *Gendering the Middle East: Emerging Perspectives* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996).

⁸ Zehra F. Arat, "Turkish Women and the Republican Reconstruction of Tradition" in *Reconstructing Gender in The Middle East*, ed. Fatma Müge Göçek and Shiva Balaghi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁹ Deniz Kandiyoti, "Gendering the Modern: On Missing Dimensions in the Study of Turkish Modernity" in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997).

argue that the impact of modern reforms in Turkey was experienced not only politically and socially, but also bodily. Turkish elite women actively embodied Western notions of gender and sexuality when they danced the waltz framed in their male partners' arms. While such shifts have historically been represented as liberating for women, scholars such as Zehra Arat¹⁰ have argued that Atatürk's social reforms maintained patriarchal Ottoman notions of women's bodies and simply imposed new forms of social control over women's movement and sexuality, couched in the modern language of freedom and the "New Woman."¹¹ I note that although women were welcomed into social spaces they previously would have been excluded from, men were still 'taking the lead.'

I do not mean to propose that women were simply pawns of the state, easily manipulated by Atatürk's top-down policies into taking on Western modes of social behavior, such as ballroom dancing, to serve patriarchal purposes. Rather, a closer look at some of Turkish women's memoirs from the period reveals that the ballroom was a space where new gender roles were created, negotiated and contested, and that the transition to modern ways of socializing was not seamless. Furthermore, Turks did not simply imitate European modernity. The process of modernization is always arranged according to local specificities. Modernization in Turkey was not a matter of one set of discourses and practices being completely replaced by another. Rather, existing discourses and practices interacted with new ideologies and institutions to produce local

¹⁰ Zehra Arat, "Turkish Women and the Republican Reconstruction of Tradition," 58-59.

¹¹ The "New Woman" was a Feminist ideal that emerged in Europe and the United States in the late nineteenth century. The aim was for women to liberate themselves from patriarchal social restrictions and pursue self-realization. Ideally, the "New Woman" was to be educated, financially independent, politically competent, and free and rational in her choices regarding family, dress, etc. See Carolyn Christensen Nelson, ed., *A New Woman Reader* (Broadview Press: 2000).

forms of modernity. I explore the events that led up to a particular historical moment when the interaction of class, ethnicity and gender in Turkey resulted in the production of a new gender system and argue that dance practices were essential to this process.

Kandiyoti has asked, “How has the field of meanings and practices designated as ‘modern’ been constituted in Turkey?”¹² There was not one authentic and continuous Ottoman identity before European modernity interrupted and shifted its direction. Many modes of Ottoman identity and tradition existed. Atatürk’s project was precisely to homogenize the diversity of Ottoman modes of being and create one people, loyal to the Turkish nation and identity. His vision was no less than a will to reconstitute people’s way of thinking and feeling, to create new Turkish selves. Although it can be argued that Atatürk was unsuccessful at reshaping the identities of much of the rural population, his reforms did profoundly affect their lives. Furthermore, Atatürk succeeded at instituting a modern state and bureaucracy, a new capital city, the Latin alphabet, Western dress, secularism in education and the courts, and new legal rights for women. Could legal reforms alone have accomplished such widespread changes? Many scholars have already explored how women contributed to the success of Atatürk’s reforms on the ground. I ask: How might women have challenged and even reshaped Atatürk’s modernization project in the Republican ballrooms? I demonstrate that elite women constructed and displayed ways of being modern in Turkey on the dance floor.

As I have hinted, the new gender roles introduced to Turkey in the early twentieth century were shaped by class, and indeed reinforced class identities. The European

¹² Kandiyoti, “Gendering the Modern,” 114.

modern social values of the early Turkish Republic were ‘tried on’ and reshaped by the elites in new social spaces such as ballrooms. Turkish elites literally performed modern gender roles for a distant public, a public that Atatürk’s modern reforms aimed to transform. The transition from Ottoman to Turkish may appear swift and seamless when looking at the elite class. In the early twentieth century, however, most rural Turks throughout the nation lived much the same way they had under the Ottoman Empire. As I will demonstrate, the urban Turks of the upper classes¹³ had already begun taking on European values and ways of being in the late Ottoman period. For this reason, they were not the target of Atatürk’s reforms; rather, the elites of the Republican period were on display to “the people,” performing modernity. Through dance events, they actively contributed to the creation of the modern Turkish state.

Dance as a Cultural Practice

Scholars have much to gain from a consideration of dance as a cultural practice through which social and gendered identities are constructed, as dance practices are always marked by race, gender, class and sexuality.¹⁴ Dance is not peripheral to social processes; rather, dance is central to understanding how societies change over time. I pose my research questions at the site of intersection between dance studies, anthropologies of gender and sexuality, and modern Turkish history. Linda J. Tomko proposes that dance can be understood as taking part in meaning-making systems, such as

¹³ At this point in Turkish history, there was practically no bourgeoisie, because most of the Greeks, Armenians, and other non-Turks had left. When I refer to the ‘upper classes,’ I refer to the new cadre of bureaucrats and military officers trained in the late Ottoman military schools.

¹⁴ Linda J. Tomko, *Dancing Class: Gender, Ethnicity and Social Divides in American Dance, 1890-1920* (Indiana University Press, 1999), xiv.

the construction of gender.¹⁵ “What consideration of dance brings to history writing, then, is the cry to recognize bodies as powerful sites for social and political contestation” and the varied ways in which people make meanings about their lives.¹⁶

As Tomko’s statement suggests, using dance as a lens into history allows the scholar the opportunity to analyze social transformations, but it also triggers an exploration of the impact of such transformations on physical and sensory experiences. In other words, a history of dance calls for a history of bodies. All dances are shaped by social rules and serve a function that goes beyond entertainment. Rules, messages and meanings concerning gender identity are embodied in the dances of societies. As dance historian Gerald Jonas suggests, “The basic vehicle of dance is the human body. When and how people dance is determined by their attitudes toward the body.”¹⁷ Jonas notes that dance can also be a powerful mechanism of social control and a channel of communication used to pass along important social skills. Even when people are dancing for pleasure, what they do and with whom reflect the interests of society at large, including gender-specific behaviors and attitudes.¹⁸

Dance does not simply reflect the ideals of society, however. It also has the capacity to actually constitute gender and national identities through scripted movements. Sonia Seeman suggests that aesthetic expressions such as dance and music have transformational power in their performative enactments and symbolic configurations

¹⁵ Tomko, xv.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xvii.

¹⁷ Gerald Jonas, *Dancing: The Pleasure, Power and Art of Movement* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), 37.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

offered up for interpretation.¹⁹ Dance performances act upon bodies, impacting human action and transforming the people who experience it. Performance is a presentation of the self, but it can also be a means for effecting domination as certain dance forms can be symbolic of prestige or status and value can be attributed to particular genres.²⁰ In other words, performance events like Republican balls narrate social meanings and are significant social practices that can be examined in terms of structural constraints, such as state ideology. Dance is understood as a social tool used for advocating existing social ideals or introducing new ones. Dance, as an embodied social practice engaged in specific cultural contexts, reflects and reshapes social life at the same time.

Gender and sexuality are intricately linked to processes of social transformation. For this reason, issues of sexuality should be central to the writing of dance history. Dance scholar Jane C. Desmond argues for the intersection of sexuality studies and dance studies for two reasons: first, issues of sexuality play a constitutive role in dance history; and second, dance provides a highly codified, visible, and privileged arena for the bodily enactment of sexuality's semiotics. Dance enacts dominant discourses about what it means to be "man" or "woman," "heterosexual" or "homosexual." Dance also, Desmond suggests, visibly and publicly manifests or elicits desire, and therefore it is explicitly politically charged. As Desmond argues, "How one moves, and how one moves in relation to others, constitutes a public enactment of sexuality and gender."²¹

¹⁹ Sonia Tamar Seeman, "You're Roman! Music and Identity in Turkish Roman Communities," (PhD dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2002).

²⁰ Ibid., 77-79.

²¹ Jane Desmond, *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities On and Off the Stage* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 6.

Dance played an active role in the development of Turkish modernity. In the Tanzimat, Young Turk and Republican eras, Ottoman dance practices that expressed explicit and homoerotic forms of sexuality were disavowed and discouraged because they were considered incompatible with the values and norms of modernity.²² Western dance practices in the early Turkish Republic were intimately implicated in Atatürk's project of modernization and were wielded in the two-pronged process of westernization and nationalism. Ballroom dance was particularly useful in this process because it entailed the performance of highly defined gender roles. The waltz, foxtrot and tango embodied Western gender norms (binary male/female roles) and sexuality (the monogamous couple, romantic love, and the nuclear family). Republican balls organized for the elite framed moral issues about gender, sexuality, and the appropriate use of the body. They established a sense of what it was to be modern and Turkish in the early years of the Republic.

Theoretical Framework

I have said that modern values regarding gender and sexuality came to be embodied by a certain segment of Turkish society in the early Republic. The concept of embodiment is useful for an analysis of dance because it gives primacy to the subjective experiences of the body. To embody a principle is to experience it in bodily form, as we do when we dance. I am concerned in this thesis with gender and sexuality, dance, and

²² Ottoman dance practices did not disappear, but they became heteronormalized and presented women as the only appropriate object of the male gaze.

the body and how these were transformed in the early years of the Turkish Republic. I work from the feminist premise that gender and sexuality are socially constructed,²³ and add that they are socially constructed in and through “dance events,” or bounded spheres of interaction in which individuals present themselves to society.²⁴ In dance events, the act of dancing orders and structures sexuality and involves social knowledge about gender norms and the rules of interaction.²⁵

Practice Theory, Habitus and the Gender System

Dance scholarship that focuses on the social aspects of gender and sexuality has roots in Pierre Bourdieu’s “theory of practice” and Michel Foucault’s work on power and subjectivity. Both thinkers are useful to my analysis of dance practices in Turkey. In particular, I see the dance event as a particular type of social context, what Bourdieu terms “fields.” These fields are structured and determined by their different available resources, or “capital,” and are like social games in which agents must be willing to play by the rules. In other words, every field presupposes a fundamental accord or complicity. Similarly, there is a link between people’s actions and their interests, as they act strategically within various social fields.

Bourdieu proposes that interactions between individuals and society are shaped not only by the rules of social fields, but by sets of “dispositions which incline agents to

²³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 10-11.

²⁴ Jane K. Cowan, *Dance and the Body Politic in Northern Greece* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

act and react in certain ways,” or *habitus*.²⁶ I borrow the term to express non-discursive social habits that are anchored in the body. However, my use of *habitus* is closer to that of Marcel Mauss than Bourdieu. For Mauss, the process of embodying social principles involves a conscious effort by people in authority to discipline the body, for example the practice of swimming in which children are trained to control their fears and use certain movements in the water.²⁷ The process of modernization in Turkey, as all over the world, required that people subject themselves to modern “techniques of the body” (*techniques du corps*)²⁸ such as eating, walking, dressing, and dancing.

Techniques of the body involve a conscious effort to discipline the self in socially acceptable and prestigious ways of moving and behaving, a “series of assembled actions, and assembled for the individual not by himself alone” but by the society to which he belongs.²⁹ I am working from the premise that the status of bodies in a particular context is shaped by the historical beliefs and practices they are formed in and through.

Therefore, a theory of embodiment is not something that calls for a philosophy, but rather a history. As Mauss insists “we should realize that dancing in a partner’s arms is a product of modern European civilization, which demonstrates that things we find natural have a historical origin.”³⁰ As I will demonstrate, dance practices in Turkey underwent major changes between the late Ottoman and early Republican periods. Among the Ottoman upper classes, performances that involved solo, improvised dancing in gender

²⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language & Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 12.

²⁷ Marcel Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” [1934] in *Incorporations*, ed. Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (New York: Zone, 1992), 455.

²⁸ Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 456.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 462.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 470.

segregated contexts were replaced in the Tanzimat era by staged, theatrical performances that required disciplined audiences. Then ballroom dancing was introduced in the early twentieth century, inviting Turkish elites to play the role of the performer rather than the observer and to dance themselves, not simply for entertainment but to contribute to creating the modern nation. All of these particular dance practices require particular kinds of gendered selves; therefore, tracing changes in dance practices allows us to trace changes in social constructions of gender and sexuality.

Feminist historians of the Middle East such as Judith Tucker, Beth Baron and Leila Ahmed often refer to the widely shared cultural beliefs and socially-constructed expectations for male and female behavior in specific societies, or “gender systems.” Gender systems prescribe the division of labor and responsibilities between men and women and grant them different rights and responsibilities. I use the term “gender system” in order to emphasize the dispositions and social habits that shape and are shaped by gender and sexuality. As with the *habitus*, the rules for behavior in a certain gender system are inculcated in children from an early age and are thought to form a basis for personality and behavior. However, hegemonic beliefs about gender are usually defined and enforced by the state or through informal sanctions in the community. Gender systems both define males and females in opposition to each other and justify inequality on the basis of their differences.

A society’s gender system will inevitably change over time and always varies between different segments of society, so a comprehensive analysis of a society’s gender

system should be multi-dimensional. For example, there has never existed one uniform “Islamic Gender System.” However, we can refer to a set of discourses and practices regarding gender and sexuality that were available to people in the late Ottoman Empire. In order to investigate the transformation of gender norms that occurred in the early Turkish Republic, it is necessary to understand the ways that the Ottoman and European gender systems interacted in the late Ottoman period. The lifestyles and ideologies of the Ottoman gender system went through a process of transformation and debate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and then were replaced at a certain level of society under Atatürk’s republic by a hegemonic gender system modeled after the West. Elite men and women who once patronized sexually explicit dance performances in gender segregated contexts now coyly danced across Republic ballrooms in each other’s arms. This thesis asks how and why such a transformation occurred, and what was the impact on Turkish ways of being men and women?

Power and Subjectivity

For Michel Foucault, processes of power underlie even the most taken-for-granted instances of shared cultural practice. Subjecthood is a matter of subjectification; that is, identity formation involves a process of forming a self through interaction with institutionalized knowledge. The relationship between individuals and institutions is not timeless or natural, but carefully produced.³¹ Although every society employs bodily techniques, in modern nation-states the institutionalization of these techniques is totalizing, leaving no shady corners. The conjunction of totalizing and individualizing

³¹ Mauss, 11.

techniques is unique to the modern era. Modern nation-states work at the level of disposition rather than imposition by introducing new social institutions and ideologies. In other words, disciplinary interventions are absorbed rather than imposed.

In modern contexts, all aspects of social life have become the target of politics. The modern state seeks to control how bodies are organized in space, so that they can be made visible and hence governable. Mechanisms of modern state power, then, are functional and infinitely productive, even when they are exclusive and oppressive.³² State control involves “a micro-physics of power,” strategies that are exercised on bodies. Foucault’s concept of the political anatomy suggests that “docile bodies” can be shaped through “a technology of power” and a “political anatomy of detail.”³³ His analysis of the Panopticon applies not just to prisons, but to families, schools, the military, and other modern institutions which create “a web of panoptic techniques” that work on multiple levels.³⁴

Atatürk’s legal reforms reshaped the institutions and ideologies of the new nation. But that was only half the battle. He knew that in order to create modern subjects, he would have to reach their hearts and minds. The will of the state had to penetrate every aspect of social life, impacting bodies through the details of dress, manners, food and wine, music, and dancing. This was not a matter of force or even state policy, but rather a matter of body techniques or disciplines consciously employed to fulfill the agenda of modernization. Atatürk and the social elites gave status and prestige to European styles

³² Mauss, 15-17.

³³ Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 182-83.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 211.

and manners, while at the same time they disavowed anything that might be associated with the Ottoman past. Tuxedos, western orchestras and ballroom dancing signaled modernity to European observers and Turkish citizens. Unlike the Turkish sultans, Atatürk himself danced, demonstrating with his own body the disciplines and techniques that would create modern Turkish subjects.

Society works directly on the body, intervening in our choices and even our experiences, as we subject ourselves to such disciplines. Within the framework of available possibilities in any given society, people make choices based on what behaviors carry social status, or capital. The norms of gender and sexuality determine how people dance, and in turn the act of dancing actually constructs and reconstructs the norms of gender and sexuality. In other words, dance events do not merely reflect social phenomena, but also shape them.

Chapter Organization

Through a comparison of dance practices in the late Ottoman period and the early Turkish Republic, my purpose is to trace the transformations of the social norms of gender and sexuality that occurred in these years. Modernizing reforms were implemented in Turkey as early as 1789, with the ‘New Order’ of Selim III, so it would be a mistake to claim that modernization began with the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. However, the Kemalist reforms were distinct from previous efforts in the unprecedented totalizing and individualizing nature of the new regime and the degree to which it intervened in the minutiae of daily life of its subjects. This, of course, greatly

impacted notions of gender and sexuality in Turkish society. By comparing the late Ottoman and early Republican periods, I examine how this transformation worked in the context of a specific social practice: dance.

The thesis is organized both chronologically and thematically. A chronological analysis of dance practices from 1453 (when the Ottomans conquered Istanbul) to the 1930s sets up the contrast between Ottoman and Republican gender values. The comparison also illustrates that modernity in Turkey had roots in late Ottoman political and ideological shifts. Within this chronological story, issues of the state and subjectivity provide a thematic framework. I move between exploring how the state shapes subjects and how subjects shape the state in order to demonstrate their constitutive relationship. Chapter one explores this relationship in the Ottoman period from the conquest of Istanbul in 1453 to the end of the Tulip Period in 1730; Chapter two focuses on the transformation of the Ottoman state and its subjects beginning with the reforms of Selim III in the late eighteenth century and ending with the formation of the Turkish Republic in 1923; Chapter three explores the image of Atatürk and his role in the formation of Turkish subjects in the late 1920s and early 1930s and the shifting dynamics of gender and sexuality in the new nation.

Four sub-themes also emerge from the research. First is the role of the state in promoting or patronizing certain dance practices over others and in defining what were deemed appropriate performance styles and venues for men and women respectively. Throughout much of Ottoman history, the sultans patronized professional dance companies that performed at court, in palace celebrations, and for the social events of the

wealthy. Although Ottoman dance practices were highly diverse, they were structured by an Islamic gender system which valued gender segregation and homosocial networks. In segregated contexts, sexual explicitness in public performances was not considered socially dangerous or immoral. After the artistic revival of the Tulip Period (1718-1730), however, dance forms that had previously been popular in urban contexts underwent major reforms due to the contradictory forces of Westernization and Islamic fundamentalism. Major military losses, over one hundred years of continuous wars, and economic decline in the empire resulted in several reform movements between the late eighteenth century and the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923. In the Tanzimat reform era (1839-1876), both civil and religious authorities condemned professional performers for lascivious behavior and enforced censorship policies. It was not until the early Turkish Republic, however, that solo, improvised, presentational dancing was disavowed among the urban elites as Oriental and morally degrading. Armenian, Greek and other “foreign” dancers were exiled while the traditional dances of the rural Turkish “folk” were collected by folklorists and taught in the Republic’s “People’s Houses” and schools. Dancing the American-style ballroom “smooth” dances, such as the waltz, tango and foxtrot, was favored among the Republican elites in the early 1930s, and upper class Turkish men and women moved into new social spaces that involved mixed gender interaction and highly structured dance movements that reinforced Atatürk’s modernization policies.

Gender and sexuality is another formative theme, which serves to focus attention on the changing roles of women, their sexuality, and their role in nation-building. As

scholars of the Middle East have demonstrated, the central concepts of modernity were gendered. What work did dance do in the making of Turkish modernity? Women's presence and participation in different dance events demonstrates their shifting roles and also allows for an exploration of how such transformations directly affected women's bodies and ways of moving. As I have mentioned, improvisational and sexually explicit movements were appropriate for women in gender segregated contexts of the late Ottoman period, but were deemed Oriental and 'un-modern' by the Turkish Republic. The roles and identities of men and women underwent changes all over the world in the nineteenth century with the introduction of new forms of production, family life, and global market relations. The social boundaries of both 'feminine' and 'masculine' were defined in relationship to each other, and these binary gender divisions were further effected by class and ethnic divisions.

A third theme that shapes this thesis is modernity, its changing definitions and its institutions. In particular, the projects of nationalism, secularism, and Westernization in the Tanzimat period are compared to related projects in the Young Turk era and the early Turkish Republic under Atatürk. I focus this comparison on the consequences of state reforms for constructions of national, gender and sexual identities. The concept of 'Turkishness' developed before the birth of the Turkish state, and its origins can be witnessed in the state-sponsored dance and theatrical events of the Young Turk era. The state-sponsored 'folk' dances of the early Republic are shown to have a direct link to Young Turk definitions of Turkish identity.

Finally, concepts and issues of space guide my analyses of dance practices and the formation of modern, gendered selves. Dancers in the Ottoman period did not perform in formalized performance spaces until the proscenium stage was introduced in the Tanzimat period. The introduction of the proscenium stage separated performers from their audiences and systematized their performances. Audiences had to learn how to behave appropriately, sitting in silence and attention and clapping their hands at the right moments. In this way, the introduction of the Western theater contributed to the formation of modern Turkish selves.

Similarly, the creation of public spaces in the modern Turkish Republic played an important role in Atatürk's project of modernization. Unlike previous architectural trends, urban Republican architecture highlighted the importance of shared, social spaces such as parks. Such spaces were not random, and indeed public gatherings outside of these designated spaces were actively discouraged. Public spaces regulated people's behaviors and controlled their movements in space. Their ordered and clean appearance also modeled modernity for Turkish citizens and foreign observers. In particular, the presence of women in these spaces was meant to signal the progress of the modern nation.

CHAPTER ONE

DANCING GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE



Figure 1

Introduction

From the beginning of the Ottoman Empire to the creation of the Republic of Turkey, the relationship of the state and its subjects underwent several dramatic shifts. A history of changing dance practices offers insights into how this relationship shaped and was shaped by the social norms of gender and sexuality. This chapter explores the role of dance in relation to the Ottoman state from 1453, the conquest of Istanbul, to the end of the Tulip Period in 1730. First, I ask how the Ottoman state used dance to display its power and wealth to its subjects and the outside world with palace entertainments and court spectacles. Pinpointing what dance events were considered acceptable by the state (and hence, which were not) elucidates the gender system that the Ottoman state intended to promote at different periods of its history. Next I move to the level of the body and investigate the ways that dancers performed their sexuality and negotiated the norms of the Ottoman gender system. Before moving to the history of dance practices, however, I

begin with a description of the Ottoman gender system as the context in which the state and its subjects defined themselves.

The Ottoman Gender System

Islam significantly shaped all forms of Ottoman art, as did the ambitions and ideas of different sultans and their families or high officials. Perhaps the most influential factor in defining what was socially acceptable in the performing arts was the Ottoman gender system. Although feminist scholars of the Middle East have noted that class, ethnicity, location and other factors make it difficult to define one Islamic gender system, in general it is safe to say that for much of the Middle East and North Africa, and indeed the Mediterranean, until the twentieth century the various gender systems in the Islamic world shared the practice of gender segregation.

Unlike the modern European gender system, which is based on a binary definition of gender, in the Ottoman gender system the differences between male and female were less distinguished and the concepts of love and beauty were not located in women alone. Dror Ze'evi³⁵ maps out sexual relations and transformations in attitudes and practices in the Ottoman Empire between the sixteenth and twentieth century through an analysis of several sets of discourse on sex³⁶ that were prevalent in Ottoman Muslim society throughout this period and concludes that, although we cannot know how individuals necessarily behaved, we can recognize the parameters and borders within which they acted. Despite the existence of different sub-discourses there was a basic understanding

³⁵ Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourses in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2006), 143-5.

³⁶ These sets of discourse are medicine, the legal system, literature on morality, dream interpretation books, shadow theater, and European travel writing.

of the human body and sexuality in the Ottoman Middle East, a “discursive world at the center of which stood the Ottoman dynasty,”³⁷ that practiced gender segregation and accepted sexually explicit behavior and the expression of homoerotic desire in certain contexts.

The Ottoman gender system was shaped in large part by medical concepts and theories.³⁸ Ottoman physicians were proficient in Galenic medicine,³⁹ which took a holistic view of the body and adhered to the humoral system.⁴⁰ Sexuality was determined by the elemental composition of the body and its humoral balance. Furthermore, gender was not binary, but rather was based on a “one-sex” model that saw men and women as having different versions of the same sexual organs. In the “one-sex” model, women were considered less-developed versions of men.⁴¹ In this model, active male homosexuality was not considered a medical problem.⁴² The Ottoman gender system was also impacted by Islam. Religious debates between Orthodox and Sufi⁴³ Muslim intellectuals centered on the use of bodily contact between males and the practice of dancing and gazing at young boys in Sufi religious rituals as means to access the divine

³⁷ Ze’evi, *Producing Desire*, 11.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

³⁹ Based on the theories of Galen, an ancient Greek physician. Galenic medicine dominated Roman-Islamic and later medieval European medical science.

⁴⁰ The four humors theory of the Greek doctor Hippocrates believed that moods and behaviors were influenced by four body fluids: blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm (Ze’evi, 22).

⁴¹ Ze’evi, 22-23.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴³ Sufism became a widespread popular movement in the sixteenth century and integrated with other corporative bodies of the Ottoman state, including households, army units, and merchant guilds. The sultan, the bureaucracy, and the clergy were affiliated with Sufism in one way or another, even if only superficially. As Ze’evi notes, Sufism formed the religious backbone of Ottoman society, and “the claim that the great majority of Ottoman Muslims in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, city dwellers and villagers alike, were Sufis, would not be an exaggeration” (80). To speak of Islam in the early Ottoman Empire, then, is to speak of Sufism.

love of God.⁴⁴ Ze'evi's work suggests that homoerotic desire was the norm and that even when it was forbidden by religious authorities, it was still expected.

In certain levels of Ottoman society, modes of intercourse were not imprinted as socially right or wrong and homoerotic sexual attraction was not a taboo subject.⁴⁵ For example, the language of the shadow theater was replete with sexual innuendos, vulgar jokes and images of the phallus. The main character, Karagöz, was often cross-dressing and engaging in homoerotic encounters with *köçeks*, male dancers dressed as women.⁴⁶ Descriptions of the female body or the desecration of women was less present, however, pointing to the strict segregation of the sexes.⁴⁷

Ze'evi's study of sexual scripts shows that the Ottoman gender system, defined as it was by diverse and sometimes contradictory discourses and practices, allowed for homoerotic attraction and sexually explicit language. Although women are mentioned in his analyses, they rarely appear as more than just female types. Leslie Peirce's research on the imperial harem illustrates that high-ranking women held political power and public prominence between the sixteenth and mid-seventeenth century, and attests to the fact that the practice of gender segregation did not suppress women's voices or the importance of their roles in society.⁴⁸ Just the opposite, segregation provided opportunities for women to exercise authority within their own spheres of influence. Furthermore, in the royal palace both women and men were the targets of strict social

⁴⁴ Ze'evi, 86-87.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 121.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 135.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 123.

⁴⁸ Also see Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (London and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

control. More important than the gender dichotomy was a generational distinction, in which male and female elders closely controlled women of childbearing age and junior men. Elder women, whose sexuality was no longer considered a threat, moved quite freely and were not subject to the same restrictions.⁴⁹ In fact, observations of women in the elite class by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, wife of the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth century, confirms that Ottoman women had more freedom and power than did women of the ruling elites in Europe at the time.⁵⁰

The work of scholars such as Dror Ze'evi and Leslie Peirce help to establish a context for certain dance and performance practices in the Ottoman Empire. Although useful for establishing a sense of the Ottoman gender system, Peirce's study reveals the position of high-ranking women but not other classes, while Ze'evi studies the body as a social script with the result that the body tends to disappear as it is brought into discourse. The notion of social scripts implies that bodies can be read like books, and fails to note the power of practice to shape social norms. An analysis of the performance of the state and sexuality in Ottoman dance events sheds light on the Ottoman gender system by recovering embodied practices.

⁴⁹ Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, ix.

⁵⁰ Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 13.

Performing the State

The Ottoman arts flourished in the fifteenth century after Mahmud II (the Conqueror) triumphed over the Byzantines in Constantinople and made the city his capital in 1453 CE. Mahmud II settled large colonies of people from all of his various provinces there, including Christian and Jewish artisans and merchants. Mahmud II saw himself as the heir of Byzantium and the future ruler of the world. Although Islam was a central part of the Ottoman identity, he had been educated in the history of the Romans, Greeks and Byzantines, and identified himself as the “Emperor of the Romans.” For Mahmud II, the conquest of Constantinople marked the beginning of the reconstitution of the Byzantine Empire under Ottoman rule. His legitimacy as a ruler was strengthened by elaborate court ceremonies that rivaled those of Europe.

The court ceremonies and palace entertainments that developed under Mahmud II flourished in the sixteenth century under Bayezid II (1481-1512), Selim I (1512-1520), and especially Süleyman I (“The Magnificent”, 1520-1566). Under a more centralized administration, the consolidation of the Empire, and an expanding upper class, the arts in the sixteenth century enjoyed official patronage on a new level. Upper class women became philanthropists, and artists from different religious and cultural backgrounds created art in diverse, vernacular styles. Süleyman’s time in particular was one of economic expansion, population growth, increased wealth and trade, and the growth of cities. It was also a time of increased contact with the rest of the world, on both the east and west sides of the empire. Europeans became more interested in the Ottomans in this

period and travelled to the empire, leaving detailed, if highly biased descriptions, of what they encountered. Ottoman conquests in the east meant that the population of the empire was now predominantly Muslim, which reinforced the position of the Sultan as the Caliph, or religious leader of the Islamic world.

In Istanbul, the sultans of the sixteenth century were often away in battle, so their interactions with court officials became more and more ritualized. The Sultan's return to the palace and every conquest of new territory was celebrated with elaborate public festivals and parades. Pageants that represented the social hierarchy were common all over Europe in this period, as well, but European visitors to the Ottoman Empire often praised the high level of order demonstrated by the Ottoman public.⁵¹ Metin And's study of Istanbul in the sixteenth century cites descriptions of the city by foreign travelers that claimed whenever the Sultan was in Istanbul during a *bayram* (public holiday), many public entertainments would be arranged with jugglers, wrestlers, musicians, dancers, acrobats, and other performers.⁵² The site of these festivals was often the Byzantine Hippodrome (*At Meydani*) or the waterside on the Golden Horn.

The Ottomans not only publicly celebrated religious festivals, but also occasions such as the return of the Sultan from a journey or the birth or circumcision of his sons, when shops would be closed and communities were free to celebrate in their own manner. The most common excuse for public celebration was victory in battle or the conquest of new territory. Süleyman's victory in Persia in 1553 CE was celebrated for

⁵¹ Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000), 179.

⁵² Metin And, *Istanbul in the 16th Century* (Istanbul: Akbank, 1994), 260.

three days, during which all the shops in the city were decorated and at night all the mosques were lit up by lamps. Wild animals, such as lions and tigers, were paraded through the streets, and young men performed public dances and played instruments. The guilds of every profession would participate in elaborate processions through the city.⁵³ European diplomats were often invited, and would report what they had seen to their own rulers. Imperial and guild pageants also offered the excuse for a public display of the empire's wealth and power. In the processions, the Sultan and his entourage would lead, followed by the clergy, military, and craftsmen, on decorated wagons or carts. Then each guild had its own parade, employing performers to accompany them and presenting displays symbolic of their trades.⁵⁴

The reign of Süleyman the Magnificent is often referred to as the Golden Age of the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁵ The influence of Ottoman innovations in this period, however, was experienced beyond the borders of the empire. Linda Darling demonstrates, in "The Renaissance and the Middle East," that the Ottoman Empire was an active partner in worldwide cultural development and emphasizes the interconnectedness of the world in this period.⁵⁶ Although Süleyman's reign only lasted until 1566 CE, his impact would be felt throughout the next two centuries and his magnificent displays of power elaborated upon by future sultans.⁵⁷ Süleyman's numerous victories in battle and incredible palace

⁵³ And, 267.

⁵⁴ Metin And, *Culture, Performance and Communication in Turkey* (Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1987), 142-3.

⁵⁵ Halil Inalcik and Cemal Kafadar, eds., *Süleyman the Second and His Time* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1993).

⁵⁶ Linda T. Darling, "The Renaissance and the Middle East," in *A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance* ed. Guido Ruggiero (Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 55-69.

processions impacted even the European mind, and French operas of this period often included the character of the stern but noble Ottoman Sultan.⁵⁸ The janissary band, or *mehter*, became highly organized in the following century and not only performed in battle, but also to greet the sultan every afternoon from a tower within the garden of the Topkapı Palace.⁵⁹

The seventeenth century was a period of factional politics and economic decline in the Ottoman Empire. As Western Europe rose to power in the world market, the Ottomans struggled to stay competitive. Consolidation, rather than expansion, and foreign policy became the priority of the empire. The bombastic art of Süleyman was replaced by more humble, reflective art and realism. The lack of money among the general population increased the demand for cheap entertainment.⁶⁰ At the same time, religiosity increased and Orthodox Islam extended its reach from the palace to everyday life. In the late seventeenth century, Murad IV banned coffee and tobacco, enforced a strict dress code, and attempted to homogenize the education of the palace elites. The *Kadızedeliler*, a group of religious zealots, mounted an attack against the Sufis and

⁵⁷ Nicholas N. Martinovitch, "The Funeral of Sultan Murad III of Turkey," *The Art Bulletin* Vol. 10, No. 3 (Mar., 1928), 262-265, interprets the Ottoman political system based on an analysis of a miniature painting that depicts Sultan Marad III's funeral procession in 1595 CE. Esin Atil, "The Story of an Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Festival," *Muqarnas: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture*, Vol. X. Margaret B. Sevcenko, ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill), 181-200, describes the elaborate circumcision festival of Ahmed III in 1720.

⁵⁸ Metin And, *Gönlü Yüce Türk: Yüzyıllar Boyunca Bale Eserlerinde Türkler* (Ankara: Dost Yayınevi, 1958), 29-31.

⁵⁹ Sbylee Tura, "Janissary Music" in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation*, Vol. 4 ed. Kemal Cicek (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2000), 621-26.

⁶⁰ Stanford J. Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789-1807* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

destroyed many of their lodges in Istanbul and other urban centers, so that Sufi music and the *sema*⁶¹ began a long period of decline.⁶²

Although historians tend to define the eighteenth century as a period of Ottoman decline, the Janissaries, *ulema*, artisans and merchants emerged as a major political force that exerted considerable pressure on the elites. The role of non-Muslims also increased, as they were valued for their contacts with Western Europe, which was becoming more and more powerful in the world market.⁶³ Several reform movements forced the empire to adjust to the shift in global politics, and European strategies and knowledge were adopted in the military. There was a short period of artistic revival from 1718-1730 CE, generally referred to as the Tulip Period. The Tulip Period is renowned for its lively social and intellectual life and is identified with Ahmed III and his grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha, who was obsessed with French culture. Under Ahmed III, enlightenment ideas from France and nationalism from the Balkans penetrated Ottoman ways of thinking.⁶⁴

There was an enormous concentration of palace festivals in the Tulip Period. Such festivals included all kinds of ceremonial celebrations, some lasting for weeks, and served to strengthen the link between the ruling and the ruled. European travel accounts and the historical accounts of Evliya Çelebi provide useful descriptions of Ottoman festivals. Equally useful are the *Surnames*, or Imperial Festival Books, which were albums commissioned by Ottoman sultans to commemorate celebrations in paintings and

⁶¹ A Sufi religious ceremony that involves ritual activities such as singing and dancing.

⁶² A discussion of these events can be found in Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 93-8.

⁶³ For a detailed exposition of the *Kadıızadeliler* movement, see Madeline C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age, 1600-1800* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988).

⁶⁴ For an interesting discussion of the cultural interactions between European and the Ottoman Empire in the 18th century, see Fatma Müge Göçek, *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 1987).

text. The *Surnames* were meant to display the grandeur of the event and aided in the Sultan's efforts to maintain his public image. Those who could not read could follow the story in pictures. The *Surnames* recounted the festivities in the order the events took place and included detailed descriptions and paintings of the processions, feasts, entertainments, firework displays, circumcisions and wedding ceremonies. For this reason, they are invaluable sources for scholars studying the performing arts of the Ottoman Empire.

The first *Surname* was commissioned in 1524 CE by Süleyman I for the wedding ceremony between his sister and his Grand Vizier, Ibrahim Pasha. The *Surname-i Vehbi* commissioned by Ahmed III in 1720 was written by Vehbi and illustrated with miniatures by the great Ottoman artist, Levni. It was devoted to the fifteen-day festival given in honor of the circumcision of the sultan's sons and demonstrates that Ahmet III maintained vast resources and political power.⁶⁵ Atil notes that the imperial painters like Levni did not rely on written accounts to create their works, but based them on firsthand experience.⁶⁶ Levni, like other painters of the period, was also a statesman. As a member of the elite palace corps, he served a dual role in the Ottoman administrative system. In his paintings, he identifies the participants in the festival through their garments. He presents the story from right to left, the action first presented to the sultan and then to the public. He also paints the procession of the guilds, marching in hierarchical order. His presentation of the parade "recreates the structure of the Ottoman

⁶⁵ Metin And, *Kırk Gün Kırk Gece* (Istanbul: Taç Yayınları, 1959), 184.

⁶⁶ Atil, Esin. "The Story of an Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Festival." *Muqarnas: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture* X, 181-200.

state, the balance of power between the administrative and religious sectors, and every single corps within the system”.⁶⁷

Metin And suggests that palace festivals had four purposes: to mark an important occasion, temporarily bringing together ruler and subject; to entertain and give people a break from normal everyday life; to instruct people of all classes and to impress courtiers and the outside world with the might and power of the sultan; and, like a modern World Fair, to advertise trade guilds, encourage healthy competition, explore innovations in technology and architecture, and give artists and craftsmen the opportunity to display themselves.⁶⁸ The Ottoman festivals were able to incorporate a large diversity of people and events and temporarily bring various levels of society together. The sultan himself did not dance, nor did the Ottoman nobles, because it was an activity of the lower classes and considered beneath them.⁶⁹ The nobility presented themselves to the public not as models of proper behavior but as a distinct and separate class. In other words, the nobility occupied a specific social niche just as the performers occupied theirs. The sultan and visiting dignitaries certainly had roles to perform in front of the public, as the people observed their reactions with the same excitement they observed the entertainments.⁷⁰ However, their gestures and body movements were meant to distinguish them from the lower classes.

The relationship between the Ottoman state and its subjects was distant. Family and social life was dictated more by religion, ethnicity and class than by any unifying

⁶⁷ And, *Kırk Gün Kırk Gece*, 190.

⁶⁸ Metin And, *Culture, Performance and Communication in Turkey*, 133.

⁶⁹ Metin And, “Dances of Anatolian Turkey” *Dance Perspectives*, Vol. 3 (Summer 1959), 10.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 135-6.

Ottoman identity. Public festivals gave ruler and subject the opportunity to perform the power of the state. Faroqhi notes that even festivals in Cairo or Damascus emphasized loyalty to the Ottoman sultan.⁷¹ In the miniatures of the *Surnames*, the sultans are always at the center of the composition. While Ottoman subjects doubtless held their own festivals on religious holidays and for life-cycle celebrations, the authorities were sometimes called in to break them up when local officials or artisans failed to demonstrate acquiescence to the sultan. Some festivals in Istanbul were altogether banned by sultan's decree or religious authorities who regarded them as heretical.⁷² Transgressions of social norms and boundaries were acceptable when the sultan himself staged the festival, but not otherwise. Sultans would often demand the presence of women at their festivals or at least allow them to take part, but when not sanctioned by the sultan the presence of women in public spaces was considered inappropriate.

Suraiya Faroqhi makes the important point that all Ottoman subjects would not have “accepted unconditionally the ‘official version’ of the social hierarchy as it was presented in the sultan’s festivals.”⁷³ Nonetheless, the festivals would have impressed on the minds of Ottoman subjects the power and might of the sultan and renewed his central authority over their lives. If transgressions of social norms were not tolerated except when authorized by the state, we can assume that the public activities of Ottoman performers generally conveyed appropriate expressions of gender and sexuality. As I will demonstrate in the next section, until the introduction of European gender norms

⁷¹ Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, 181.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 183.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 184.

beginning in the nineteenth century, frank and open presentations of sexuality, both homosexual and heterosexual, was standard in the Ottoman gender system.

Performing Gender and Sexuality

From the reign of Mahmud II on, all of the sultans kept a core of entertainers, mostly obtained through the *devşirme* system, a levy of Christian youth from the Balkans who were trained for positions in the army and administration. Royal concubines and performers moved between several worlds, as they were either slaves or of the servitor class, yet they gained entrance to the spaces of the nobles as entertainers. The maids and pages of the sultan's harem were involved in choirs and musical performances, and the ladies of high society taught their slave girls music if they displayed talent.⁷⁴ Music and dance were essential parts of a concubine's education, and the large orchestras that performed at Topkapı Palace were often composed entirely of women.⁷⁵ Male entertainers dressed as women would sing, dance, juggle, and put on theatrical performances and games for the sultan and the princesses in the Hall of the Emperor. Their theatrical and dance performances were sometimes lewd burlesques and included comedic puns and caricatures.

Although elite women were often patrons of the arts, it seems that they themselves were not expected to be accomplished in the visual arts or architecture. However, they were often the subjects of Ottoman miniature paintings from the sixteenth,

⁷⁴ Faroqhi, 121.

⁷⁵ Carla Coco, *Secrets of the Harem* (New York and Paris: The Vendome Press, 1997), 131.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and depictions of them signal that they were accomplished singers and dancers.⁷⁶ While women rarely appear in the *Surname* that illustrated ceremonial occasions of the court or military events, foreign and non-Muslim women do appear occasionally such as in the *Süleymanname* of 1558. Levni's *Surname* includes several paintings of female entertainers. Sometimes women are depicted in windows, watching the festivities below.⁷⁷ Apart from the *Surnames*, women do appear in other kinds of manuscripts. For example, Ahmed I (1590-1617) commissioned an album to represent members of the court, the military and the harem in stylized types and depictions of women in the court and in daily life are numerous. While we can assume that women were entertaining the Byzantine and Ottoman courts long before they show up in paintings, Nancy Micklewright suggests that women's increased visibility in miniatures of the seventeenth and eighteenth century mirrors broader social trends.⁷⁸

According to Dorit, the Ottoman court held regular private performances by palace-educated entertainers, particularly the *köçek*, young boys who performed in women's attire.⁷⁹ The *köçek* came to the court as slaves of various origins, some through the *devşirme* system. They were often educated at the palace school, and those with the most talent were chosen to perform for the court. Some of the boys were also in the

⁷⁶ Nancy Micklewright, "Musicians and Dancing Girls': Images of Women in Ottoman Miniature Painting" in *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era* Ed. Madeline C. Zilfi (Leiden, New York and Koln: Brill, 1997), 158-9.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁷⁹ Dorit Klebe, "Effeminate professional musicians in sources of Ottoman-Turkish court poetry and music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries," *Music in Art: International Journal for Music Iconography*, Vol. XXX (2005), Issue 1-2: 97-116.

service of chamberlains and officers living in government houses.⁸⁰ The main duty of the *köçek* was to entertain the sultan and courtly dignitaries by singing, dancing and playing instruments.⁸¹ At times of war the *köçek* marched into battle with their proprietors, and have a reputation for also being their lovers.⁸²

Not only the palace arts but also popular entertainments, like the shadow theater, flourished under Süleyman in the newly popular coffee houses and the taverns of Galata. According to Klebe, some *köçek* worked commercially outside the palace in performance companies, or *kol*, and were hired to perform at festivals and accompany parades of the trade guilds. They also performed at taverns and coffee houses.⁸³ According to Ralph S. Hattox,⁸⁴ coffeehouse entertainments included story-telling and puppet shows.⁸⁵ The advantages of such entertainments for the space of the coffeehouse were that the types of performances were practical in scale to the narrow confines of the shops, and these forms of entertainment were generally considered wholesome.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, conservative Muslims were against the drinking of coffee because of its association with forbidden activities such as smoking and indulging in public entertainments.⁸⁷ Although conservative Muslims approved of non-religious music in certain contexts, such as military or civic processions, music for its own sake was highly questionable. In

⁸⁰ Klebe, 105.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 102.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁸⁴ Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1985). Also see Ulla Heise, *Coffee and Coffee Houses* (Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing, 1987).

⁸⁵ Along with works by Metin And, another useful source on the topic of Turkish shadow puppets is Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 125-48.

⁸⁶ Hattox, 104-5.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 78-79.

particular, vocal music performed by women for a male audience was considered shocking.⁸⁸

Despite religious disapproval, Süleyman patronized performance guilds and dancing troupes known as *singuins*. According to Metin And, there were all-male and all-female *singuins*, but men and women never danced together.⁸⁹ The performers would play instruments, sing, dance, and mime for private occasions such as weddings. Wealthy families could afford to employ their own *singuins* for all of their special occasions. *Singuins* also performed in public. For example, Metin And describes an open area near the Beyazit Mosque where story-tellers, magicians, animal trainers, comedians, acrobats, wrestlers, and dancers would gather to entertain large crowds.⁹⁰

And suggests that public performers were usually non-Muslims.⁹¹ This assumption is repeated often in scholarly works on the Ottoman performing arts, and not just from the perspective of modern Turks. Minna Rozen's *A History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul* claims that "female performers among free people were almost always of *zimmi* origin – Greeks, Armenians and Jews. The Muslims who engaged in the performing arts were mainly Gypsies, who were viewed as outsiders no matter what their religion."⁹² Although I have yet to find a primary source that contradicts this idea, I am suspicious of the claim that Muslim Turks did not perform. Up into the twentieth century, performing for money was considered a low class profession for both men and

⁸⁸ Hattox, 107.

⁸⁹ And, *Istanbul in the 16th Century*, 276-77.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 282-83.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 278.

⁹² Minna Rozen, *A History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul: The Formative Years, 1453-1566* (Istanbul, Turkey: Brill, 2002), 271.

women and did not befit the upper classes, whether Jewish, Muslim or Christian. In the imperial harem, slaves were indeed non-Muslims. However, outside of court life Muslim Turks from the lower classes most certainly did become professional performers. More than likely, modern Turkish historians have sought to disassociate the Ottoman performing arts from Turks and characterize them as foreign, which will be discussed in detail in coming chapters.

Outside of court life, performers called *çengi* were often hired to perform at weddings as part of a *kol*, or company, which usually included female dancers, musicians and singers. They performed in public places, women's quarters of the palace, and private residences.⁹³ Popescu-Judetz claims that the girls were usually dissolute or runaways taken in by the manager of the *kol* for training and education.⁹⁴ Descriptions of their clothing as transparent and immodest, and their movements as sensual, explain why religious authorities deemed their performances inappropriate. Public female dancers in the Middle East have long been associated with prostitution, and Sema Nilgün Erdoğan claims that prostitutes who were banished from Istanbul were left with the option of joining a traveling *kol*.⁹⁵

Even if the performers themselves were socially marginal, their performances were essential for the celebration of important events. They would play tambourines, finger cymbals or spoons while dancing, and were usually unveiled. At weddings, the *çengi* would encourage the family of the married couple to dance, especially the bride's

⁹³ Eugenia Popescu-Judetz, "Kocek and Cengi in Turkish Culture," *Dance Studies* 6 (1982): 53.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁹⁵ Sema Nilgün Erdoğan, *Sexual Life in Ottoman Society* (Istanbul, Turkey: Dönence Basım ve Yayın Hizmetleri, 2000), 33.

mother, and would even imitate gestures of love and what was expected to happen on the wedding night.⁹⁶ Besides this display by professional dancers, men and women did not dance together. They would form segregated circles or lines, women dancing with women and men dancing with men, holding onto handkerchiefs between them. Men's dances usually involved hopping or jumping steps, while the women took small, graceful steps.⁹⁷ The dancing would continue all night long and, among the wealthy, celebrations might last for several days.⁹⁸

Although traveling *kols* entertained all over the empire, in Istanbul they were often relegated by religious and state authorities to the taverns and coffeehouses of the Galata and Beyoğlu regions, where the majority of non-Muslims lived.⁹⁹ The *çengi* and *köçek* dancers traversed the public spaces of coffeehouses and taverns and the segregated spaces of the palace, negotiating and reflecting the sexuality and gender norms for both. According to Popescu-Judetz, the term *köçek* originated in Turkey in the seventeenth century. Before that, male dancers were called by the Arabic/Persian term *raqqas*, and female dancers were *raqqasah*.¹⁰⁰ The *köçek* were young boys who entered the Janissary corps or a Sufi lodge as an apprentice to an older dervish. It is unclear when the term *köçek* was extended to dancing boys.¹⁰¹ It might be safe to assume that the Sufi apprentices were already filling such a role early on as part of the practice of gazing at

⁹⁶ And, *Istanbul in the 16th Century*, 277-8.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁹⁸ Although there is not space here, of possible interest to future research is the whirling of the Sufi dervishes, and the appropriation of this kind of movement into professional entertainments.

⁹⁹ Erdoğan, 42-3.

¹⁰⁰ Popescu-Judetz, 48.

¹⁰¹ According to Popescu-Judetz, the term is still used today to designate itinerant public performers.

beauty.¹⁰² Trained in the performing arts from a young age, the *köçek* who showed talent were assigned to performing troupes, and when they started to show a beard they would leave the troupe or stay on as musicians.¹⁰³

According to Klebe, the *köçek*'s style of music and dance imitated that of the female entertainers, and also mimicked the outward appearance and behavior of women. She suggests that they were allowed into the harem because they were not yet considered men, so they were able to observe and learn women's ways.¹⁰⁴ Miniatures in *Surname* show young boys around the age of ten or twelve with long hair and dancing in small groups (see Figure 1). They are playing wooden clappers, or *çarpara*, in their hands as they dance, and Popescu-Judetiz describes them as wearing women's clothing.¹⁰⁵ European observers who saw the *köçek* described them as suggestive and sensual, affecting the movements and looks of women. In the first part of their performances, the dancers would move to slow music using a veil or a shawl. The second part would be livelier, and the dancers would employ shimmies of their shoulders and hips. They

¹⁰² I am referring here to the Sufi practice of gazing at young boys as a path to contemplation of the beauty of God's love. Ze'evi notes that in theory both men and women could have been the subjects of Sufis' contemplation of beauty, but because social norms dictated that women could not be present in the Sufi lodges, young, beardless male slaves or initiates, who were not socially gendered, became the focus of admiration (83). The practice of gazing coupled with the ecstatic music and dance rituals of the sema were highly criticized by more conservative Muslims as sinful. They associated dance, in particular, with pagan rituals and declared that the Prophet himself rejected the practice of dance. Literature warning Muslims of the dangers of the sema was prolific.¹⁰² Besides criticizing the use of music and dance in a religious context, the literature denounced the master-disciple relationship for encouraging bodily contact and even sexual intercourse (86).

¹⁰³ Popescu-Judetiz, 50-51.

¹⁰⁴ Klebe, 103.

¹⁰⁵ Popescu-Judetiz, 50.

would mime stories to elaborate their songs, and sometimes they would include acrobatic tricks. The audience would reward dancers by tossing coins.¹⁰⁶

Conclusions

Metin And suggests that the Ottoman performing arts were repressed under Islam, first because the use and presentation of the body is unavoidable in music, theater and dance, and second because public and ritual performances were associated with pagan practices and prostitution.¹⁰⁷ The sources analyzed here, however, indicate that repression is not an accurate characterization of the condition of the performing arts in the Ottoman Empire. Rather, public performers conformed to state expectations for imperial festivals, and in other circumstances were regulated by local social norms based on religion, ethnicity, and especially class. The Ottoman gender system prescribed gender segregation between men and women, but transgressions were often sanctioned by the state particularly when it came to performers. Furthermore, as Ze'evi explained, several sets of discourse and practice regarding gender and sexuality existed simultaneously. Although Orthodox Sunni religious authorities rejected the practices of Sufi dervishes and public performers, clearly the *köçek* and *çengi* were a state institution well into the modern era.

Popescu-Judetz proposes that the *köçek* reflected a tension between Islamic religious teaching and local customs.¹⁰⁸ She sees the *köçek* as an example of the

¹⁰⁶ Popescu-Judetz, 51.

¹⁰⁷ And, *Turkish Dancing*, 21.

¹⁰⁸ Popescu-Judetz, 48.

negotiations that took place in order to accommodate both religious injunctions, particularly regarding gender segregation, and artistic expression. However, Popescu-Judetz also assumes that male parties employed the *köçek* for entertainment simply because it was unacceptable in an Islamic society for women to dance in the company of men. Afsaneh Najmabadi warns against the tendency to map later formations of desire onto earlier times.¹⁰⁹ Popescu-Judetz projects the heterosexual European gender system onto the Ottoman gender system and closes her analysis to the possibility that male parties employed young boys to dance because they were considered beautiful, not because of the absence of women.

While European observers interpreted the movements of the *köçek* as feminine and scholars like Popescu-Judetz tend to assume that the *köçek* were merely imitating women, it is more likely that before the nineteenth century shimmies and movements of the shoulders and hips were not yet defined as feminine. Afsaneh Najmabadi, in her analysis of gender and sexuality in Qajar art, argues that although European travelers described adolescent beardless men as effeminate, it would be a mistake to assume that European, binary, man/woman gender categories were normative in the early modern Islamic world. In fact, Najmabadi demonstrates, male/female was less distinguished in Persian art before the introduction of European categories of sexuality and gender.¹¹⁰ Ze'evi notes that sexuality in the Ottoman Empire took more than two forms. Male sexuality, for example, was expected to manifest two distinct phases. Young boys were

¹⁰⁹ Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2005), 19.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

thought to have an untamed sexuality that was drawn to both sexes and especially older men. Once the boy became a man, marked by a beard, his sexual behavior was expected to change so that he would be attracted to women and young boys, but not to other adult males.¹¹¹

While sexual preferences did exist, as they do at all times everywhere, “heterosexual” and “homosexual” were not fixed types in the early modern Islamic world. Stavros Stavrou Karayanni takes cues from Foucault when he suggests that the term “homosexual” is a European construction based on its opposition to “heterosexual.” He notes that before Western constructs of sexuality were introduced to the Islamic world that made sexual preference into a source of identity rather than just an activity, dancing boys elicited socially acceptable forms of attraction without necessarily pointing to “homosexuality.”¹¹² Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı add that the boundaries of permissible love for Ottoman men were significantly less restrictive than modern European boundaries.¹¹³ In the early modern Ottoman Empire, both men and women were considered objects of beauty and desire.

Movements that are today associated with femininity were performed by both the *çengi* and the *köçek*. Karayanni suggests that their swaying gait “was a particular way of gesturing that celebrated youth, health, beauty, and artistic talent.”¹¹⁴ Andrews and

¹¹¹ Ze’evi, 93.

¹¹² Stavros Stavrou Karayanni, *Dancing Fear and Desire: Race, Sexuality and Imperial Politics in Middle Eastern Dance* (Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004), 28-29.

¹¹³ Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 11.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

Kalpahlı have also shown that the Ottomans believed outer beauty in both men and women reflected inner intelligence and moral purity.¹¹⁵ However, foreign travel accounts (and indeed most contemporary scholarly writing) that described the male dancers claimed they imitated the movements of women in “a self-mocking parody of traditional gender roles.”¹¹⁶ Again, such an interpretation imposes Western models instead of understanding the practice from within Ottoman society. Male dancers were not simply parodying women. In fact, women in the harem who viewed the *köçek* performing at palace functions copied the movements of male dancers.¹¹⁷ Similarly, although the male dancers are often described as “dressed like women,” their manner of dress was distinct, and it is obvious in the Ottoman miniatures which dancers were male and which were female by how they were dressed. I suggest that their long hair and skirts were meant to convey beauty, not femininity. Both male and female movements and ways of dressing were appropriate to the dance, and were gendered in ways different from modern conceptions.

Ze’evi emphasizes that despite the existence of different sub-discourses there was a basic understanding of the human body and sexuality in the Ottoman Empire by which men and women were usually segregated and homoerotic desire was not considered abnormal. He suggests that these underlying assumptions broke down in the nineteenth century with the introduction of European modernity and were not replaced with a new

¹¹⁵ Andrews and Kalpahlı, 4.

¹¹⁶ Jonas, 116.

¹¹⁷ Anthony Shay, “The Male Dancer in the Middle East and Central Asia” in *Belly Dance: Orientalism, Transnationalism and Harem Fantasy*, ed. Anthony Shay and Barbara Sellers-Young (California: Mazda Publishers, 2005), 56.

set of sexual scripts until the late Republican period. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, European scrutiny towards the Islamic gender system instigated major shifts in the Ottoman Empire beginning in the nineteenth century that eventually contributed to the adoption of a binary male/female, heterosexual/ homosexual gender system.

CHAPTER TWO

A PERIOD OF TRANSFORMATION: ‘TURKISHNESS,’ THE ‘NEW WOMAN,’ AND DISCIPLINE IN TURKISH THEATER



Figure 2

Modernization in Turkey is commonly associated with the *Tanzimat* period (1839-76), but leading historians such as Erik J. Zürcher and Bernard Lewis mark the beginning of modernization in the late eighteenth century with the growing influence of Western Europe and the reforms of Selim III (1789-1807).¹¹⁸ As Zürcher notes, “Any modern history of Turkey really is a history of the Ottoman Empire.”¹¹⁹ Leading up to the *Tanzimat* under Mahmud II (1808-39), the Ottomans experienced the abolition of the Janissary Corps, centralization of power, introduction of direct taxation, state control of the religious foundations, secular education, and a new class of Ottoman bureaucrats.¹²⁰ The reforms of the *Tanzimat* period and later the Young Turk era (1908-50) were a culmination of these previous transformations.

¹¹⁸ Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd Publishers, 1997), 23 and Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 3rd edition (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 56-65.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹²⁰ Kandiyoti, *Women, Islam and the State*, 24.

While much scholarship has already been dedicated to the socio-economic and political developments of modern Turkey, very little has been written in the field of the arts. In this chapter, I evaluate the period of transformation from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century through shifts in dance practices, highlighting what these shifts can reveal about changing discourses and practices in the realm of gender and sexuality. Orientalism certainly impacted the role of the performing arts in the late Ottoman Empire. As I explain below, European representations of Ottoman sexuality provoked anxiety on the part of urban Ottomans, who internalized European criticism and reshaped their own gender system. However, instead of characterizing this period as simply a time of Westernization or crediting European influence for Turkish modernization,¹²¹ I explore the tensions that existed between the local and the foreign, the traditional and the new. While the dance practices of the *köçek* and *çengi* underwent enormous transformations, innovative theatrical styles such as *kanto* and *tuluat* emerged as forums for negotiating ideas such as nationalism and women's entrance to the public sphere. Perhaps more than in the preceding centuries, the Ottoman performing arts actively shaped changing discourses about sexuality and the body in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

¹²¹ Brian Silverstein reminds us that the developments of modernization in Turkey cannot be understood only in terms of 'Westernization.' Rather, they took place within the central Ottoman lands, the Balkans, and were a feature of Islamic traditions themselves. The Ottomans, in Silverstein's analysis, were not outside Europe looking in, but were actively part of the milieu in which modern transformations took place. In "Islam and Modernity in Turkey: Power, Tradition and Historicity in the European Provinces of the Muslim World" *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 3. (Summer, 2003), 513.

Orientalism and the Binary Male/Female, Heterosexual/Homosexual Gender System

Much has already been written on the impact of Orientalist stereotypes on the Middle Eastern psyche, so I will limit my analysis to the areas of dance, gender and sexuality. Scholars such as Joanna de Groot argue that European hegemony plays an important role in defining the dichotomy between masculine/feminine and West/East.¹²²

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European women and the East were simultaneously feminized and defined as subordinate. The invasion of the Ottoman harem by the Western imagination masculinized the Western gaze and projected the source of European men's pleasures and desires into the savage Other. De Groot also suggests that European hegemony meant increased interactions between men and women, different classes, and westerners and non-westerners, which resulted in intensified distinctions between the Self and the Other.¹²³

Dror Ze'evi observes that accusations of indiscreet sexuality were often at the core of East/West power struggles. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European travel literature had an enormous impact on both European and Ottoman ideas about sexuality and morality.¹²⁴ Descriptions of the Ottomans were full of stereotypes portraying the empire as an example of either Oriental despotism or the backward and barbaric treatment of Muslim women. The most popular theme among Orientalists was the Ottoman harem, where Westerners imagined all kinds of sexual deviance and displays.

¹²² Joanna de Groot, "'Sex' and 'Race': The Construction of Language and Image in the Nineteenth Century" in *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century* ed. Susan Mendes and Jane Rendall (London: Routledge, 1989), 91.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹²⁴ Ze'evi, 163.

The harem woman became a character of the European imagination conjured for the sake of tantalizing Western fantasies and appropriated through various mediums. It became common practice in Romantic literature to contrast the wild and exotic lives of harem women with the monotonous and tedious existence of ‘ordinary people.’ The supposedly unfettered nature of the harem lifestyle was celebrated with prurient interest, perhaps as an outlet for European readers who longed for simpler, pre-Industrial Revolution times and an escape from the strict Victorian rules of sexual modesty.

Spaces of homosocialization, such as the harem for women and the coffeehouse for men, signaled sexual backwardness under the European gaze. The harem, as the ultimate realm of Western male fantasy, was understood as a form of domination of women by lascivious men with multiple wives and concubines at their disposal. Therefore, this space was considered exotic, but also deviant. Women were portrayed as excessively sexual, and at the same time oppressed by a patriarchal system. Graham-Brown explains in *Images of Women*:

The power of the harem image lay in the notion of a forbidden world of women, of sexuality caged and inaccessible, at least to Western men, except by a leap of imagination. It was this leap of imagination which shaped the literature, paintings, engravings and photographs which purported to reveal the life of women behind the walls and barred windows of the harem.¹²⁵

Europeans could find in this portrayal of the harem an alter-ego into which they could project all that they considered backward and foreign, therefore strengthening their own sense of identity as Western, modern, and civilized in opposition to a barbaric East. The solo dancer was a key character in this European fantasy and sparked an obsession with

¹²⁵ Sarah Graham-Brown, *Images of Women: The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East, 1860-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 70.

public dancers, both male and female. Middle Eastern dancers who experienced low social status in their own societies now found themselves attracting the attention and money of foreign men. When the French saw these dancers articulating their mid-sections, something that was foreign to European dance styles, they called it *danse du ventre*, and “belly dance” was born.

In the nineteenth century, Ottoman-European interaction increased. European travel writing and Ottomans educated in Paris and other European cities made their way back to the empire and highly impacted the Ottoman gender system. An analysis of shifting dance practices in this period demonstrates that beauty became gendered as a female trait while male beauty, represented by the *köçek*, was renounced. Afsaneh Najmabadi notes that in nineteenth-century Iran, the disappearance of male-male loving couples in art was “accompanied by a veritable abundance of female objects of desire, most notably as entertainers of various types, ladies of male pleasure.”¹²⁶ Interestingly, not only did depictions of male-male amorous couples disappear in artistic representations, but male-female couples disappeared as well. Najmabadi suggests that male-female couples in art invite homosexual and heterosexual desire. The male figure is open to the gaze of both men and women. With the disappearance of male figures, only the female was left as the receptacle of sexual desire.¹²⁷

To the European observer the *köçek* was cross-dressed as female. Male homosexuality was linked to the seclusion of women in the harem and homoerotic desire

¹²⁶ Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards*, 27.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 30-32.

was assumed to be the defining feature of Ottoman sexuality. It was believed that men and women, secluded from each other, had fallen into depravity.¹²⁸ The sexual anxiety that the Ottomans experienced in the face of such portrayals led to the eventual disappearance of the *köçek* in the big cities. However, “belly dance” managed to survive. Stavros Stavrou Karayanni suggests that “belly dance” underwent cultural appropriation under an Orientalist agenda that simultaneously constructed binary masculine/feminine subjects and affirmed the power of the European male gaze.¹²⁹ The dancing body was thus re-inscribed with excessive heterosexual eroticism. “The lasciviousness of the dance,” writes Karayanni, “is an attribute that came to exist during scopis intercourse with the Western gaze.”¹³⁰

As I will demonstrate in this chapter, the transformations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were not a matter of European imposition, but rather a process of minute shifts in the prestige of certain values over others. This did not occur only in the realm of politics, but more so in the realm of society and culture. Europeans certainly impacted the role of performers in the late Ottoman Empire, but the Ottoman elites were complicit in this process and contributed to new definitions of gender and sexuality that disavowed male-male sexual attraction and became obsessed with controlling the sexuality of women in public spaces.

¹²⁸ Najmabadi, 35.

¹²⁹ Karayanni, 11-13.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

The New Order

The Ottoman Empire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century experienced a long period of wars (with Russia, Crimea, and Austria), invasions and rebellions (in Ottoman territories in the Middle East and North Africa). Aware that they had begun to lose battles which they used to win, Ottoman religious and civil authorities began to discuss strategies for improving their military expertise and equipment.¹³¹ These discussions culminated in the reorganization of the military beginning with Selim III's *Nizam-i Cedid* ('New Order') in 1793. The period between the French Revolution in 1789 and the 1830s was a time of fast-paced changes particularly with respect to the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Western Europe.¹³²

Sultan Selim III (1789-1807) continued the architectural and artistic innovations of the Tulip Period. His role model was Louis XVI of France and he had a deep interest in all things European. Italian ballets and operas had already been introduced to Istanbul and were performed in Beyoğlu for largely non-Muslim audiences. Under Selim III, Western European performing arts were brought to the palace and Ottoman elites took instruction from foreign teachers in ballet and Western classical music. While the impact of European art and culture was felt mostly among the nobles and the wealthy, professional performers still experienced the same tolerance for the popular arts as they had under Ahmed III and continued to perform at coffeehouses, taverns, public festivals, weddings, private residences and public squares.¹³³

¹³¹ Silverstein, 501.

¹³² Zürcher, 23.

¹³³ See Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 1971.

Although historians have tended to credit the empire's 'Westernization' policies to Selim's affinity with Europe, in reality the *Nizam-i Cedid* aimed to strengthen the state apparatus against its enemies by reforming the military. What made Selim III different from previous reformers was that he was willing to look to European advisors to achieve his goals.¹³⁴ As Silverstein notes, the Ottomans were not the only ones sending officers and administrators to European centers like Paris, London and Berlin in order to acquire emerging modern techniques; Spain, Sweden and Russia were also doing so, in order to achieve more efficient warfare.¹³⁵ All of the dynastic empires, including the Hapsburg, Romanov and Ottoman, borrowed methods from the nationalist liberals without necessarily adopting their ideologies.¹³⁶ The Ottomans were simply participating in a larger process of modernization, not submitting themselves to European imperialism.

Selim's reforms required a new system of training for the military, so he recruited French instructors to the empire. Along with military education, modern medical services and schools were also established. The Ottoman ruling class, mostly attached to the army corps, was instructed in the French language and culture and influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution, particularly the idea of 'the people.' Their ability to socialize with foreigners was also greater than it had been before and likely would have involved dancing.¹³⁷ New Ottoman embassies were installed in London, Vienna, Berlin and Paris, and Ottoman ambassadors and foreign consulates brought the manners and

¹³⁴ Zürcher, 24.

¹³⁵ Silverstein, 502.

¹³⁶ Selim Deringil, "The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808-1908" *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Jan., 1993), 3.

¹³⁷ See Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964) and Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962).

customs of these cities back to the elites of the empire, including European theatrical traditions. Elite Ottoman women employed foreign instructors to teach them ballet, in particular.¹³⁸

Although many of the reforms of Selim III were overturned by religious authorities and he was deposed in 1807, the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and France continued. Furthermore, the impact of urban European ideas on the Ottoman elite was impossible to reverse. Young bureaucrats now looked for rationally motivated solutions instead of traditional ones, which led to new legislation.¹³⁹ The Christian communities of the Ottoman Empire were especially impacted by the ideas of the French Revolution, ‘liberty, equality, fraternity,’ and the early nineteenth century saw the beginnings of Greek and Balkan nationalism. The introduction of European military techniques and medical discourses reverberated throughout the Ottoman urban centers and led to continuing reforms under Mahmud II and the inauguration of the *Tanzimat* in 1839.

Like Selim III, Mahmud II aimed to strengthen the central state by building a modern army. As noted above, the Ottomans were prompted to emulate the West because of organizational and practical problems in the military, not philosophical or identity issues. In order to build a new army, Mahmud II established a military academy and invited foreign instructors, particularly Prussians, to train the officer corps. New methods were introduced to organize the hierarchy of command, formations, maneuvers

¹³⁸ Although there is not space to do so in this thesis, an interesting study might explore the impact of ballet and opera on modern formulations of gender roles and sexuality in the late Ottoman Empire.

¹³⁹ Zürcher, 28.

and tactics. This led to new ways of controlling bodies, uniformity, and techniques of self-discipline. Mahmud II also established an army medical school, where students were introduced to rationalism and positivism through the discourses of modern European medicine.¹⁴⁰ Although the army had benefitted from formal education and modern medicine since Selim III, the development of a modern bureaucracy required a group of people with knowledge of French, the diplomatic language of the day. Civilians were sent to Western Europe for training or were trained in the new Foreign Office in Istanbul. The people trained in the Foreign Office, the military schools and foreign embassies became the nineteenth century cadre of Ottoman reformists.

Reorganization

The period from 1839 to 1876 is known as the *Tanzimat* (reorganization), in which Mahmud II's sons, Abdülmecid (1839-61) and Abdülaziz (1861-76), continued their father's modernizing reforms. However, the difference was that the center of power shifted from the imperial palace to the new bureaucracy discussed above. The edict reflected the interests of the young Turks who had been trained in the new schools and new government offices. They wore frock coats and fezzes and attended balls and other social gatherings with Europeans, where they exercised Victorian piety. The sultans also now showed themselves to the public, visited other provinces, and participated in diplomatic gatherings.

¹⁴⁰ Erik J. Zürcher, *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775-1925* (I.B. Tauris, 1999), 33.

Meant to gain the support of the European powers and halt the growth of separatism among the Ottoman Christians, the *Tanzimat* reforms ushered in a process of negotiation and compromise between the requirements of European modernity and the Ottoman order that resulted in a kind of dualism between new and old laws and institutions.¹⁴¹ Ze'evi claims that as a result of the *Tanzimat*, Ottoman discourses on sexuality either disappeared or were significantly transformed by a major discursive shift which involved a cultural silencing mechanism when it came to the issue of sexuality. Ze'evi argues that, at least until the emergence of a new nation-state culture in the early Turkish Republic, the old sexual discourse was not replaced with a new one. Instead, what existed was a tension between the disappearing Ottoman sexual scripts and the heteronormalized view of sexuality imported from Western Europe.¹⁴²

The discursive shift Ze'evi discusses involved the introduction of new state policies and values. Islamic law was almost completely limited to family law and replaced by secular laws and institutions. Secular education, modeled on the French lycées, was implemented for the bureaucracy and later in every provincial capital. The *Tanzimat* state defined space according to Western European concepts of public and private, and the development of the nuclear family began to shift the focus of the state from larger communities to an emphasis on individuals and personal responsibility. The nationalizing campaign also destroyed old social boundaries and new identities were shaped by the state prerogative to counter Orientalist stereotypes. For example, the long-term persecution of Sufis culminated in the *Tanzimat* period when Sufi religious orders

¹⁴¹ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 48.

¹⁴² Ze'evi, 15.

were all but completely disbanded and homoerotic Sufi practices were replaced with heteronormalized sexual discourses. Similarly, the public arena was gradually opening to women, which encouraged the *Tanzimat* to cleanse the performing arts of sexual references in order to protect their honor.

Even before state intervention, the populace was already beginning to self-censor due to the impact of European travel literature, which condemned the Ottomans for depraved morality and linked their sexual habits to the failures of their government. European discourses not only formed the perspectives of Europeans, but found their way back to the Middle East where they imprinted local constructions of right and wrong in sexual comportment.¹⁴³ Ze'evi writes, the “tendency to disavow former sexual inclinations and supersede them with others swept the entire elite.”¹⁴⁴ In medical discourses, humoral balance and Ottoman terminology were replaced by French, German, and Italian literature that emphasized hygiene and disease and had reservations about bodily contact with patients. Women were described as a totally different sex rather than incomplete versions of men. Psychology also introduced a new discourse on sexuality, one that carried the stigma of guilt, deviation, and mental disorder.¹⁴⁵ Homoerotic references and depictions of the sexual organs were cleansed from the shadow theater. Largely as a result of foreign criticism, the performances of the *köçek* were discouraged

¹⁴³ Ze'evi, 163.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 164.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 45-47.

in the larger cities and their troupes dissolved by Sultan Abdülmecid I in 1857.¹⁴⁶ The traveling *çengi* troops were also officially unwelcome in urban centers, although individual female dancers continued to perform in taverns and later in nightclubs despite disapproval.

Ze'evi's argument that the *Tanzimat* period was characterized by dualism is affirmed by the new dance practices that emerged in the *Tanzimat* period. *Orta oyunu*¹⁴⁷ and *kanto* both expressed the popular performing arts of previous generations and the influence of Western theater traditions. However, Ze'evi and other scholars tend to portray modernity as an abrupt imposition from the outside that disrupted Ottoman traditions and ideologies. As I will show, Ottoman modernization consisted of incremental shifts in the prestige of certain regimes of knowledge and institutions and a relative uneasiness with the process of modernization was expressed in the theater arts of the *Tanzimat* period.

Tanzimat Theater

Selim Deringil suggests that in the world after the French Revolution, monarchs needed to broaden their base by mobilizing and acculturating the lower and middle classes, or 'the people,' and to concern themselves with the public image of the state, so

¹⁴⁶ Popescu-Judetiz claims that, although the traditions of the *köçek* died out completely in the cities due to the prohibition, they continue to be performed today at weddings and traditional festivals in small Anatolian and Balkan towns and villages (53). Similarly, the *çengi* remain central to Anatolian and Balkan village life today, where single female performers or groups are hired to perform at weddings and private parties or public festivals. They usually perform for women-only audiences, or if they perform in front of mixed crowds the men are only bystanders and not participants (56).

¹⁴⁷ Theater in the round, likely influenced by the Italian *Commedia dell'Arte*.

the ruling Ottoman elite began to look for the basis of an “Ottoman citizenry.”¹⁴⁸ Pre-existing popular traditions were adapted to new uses and employed in a kind of proto-nationalism. Music was one useful tool for communicating the messages of the state to ‘the people.’ Mahmud II and his elder son Abdülmecid I (1839-61) both employed foreign court musicians to compose their imperial marches and to train the palace musicians that replaced the Janissaries.¹⁴⁹ Abdülmecid also supported the development of a new Turkish theatrical style called *tuluat* that was based on the street theater tradition *orta oyunu*, but staged like Western plays. As Metin And points out, “The meeting with the western culture was an uneasy and often incongruous business resulting in a loss of cultural identity.”¹⁵⁰ The benefits of modernism did not satisfy all the needs of national consciousness. With the emergence of an Ottoman middle class, theater provided the link between the state and the people, allowing Ottomans to reconcile the Turkish heritage with elements of the Western world to create a cosmopolitan identity. ‘The people’ displaced the ulema in their role as cultural leaders and demanded that art be popularized, instead of directed to the foreign and palace elites. Along with the printing press, the theater served as a vehicle for new ideas. The Reform Decree of 1856 purged the language of many Persian and Arabic words and proclaimed that educational and official documents should be written in a more accessible form of Ottoman Turkish. The

¹⁴⁸ Deringil, 3-4.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁵⁰ Metin And, *Culture, Performance and Communication in Turkey*, 59.

theater followed suit, so that the first Turkish play scripts were written in simplified language.¹⁵¹

The Ottoman elites were well acquainted with Western theater because foreign embassies frequently organized performances by visiting companies. Furthermore, the Levantine, Greek, Armenian, and Jewish residents of Beyoğlu held regular performances. The Italian community had organized performances of ballet and opera since at least the sixteenth century. Abdülmecid himself was known for visiting the Pera theaters, two of which also presented traveling circuses, acrobats, and song and dance acts.¹⁵² But in 1858, Abdülmecid had a private theater built at his new palace at Dolmabahçe, and it was for this theater that İbrahim Şinasi Efendi wrote the first Turkish play, a one-act comedy titled *Şair Evlenmesi* (The Poet's Marriage).¹⁵³ The ground floors of the new palace were used for music and dance classes, where foreign male teachers taught young palace girls ballet and opera. The all-girl companies were restricted to performing in the palace.¹⁵⁴

Under the next sultan, Abdülaziz (1861-76), the *İslam oyuncularını* (Palace Muslim Players) were organized and performed Turkish comedies for the sultan and palace officials. The greater freedom of entertainment and a growing interest in European arts resulted in a proliferation of theaters and *café-concerts*, not only in Pera but also in the surrounding suburbs. By 1867, there were at least three professional theater groups who

¹⁵¹ Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Vol. II: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975*, (Cambridge, London, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 128-9.

¹⁵² Nermin Menemencioglu, "The Ottoman Theater, 1839-1923," *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1983), 50.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁵⁴ Leman Figen Yılmaz, "The Dance History in Turkey During the Modernization Process of the Republican Period (1929-1939)," (Master's thesis, Boğaziçi University, 1994), 22.

performed in theaters in Beyoğlu. Whereas foreign troupes had previously staged mostly opera, ballet and French and Italian plays, now Ottoman companies also entertained the non-Muslim elites. Most of the actors were Armenians and Levantines, but as the audiences became increasingly Turkish, the oral traditions of *orta oyunu* fed into new scripted versions delivered in the Turkish language. Despite disapproval by the religious orthodoxy, the intelligentsia used the support of the Sultan to defend their attendance of the theater. In the nineteenth century, statesmen and Turkish ambassadors also patronized theaters.¹⁵⁵

Before the establishment of a Turkish stage theater, *orta oyunu* was performed in open spaces surrounded by the audience on all sides. Women and children could attend, but were separated by a lattice. The plays involved stock types and plots, a loose and episodic structure, and either an open form or a series of playlets. Stories were not linear and often employed contradictions, exaggerations, repetition, and symbolism to communicate a message or simply to make the audience laugh.¹⁵⁶ Long dialogues between two main characters had little bearing on the progress of the story, emphasizing instead a battle of the wits. Performances also often involved long monologues by storytellers.¹⁵⁷ It is believed that *orta oyunu* evolved out of the *karagöz* shadow theater, when professional performers began imitating the puppets in the sixteenth century. It involved total theater, with music, dance and comedy. The performances were not scripted; rather, performing companies agreed on the basic premise and then

¹⁵⁵ And, *Culture, Performance and Communication in Turkey*, 180.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 190-93.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 201.

spontaneously improvised each show. As Metin And points out, the idea that actors would lose their identities in their characters was a modern, Western idea introduced to Turkey in the nineteenth century. Before that, players acknowledged the presence of the audience and shows were more participatory, not requiring the compulsive attention of the audience.¹⁵⁸ The political satire and obscene comedy involved in *orta oyunu* survived its transition to *tuluat* stages at first, but was quickly attacked by the intelligentsia as primitive and vulgar. Similarly, foreign observers of the plays were appalled that women and children would be present for such displays. As a result, sexual jokes and comments made directly against the sultan were purged from *tuluat* theater.¹⁵⁹

The actors of the *tuluat* theater were all male, as they had been in *orta oyunu* (female Turkish performers were not officially allowed onto the stage until the Republican period, although they began to appear in the Young Turk era). However, female spectators were encouraged to attend with free admission and were seated separately in balconies with lattices.¹⁶⁰ The proscenium theaters had raised, curtained stages and tiered seats that invited the audience to sit quietly in rows, at a distance from the performers. Rather than a communal gathering that involved the participation of the audience, now the function of public theater was to entertain spectators. Actors were limited to a memorized text and audiences were expected to express predetermined responses. However, it took time for audiences to learn how to comply. They drank and smoked in the theater, threw food off the balconies, and got into fights.¹⁶¹ When

¹⁵⁸ And, *Culture, Performance and Communication in Turkey*, 185.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁶⁰ Menemencioğlu, 52.

¹⁶¹ And, *Culture, Performance and Communication in Turkey*, 183.

Armenians delivered serious lines in heavily accented Turkish, audiences would burst into laughter.¹⁶² The modern newspapers, which also developed in the *Tanzimat* period, complained about poor pronunciation and suggested that actors memorize their lines properly and really live the part by becoming their characters.¹⁶³ The obstacles to a fully Western style theater were illiterate actors, foreign actors who did not speak Turkish well, companies that were not educated in western theatrical traditions, and untrained audiences who expected the stock characters and plots they were used to.

In the 1870s, several Turkish playwrights emerged who used the theater as a forum for their political views. Gülü Agop decided to build the first theater on the Istanbul side for plays in both Armenian and Turkish, which he called the *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu* (Ottoman Theater). In 1870, Agop obtained the sole rights to produce plays in Turkish. Whereas European plays had been translated and adapted to Turkish in the previous decade, in the 1870s original plays by Turkish writers such as Namık Kemal¹⁶⁴ and Ahmet Midhat Efendi were staged in Agop's Ottoman Theater.¹⁶⁵ The writers gave the Armenian actors lessons in elocution and often directed the plays themselves, emphasizing realistic events and believable characters that reflected the current experiences of Turkish life. Namık Kemal's famous play *Vatan* (The Fatherland) was performed for the first time in 1873 and attended by writers, bureaucrats, and intellectuals. Expressing nationalist ideals, it also dealt with the status of women and the

¹⁶² Menemencioğlu, 53.

¹⁶³ And, *Culture, Performance and Communication in Turkey*, 196.

¹⁶⁴ Namık Kemal was a bureaucrat who took over the first Ottoman newspaper, *Takvim-i Vekai*, in the 1860s. Kemal supported liberal values within Islamic arguments and, along with other 'Young Ottomans,' looked back to a golden era of Islam and decried superficial imitations of Europe (Zürcher, 71-2).

¹⁶⁵ Menemencioğlu, 53.

concept of marriage. The audience apparently went wild with applause at its finish and ran into the streets shouting, “Long live the fatherland!” As a result, Kemal was exiled along with other ‘Young Ottomans,’ as they came to be called, associated with the Ottoman Theater, and Agop was arrested.¹⁶⁶

The activities of the Young Ottomans continued abroad in London, Paris and Geneva, where Namık Kemal and his colleague Ziya Bey published the journal *Hürriyet* (Freedom) and sent copies to the empire. Kemal, determined to save the state through liberal reforms, returned to the Ottoman Empire and organized a small group within the ruling elite. The Ottoman constitutional movement in 1878 was based on his writings. Zürcher suggests that the Young Ottomans “can be regarded as the first modern ideological movement among the Ottoman elite of the empire, and they were the first who, through their writings, consciously tried to create and influence public opinion.”¹⁶⁷

The Young Turks

The Young Ottomans made several attempts to implement a constitution and parliament but were blocked by disputes over power in the palace, the crisis of nationalism in the Balkans, and war with Russia. The constitution was finally promulgated in 1876 and the Ottoman parliament was officially opened the following year. However, in 1878 the new sultan, Abdülhamid II, suspended the constitution and discontinued the parliament indefinitely. Under the rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II, the center of power shifted back to the palace and the Turkish theater stagnated. The plays

¹⁶⁶ Menemencioğlu, 53-4.

¹⁶⁷ Zürcher, 74.

written by the Young Ottomans were denounced by the palace as propaganda and the Ottoman Theater was destroyed. Censorship was employed to cleanse the theater of what the sultan defined as separatist language, including words such as ‘Anatolia,’ ‘socialism,’ ‘freedom,’ ‘equality,’ and ‘constitution.’ Furthermore, no royalty or religious characters could appear on stage.¹⁶⁸ Despite these obstacles, foreign companies continued to perform in Istanbul and more Turkish actors began to appear on the stage.

Abdülhamid II’s mistake was his failure to instill loyalty in the Ottoman intelligentsia, who remained attracted to the liberal and constitutional ideas of the Young Ottomans. Opposition groups appeared slowly and quietly at first, in the empire and in France. Eventually one group emerged as a force to be reckoned with, calling themselves the *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (Committee of Union and Progress, or CUP). In France, the group went by the name *Jeunes Turcs*, or Young Turks. Several failed attempts to reinstate the constitution culminated in 1908 when, in a coordinated campaign, the Young Turks forced the sultan to restore the Ottoman constitution after an interval of thirty years. Words that had been forbidden in the theater were shouted in the streets, and *Vatan* was performed to vast crowds. The Ottoman Comedy Company emerged that same year, and in the years to come the National Ottoman Stage and the Eastern Drama Company also developed.¹⁶⁹ While the *tuluat* theater had incorporated the *köçek* into the intermezzo act and finale, under the Young Turks men were to dress as men and women as women, which meant that Turkish women would play their own roles for the first time. Although Western traditions had certainly shaped the Ottoman theater, a native drama

¹⁶⁸ Menemencioğlu, 55.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

began to flourish that dealt with social problems such as secularism, the new nationalist concept of ‘Turkishness,’ and the ‘woman question.’

Secularism, ‘Turkism’ and the ‘Woman Question’

Turkish nationalism was not a grass-roots movement, but rather a solution to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire as proposed by European-influenced intellectuals. With increasing military defeats and losses in the Balkans, the Young Turks began to emphasize a national culture rather than an Islamic one. Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924) was a sociologist and a leader of the CUP (Union and Progress Party), and a prominent Turkish ideologue of Pan-Turkism, a political movement aimed at uniting the various Turkic¹⁷⁰ peoples into modern political states. He was highly influenced by European modernity and a disciple of Durkheim. Gökalp’s ideas were a major influence on Kemalism¹⁷¹ and today he is considered by many scholars of Turkish history as the founder of modern Turkish sociology and the formulator of Turkish nationalism.

Gökalp advocated that the state play a civilizing role in social life by replacing the Islamic community with Turkish nationhood. In *The Principles of Turkism*, Gökalp traces ‘Turkism’ to Turkish-oriented movements in Europe, namely “Turcophilia” and “Turcology.”¹⁷² His definition of Turcophilia can be related to Edward Said’s concept of

¹⁷⁰ ‘Turkic’ referred to linguistic and cultural unity, versus ‘Turkish,’ which was more of an ethnic/racial term for the citizens residing in Turkey.

¹⁷¹ The Kemalist movement to purify the Turkish language from foreign influence was part of this same intellectual climate.

¹⁷² Ziya Gökalp, *The Principles of Turkism*, trans. Robert Devereux (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 28.

Orientalism,¹⁷³ in that it describes Europe's fascination with all things Eastern.¹⁷⁴ Unlike Said, however, Gökalp is not critical of this fascination; rather, he attributes it to Europe's recognition of the great contributions of the Turks to civilization. (He does not say that Europe recognized the Ottomans, but that they recognized the Turks.)¹⁷⁵ Gökalp uses the historical and archeological research done by European scholars related to the origin of the Turks, Huns and Mongols to propose a Turkish nationalism based on an ancient and noble Turkish race.

Unlike other Turkish sociologists at the time, Gökalp did not define the nation only in terms of race, ethnicity, geography, and religion, but also in terms of education. Like Durkheim, he suggested that the nation is made up of people who are educated in the same morals, the same language, and the same identity. A Turk is someone, he claimed, who says, "I am a Turk." He draws a distinction between culture as belonging to 'the people', and civilization as belonging to the elite:

¹⁷³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

¹⁷⁴ In Europe, portrayals of the Ottomans in the opera, theater and ballet became prominent in the seventeenth century. Eve R. Meyer, in "The Image of the Turk in European Performing Arts," notes that in most productions the Ottomans were portrayed as barbarians ruled by murderous sultans who were dedicated to conquering the Christians. Süleyman the Magnificent was the most prominent subject of European operas, particularly regarding his relationship with Roxelana and his order for the death of his own son. However, in countries that did not feel threatened by the Ottomans, such as England, Süleyman was portrayed as a benevolent ruler. Sultan Bayezid I and Tamerlane were other popular figures in the Turkish operatic genre, and Tamerlane was often glorified as the hero. It seems that after the Ottomans were unsuccessful in Vienna in 1683, European portrayals of the Turkish sultans became more positive. Meyer suggests that since Turkish operas had such wide popular appeal and composers catered to the taste of their audiences, one can conclude that the image of the Turk in the performing arts genuinely reflected European perceptions of the Turk.

¹⁷⁵ Gökalp, 28.

Civilization is the sum total of concepts and techniques created consciously and transmitted from one nation to another by imitation. Culture, however, consists of sentiments which cannot be created artificially and cannot be borrowed from other nations through imitation.¹⁷⁶

In this understanding, civilization is learned whereas culture is a kind of national temperament. Gökalp claimed that the Ottomans were foreign rulers over the authentic Turks, in whom Turkish culture has been dormant and must be reawakened. He argues, “The mission of Turkism is to seek out the Turkish culture that has remained only among the people and to graft onto it Western civilization in its entirety and in a viable form.”¹⁷⁷ While civilization could change, adapt and be adopted, Turkish culture, the essence of national identity, had to remain intact.

Gökalp wanted to recuperate feminism as inherent to Turkish identity, rather than an importation of Western values.¹⁷⁸ If the nation was to be defined by education, then all citizens, both men and women, could learn how to be national. According to Gökalp, the culture inherent in Turkishness was rooted in a past that honored the role of women in society. Although the Ottomans had allowed themselves to be influenced by the patriarchal systems of the Persians and the Byzantines, true Turks were originally feminists.¹⁷⁹ Using archeological evidence, Gökalp argued that ancient Turkish shamanism emphasized women’s sacred power. He also claimed that Turkish tribal communities recognized women as legal equals:

¹⁷⁶ Gökalp, 24.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 33.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 35-6.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 111-13.

The ancient Turkish women were all amazons and they, as well as Turkish men, were noted for their horsemanship, skill in use of arms, and feats of heroism. Women could become rulers, fortress commanders, governors and ambassadors in their own right.¹⁸⁰

Gökalp claimed that no ethnic group granted women as much respect as the ancient Turks, citing Turkish characteristics such as chivalry and high sexual morals.

Gökalp's concept of the division between civilization and culture was gendered. K.E. Fleming suggests that women were at the heart of Gökalp's vision of the new nation.¹⁸¹ "Not only was this question of women to be a central aspect of Gökalp's utopian 'New Nation,'" Fleming writes, "but the very idea of nationalism itself was, in many ways, predicated on the proper positioning of women in society."¹⁸² As discussed above, Gökalp saw women's equality as a necessary part of rediscovering the original ethics of Turkish culture. Fleming notes that women were understood by Gökalp to be "the repositories and guarantors of the past."¹⁸³ As such, women were responsible for educating the new nation and for the most fundamental basis of society, the family, through which women would transmit civilization. Culture, she suggests, related to the male gender and represented the deepest level of Turkish identity, while civilization was gendered as female, and represented the features of a nation that could be passed on or learned.¹⁸⁴ According to the Young Turks, the crumbling of the Ottoman Empire was due in large part to the oppression of women, which prevented them from educating

¹⁸⁰ Gökalp, 113.

¹⁸¹ K. E. Fleming, "Women as Preservers of the Past: Ziya Gökalp and Women's Reform" in *Deconstructing Images of "The Turkish Woman"* ed. Zehra F. Arat (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

Turks in the successful adoption of other civilizations. By the same token, however, it was this suppression of women's involvement in the public realm that kept women pure and fixed, and therefore unaffected by the ills of Ottoman society. Awakening the Turkish woman, then, would in affect result in the awakening of the slumbering soul of the nation.

Deniz Kandiyoti agrees that the 'woman question' propelled Turkish nationalism. She states, "The predominantly male polemicists on questions relating to women and the family used the condition of women to express deeper anxieties concerning the cultural integrity of the Ottoman/Muslim polity in the face of Western influence."¹⁸⁵ Reformists in favor of women's emancipation criticized arranged marriages and women's oppressed condition in society, but were also outspoken critics of *Tanzimat* Westernism.¹⁸⁶ Men found the plight of women a powerful vehicle for the expression of their own lack of freedom in the patriarchal Ottoman gender system. Veiled, traditional women became the most visible symbol of Ottoman backwardness and the requirement of progress and civilization was to educate and unveil them. Changes in women's condition, the Young Turks hoped, would benefit the health of the whole society.¹⁸⁷ The CUP's family policies were for the purpose of extending state control to the new model of the family, which was nuclear and monogamous. The Young Turks saw this not as emulation of the European family model, but as a return to Turkish traditions. Despite these claims, legislation in favor of women's rights remained limited and ultimately failed to bring

¹⁸⁵ Kandiyoti, *Women, Islam and the State*, 23.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

family law under the control of the state, rather than religious authorities, until the Kemalist regime.¹⁸⁸

Women on Stage

Although Turkish women were just beginning to enter the public sphere, with mixed feelings and results, the presence of non-Muslim women, such as Armenians and Greeks, on stages in Beyoğlu was not unusual. *Kanto* developed in the late nineteenth century in Turkey as a stage dance with origins in Italian *Cantare* music and the tradition of players taking the stage during the *entré actes* in French variety theater.¹⁸⁹ Much like the performances of the *köçek* and *çengi*, the *kanto* performers would amuse audiences with mime, dance, song and comedy before the show to draw in a larger audience and in between acts while players changed costumes and sets. Although the *köçek* may have been among some of the first *kantocus*, they were quickly replaced by non-Muslim women. While Turkish women were not yet allowed on stage, Armenian, Jewish and Greek entertainers filled a new social-economic niche with the popularity of female performers. Although ballet and opera remained fashionable in Beyoğlu, by the beginning of the Young Ottoman involvement in theater, *kanto* was in high demand.

Tuluat, or improvised, theater appeared in the first Constitutional Period which, as discussed earlier, was an adaptation of the *karagöz* shadow puppets and *orta oyunu* folk dramas to the Western stage. In the *Tuluat* theaters, female *kantocus* would dance and

¹⁸⁸ Kandiyoti, 37.

¹⁸⁹ As *Tanzimat* theater developed, Italian words were appropriated for the stage and the “kanto” referred to the short skits performed between acts.

sing to music based on the traditional *makams* but played on Western instruments, such as piano, violin and trumpet.¹⁹⁰ The Ottoman Theater under Agop employed *kantocus* to perform on the Istanbul side, and after performances Agop often arranged elaborate balls for the attending European elites.¹⁹¹ In the Hamidian period, *Tuluat* theater flourished under Sultan Abdülhamid II while Western plays were banned. Although fully supportive of modern technology, the sultan was intent on preserving the Islamic culture of the Ottomans and he discouraged Westernization. For a brief period during his reign, the royal palace processions of Abdülhamid's predecessors were revived. The sultan used this tradition to create a modern public persona and a ceremonial public space that would inspire the loyalty of his subjects.¹⁹² Perhaps ironically, it was with Abdülhamid that the public image of Ottoman leaders became an obsession.

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 reversed the censorship policies of the Hamidian period, opening up a public forum for debate and discussion about modernity and Westernization in the Ottoman press and the theater by intellectuals, political cartoonists and social critics. After Abdülhamid, the Ottoman sultans never again wielded sovereign power. Instead, power was in the hands of the military and civil bureaucrats trained in the previous generation. Previously censored plays were revived, new schools of music and drama were established, native playwrights were supported by the state, and the performing arts were used both as a forum for nationalist discourses and a morale booster for those going off to war. The press and the theater framed these social

¹⁹⁰ And, *Culture, Performance and Communication in Turkey*, 184.

¹⁹¹ Yılmaz, 34.

¹⁹² Deringil, 12.

changes in terms of the old and the new, the Ottoman and the Western, and female imagery was used to express these paradoxes.¹⁹³ Veiled female characters and scenes of the *köçek* performing in coffeehouses were juxtaposed on the stage to exposed bosoms and men in frock coats and fezzes. In other words, societal changes in the norms of gender and sexuality were embodied by figures on stage who played out the benefits and setbacks of modernity.

Palmira Brummett describes old and new women figures in the Young Turk era as they were represented in the press. Although they appear in political cartoons as ideal types, in reality urban women were dealing with changing roles and expectations and such representations reflected real issues. One of the ideal types was the *alafranga* (Westernized) woman, a figure that “represents Ottoman womanhood sacrificed on the altar of European culture.”¹⁹⁴ The opposing figure was the female patriot, who rejected European culture and simultaneously preserved her sexual honor and the honor of the nation. The *alafranga* woman was both alluring and dangerous, and although she was at times representative of progress, she was also associated with the temptress who corrupted Ottoman society from within.¹⁹⁵

Political cartoons transferred the themes of traditional theater into visual images. The newly developed Turkish theater placed the *alafranga* woman on stage as a character that could be criticized and made fun of for her Western ways. Out in public without a

¹⁹³ Palmira Brummett, “New Woman and Old Nag: Images of Women in the Ottoman Cartoon Space” in *Political Cartoons in the Middle East*, ed. Fatma Müge Göçek (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998), 13.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

male escort, dressed in European fashions and spending her money extravagantly, the *alafranga* woman represented the tensions that existed between local and foreign values. She constituted a threat to Ottoman morality by exposing herself – her vulnerability to the lure of Westernization represented the vulnerability of the declining Ottoman Empire. Brummett claims, “She suggested a society at risk, a breaching of propriety, and a violation of sexual boundaries.”¹⁹⁶ Interestingly, such women were likely in attendance at the theater. Perhaps the opportunity to laugh at exaggerated versions of modern behavior offered an outlet for feelings of disjuncture and disorientation in a rapidly changing society.

Turkish intellectuals in the Second Constitutional era developed a strong distaste for *tuluat* theater. The *kantocu*, a European counterpart to the *alafranga* woman, was portrayed as seductive and dangerous for Turkish men. She became associated with loose behavior and even prostitution and was considered a bad example for young, Turkish women. The social values of the Young Turks regarding women defined *kanto* as exploitative and immoral. Furthermore, the discourse of duality in men and women could not incorporate what was considered masculine behavior among the female *kantocus*, as they appeared in public alone and late at night, mingling with men, smoking and drinking alcohol openly.¹⁹⁷ The *kantocu*'s overtly sexual appeal and European dress singled her out as the embodiment of Western cultural values that would tear the empire apart. This perception of female performers, likely influenced by European opinion, would carry over into the Republican period and can still be seen today. Most of the

¹⁹⁶ Brummett, 23.

¹⁹⁷ Yılmaz, 45.

tuluat theaters were closed in the 1930s and *Kanto* became a musical style solely enjoyed on the gramophone. The changing social status of women was a main theme in their lyrics.¹⁹⁸ Female performers continued to dance and sing in coffeehouses and taverns, but were largely associated with prostitution in the Republican period and continuously experienced police harassment.

A conservatory for the education of music and drama, the *Darülbedai*, was founded in Istanbul in 1914 and experimental performances were given by teachers and students. Turkish women were admitted and even began to appear on the stage. The administration was divided over the issue, and when in 1920 Afifa Jale played the lead in a Turkish play in a theater in Kadıköy, she was prosecuted and the theater's stipend was withheld. The *Darülbedai*'s reputation suffered, but they continued to put Turkish women on the stage.¹⁹⁹ In 1923, Mustafa Kemal, the founder of the Turkish Republic, attended a theater in Izmir in which female actors appeared on the stage. After the show, Kemal promised the players that from then on, female actors would be officially supported and trained by the state and legally free to perform.²⁰⁰

Conclusions

Ottoman theater in the early modern period was a venue for debating and exploring new ideas and for negotiating the compatibility of Western culture with local traditions. The staging of *orta oyunu* in the *tuluat* theaters managed to maintain its

¹⁹⁸ Yılmaz, 44.

¹⁹⁹ Menemencioğlu, 57.

²⁰⁰ And, *Culture, Performance and Communication in Turkey*, 161.

improvisational techniques until the impact of Young Ottoman ideologies, which introduced written scripts and audience protocols. Sexual innuendos and dancing boys were purged from the theater because they were not compatible with modern ideas about gender and sexuality. However, non-Muslim female performers continued to dance and sing on stages into the Young Turk era, particularly in the genre of *kanto*. The changing role of women in the late nineteenth century was played out on theater stages in urban centers, where religious authorities and traditionalists saw women's entrance into the public sphere as a crude adoption of Western ways and reformists knew that putting women on stage was an effective means of impacting social change.

The Young Turk reform policies of 1913-18 affected social and cultural change on several levels. Like the previous Ottoman reforms, the Young Turks focused at first on modernizing the army. Prussian training methods imposed discipline and abolished pauses for prayers during drills and exercises.²⁰¹ However, it was not only in the army that new disciplines were introduced. As detailed above, actors now had to memorize their lines and stay close to written scripts. This required training and a new sense of what it meant to be a professional actor. Furthermore, audiences also had to discipline themselves to conform to new rules about attending the theater. The social norms of foreigners and local elites were thus subtly imposed on the theater-going population, which in the nineteenth century included more Muslim Turks than ever before. Their manner of dress and means of socializing at the theater contributed in large part to the training of the modern bureaucracy in modern comportment.

²⁰¹ Zürcher, 103.

The theater of the Young Turk period was a forum for expressing the tensions of modernization and popular public opinion, as it was at the same time a target of state control and a tool of nationalism. Urban audiences that had been trained in the *Tanzimat* how to behave now engaged in social issues, discerned ideas introduced by playwrights, and were actively interested in solving the social problems presented on the stage.

CHAPTER THREE

FOLLOWING ATATÜRK'S LEAD: TURKEY'S WALTZ INTO MODERNITY



Figure 3

The image of Atatürk dancing with his adopted daughter at her wedding is well-recognized in Turkey. It is a poignant vision of the modern shifts that occurred in the Republican era under the Kemalist regime. Opposed to the gender segregated wedding celebrations of the early Ottoman period, in which solo, improvised dancing would have been the norm, in the Turkish Republic bureaucrats and their wives danced the waltz to Western music and dressed in the latest European fashions. Furthermore, women were

encouraged to participate in the new social space of the ballroom as markers of Turkey's progress towards modernization. The close embrace of Turkish men and women in the waltz signaled the state's emphasis on the nuclear family and new social norms regarding romantic love and companionate marriage. As Yılmaz points out, "The 'society of balls' that had started particularly in the capital city with the Republic aimed at accustoming the Western style entertainment in society."²⁰² Government officials were expected to participate in the balls, to perform European dances, and to serve as model citizens for the Turkish public. In this chapter, I demonstrate that the dance practices officially encouraged by the Turkish Republic, namely Turkish folk dance and European "smooth" ballroom dancing, contributed in a significant way to the Kemalist project of modernity.

Modern Reforms

The position of women changed in the Young Turk era in large part because of the CUP policies. The family law of 1917 dictated that women had to be at least sixteen years old to marry and women's right to divorce was expanded. Women's educational rights were also broadened when primary education was made compulsory for girls and teacher training colleges were opened to women. Middle and upper class women in the cities were encouraged to appear in public with their husbands and attend theatrical and musical performances. But the impetus for further reforms was the World War, when a lack of manpower brought women into the workforce.

²⁰² Yılmaz, 18.

Turkish nationalism took hold especially during the Balkan War of 1913, supported by the *Türk Ocağı* (Turkish Hearth), a social and cultural organization that founded clubs around the empire and sponsored theatrical and musical performances that spread nationalist ideologies.²⁰³ Alongside pan-Turkism, *halkçılık* (populism) idealized the culture of Turkish peasants. As discussed above, Ziya Gökalp synthesized these ideas with a recognition of the Ottoman Islamic heritage and the benefits of European modernization, and developed a sense of national pride that reconciled local identity and European appropriation. Throughout the struggle for independence, Turks were highly impacted by the ideologies of Gökalp and the practical implementation of women's rights. The emergence of the Turkish Republic in 1923 was therefore defined by the nationalism of the Young Turks and centered on social reforms for women.

Although it is true that the Kemalist reforms extended the Ottoman reforms of the *Tanzimat* and Unionists, when Mustafa Kemal emerged from the War of Independence as the leader of the Turkish Republic, Anatolia was an entirely different place from what it had been under the Young Turks. The Armenian and Greek communities were almost completely gone, essentially leaving Turkey without a class of bourgeoisie, and the population of Anatolia was ninety-nine percent Muslim. The city populations had shrunk so that a larger percentage of Turks was rural. Much of the country had been damaged by war and the economy was in shambles. Due to these changes, Atatürk's concept of

²⁰³ Zürcher, 134.

nationalism was both ethnic and territorial.²⁰⁴ According to Hugh Poulton, “The territory was to be essentially Anatolia. Despite the existence of potential members of the nation living outside the area, they were not to be claimed as such. Conversely, Christians inside the territory were to be rejected.”²⁰⁵ In 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne was secured and the Republic of Turkey was proclaimed with its capital in Ankara, rather than Istanbul. All Muslims of the new state were considered members of the new Turkish nation, including the Kurds who aimed for an independent nation of their own. In this sense, Atatürk ‘created’ Turkey in much the same way the CUP implemented its top-down reforms in the Young Turk era. Mustafa Kemal justified his move to solidify a Turkish identity because he saw diversity as a threat to the unity of the nation.

Even before the Treaty of Lausanne had been ratified, Mustafa Kemal had already succeeded in creating a new party, the People’s Party, and consolidating political power. The Ottoman sultanate had been abolished in 1922, so that Abdülmecid Efendi retained only the title of Caliph. However, the first thing Mustafa Kemal did the year he was proclaimed the first president of the Turkish Republic was to abolish the caliphate and send the Ottoman dynasty into exile. Once the Kemalists established a power monopoly, they proceeded to initiate a series of radical reforms that were meant to rapidly transform

²⁰⁴ Brian Silverstein’s article, “Islam and Modernity in Turkey,” recognizes Atatürk’s identification of Anatolia as the homeland of the Turkish nation as a “metonymic shift” from a Balkan context, and reminds us that this was not previously an obvious equation.

²⁰⁵ Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat, Grey Wolf, and Crescent: Turkish Nationalism and the Turkish Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 96.

Turkey into a modern, secular nation-state.²⁰⁶

The *Nutuk* (Speech) that Mustafa Kemal gave before the congress of the Republican People's Party in 1927 lasted thirty-six hours and symbolically solidified his position as the sole leader of the new Turkish Republic. Ignoring the reforms of the CUP and any resistance movements that had occurred against him, Kemal presented the struggle for independence as a movement that intended from the beginning to establish the new Turkish state. He defined a clear break from the Ottoman past and emphasized Westernization in order to undercut any remaining loyalties to the Ottoman legacy. History was reformulated to place Turkey firmly in the West, as opposed to the Islamic Orient. The Kemalist party headed a dictatorship that silenced all opposition under the Law on the Maintenance of Order from 1925-9. In 1930, Turkey was officially declared a one-party state whose basic principles were secularism, nationalism, republicanism, statism, revolutionism, and populism.²⁰⁷ The single party era (1930-46) is the period in which Kemalism became the official state ideology. In 1934, with the introduction of family names, Mustafa Kemal came to be known as Atatürk, the Father of the Turks.

The 'Folk'

²⁰⁶ Among other things, the Sufi dervish lodges were closed down, the fez was prohibited and replaced by a western-style hat, the European clock and calendar were adopted, the Swiss civil code replaced the *Şeriat*, all courtesy titles were abolished, and family law was taken out of the hands of the religious authorities and secularized.

²⁰⁷ Zürcher, 184-89.

In the Ottoman system, Muslims defined themselves in terms of religion more so than ethnic groups. Turks, Kurds, Arabs and other Muslims saw themselves as the dominant religious group and did not emphasize ethnic differences between them.²⁰⁸ With the awakening of other nationalist movements in the Balkans and elsewhere, Turkishness became important to Ottoman intellectuals. As discussed above, Namık Kemal and other *Tanzimat* writers emphasized the importance of ‘the people’ and wrote in a vernacular style that was more accessible than the court literature. For the Kemalists, however, the project of modernization was realized within the framework of a nation-state rather than an empire. Modernization and Westernization were the goals, and secularism and nationalism were the tools to make it happen.²⁰⁹ Nationalism required a unified sense of ethnic identity that did not depend on religion. The majority population of the Turkish Republic was Muslim, Turkish, and rural, so nationalism had to appeal to the ‘local’ without contradicting the goals of secularization and modernization. Kemalism defined the new nation in terms of one ethnic and linguistic group, dispossessed the people of their multi-cultural Ottoman heritage, and sought the roots of a Turkish heritage to take its place. Islam would not unify the Turks, because the *ulema* had been marginalized since the *Tanzimat* era and completely banished from politics in the new Republic. So Atatürk followed the Turkism of Ziya Gökalp as a blueprint for inventing a national, secular Turkish identity. As discussed above, Gökalp looked to the early history of ancient Turkish tribes from Central Asia and the practices of the ‘folk’ in

²⁰⁸ Arzu Öztürkmen, “Individuals and Institutions in the Early History of Turkish Folklore, 1840-1950,” *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1992), 178.

²⁰⁹ Kemal H. Karpat, *Turkey's Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 444.

rural Anatolian areas for the source of Turkism. According to Gökalp, the Turks had outgrown the Arab civilization and needed a paternal leader who could impress upon the people of the new state their essential Turkishness. Atatürk embraced that role, and advocated the homogenization of national society through the reconciliation of Turkish culture and Western civilization. The traditions of the ‘folk’ would be the wellspring of Turkish identity.

The concept of the ‘folk’ came into usage in Europe in the nineteenth century to mean ‘the people,’ or the common people whose cultures were handed down orally. The construction of the ‘folk’ as an entity opened the door for folklore studies and the collection of folktales, folk art, folk music, and folk dance. Folk practices were celebrated as survivals from an ancient, pure past and were used to assert national identities in opposition to high culture, like ballet. The dances of the folk were romanticized as spontaneous and natural, a primitive expression of a people’s spirit. Because these practices were in danger of dying out in the face of modernity, it was essential to collect them before they disappeared.²¹⁰

In the German definition, *volk* also referred to the nation. Prior to the World War, German ideas about folk culture, ethnic nationalism, and romanticism had a great impression on the Ottoman reformists. Gökalp was the one to develop the relationship between the ‘folk’ and the Turkish nation. He introduced the term *halkiyat* to mean the “lore of the people” and began to collect folktales and folksongs in 1912.²¹¹ Music and

²¹⁰ Theresa Jill Buckland, ed., *Dancing from Past to Present: Nation, Culture, Identities* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 6-7.

²¹¹ Öztürkmen, 182.

dance were essential tools in the process of secular regeneration because they could instill values of teamwork, self-presentation, competition, and sociality and at the same time provide a logical, systematic model that fit in well with modernist ideologies.²¹² Gökalp also drew a distinction between the classical Arabo-Persian music of the Ottoman court and folk music. While he described the Arabo-Persian music as morbid, irrational and foreign, he believed that folk music was truly Turkish. Therefore, the imported music could easily be replaced by Western music, while the folk music should be collected intact. A national, modern music of Turkey would draw from the folk music melodies of rural Turks and arrange them based on Western musical techniques.²¹³

Gökalp's idea of a national music fed into the development of a national dance in the Republican period. Selim Sırrı Tarcan's concept of *milli raks* ('national dance') was influenced by his visits to Sweden, where he trained in physical education and was impressed by the development of a repertoire of Swedish national dances.²¹⁴ When he returned to Turkey, he witnessed performances of *zeybek* and decided to use the dance as the premise for choreographing a national dance "in a more 'methodological way, that is with predetermined figures, and a well-calculated beginning and end."²¹⁵ *Zeybek* is a highly masculine dance originally done by Turkmen peoples living in Southwestern Anatolia, known as mountain warriors who protected village people against attacks up to the nineteenth century. Many of them fought against the Greeks in the Greco-Turkish

²¹² Martin Stokes, *The Arabesk Debate: Music and Musicians in Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 20.

²¹³ Stokes, 33.

²¹⁴ Arzu Öztürkmen, "I Dance Folklore" in *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey*, Ed. Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 129.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

War, so their dance was easily appropriated to represent the macho, heroic strength of the Turkish nation. Atatürk himself was known for dancing the *zeybek* at social gatherings, a poignant embodiment of the masculinized, warrior nation performed by the ultimate Turkish hero.

Tarcan used the folk song ‘Sarı Zeybek’ for his choreography, which he called *Tarcan zeybeği*. The dance was quite different from the original *zeybek*, however. Tarcan eliminated sharp movements and improvisation and formulated the *Tarcan zeybeği* as a ballroom dance which could be performed by mixed couples. Apparently, when Atatürk saw Tarcan dance the *Tarcan zeybeği* in Izmir in 1925, he requested that Tarcan repeat his performance in a tuxedo and with a woman, and then exclaimed, “From now on, we can tell the Europeans that we too have an excellent dance... The *zeybek* can and must be performed with women in all kinds of social salons.”²¹⁶ It did not become the ‘national dance’ that Tarcan had hoped for, however, mainly because there was not yet a network of public places where social dances could be performed. Such a network developed almost a decade later, with the *Halkevleri*, or People’s Houses.

The Kemalist regime carried out several activities involving the collection of folklore. The idea was that Turkishness had been preserved, uncorrupted by foreign influences, in the rural parts of Turkey. The Minister of Education in 1920, Rıza Nur, began collecting songs from rural Anatolia to archive with the Bureau of Culture. The administrators of *Darülelhan* (The Music Conservatory) attempted a nationwide folksong

²¹⁶ Öztürkmen, “I Dance Folklore,” 130.

collection in 1924. The Turkish Folklore Association was founded in 1927.²¹⁷

Institutions for research on the Central Asian origins of the Turks were established in the 1930s, as were the People's Houses, cultural clubs of the Republican People's Party (RPP), a reformed version of the Turkish Hearths. They were under the direct authority of the Secretary General and the head of each House was appointed by the RPP.

Öztürkmen writes that the People's Houses "constituted the first government-sponsored body to take a serious interest in vernacular literature, music, and dance, to teach these in a systematic way, and to interpret them through publications and stage performances."²¹⁸

The People's Houses' annual celebrations in Ankara gave folk dance official recognition and a national platform. The dances were not categorized by ethnicity, but by geographical location, and were given names based on the towns in which the dances originated.²¹⁹ The folk dance groups who were chosen to perform in Ankara used the opportunity to promote a particular local image, so that eventually each town became associated with a specific dance. Performing at the People's Houses was considered very prestigious, so the atmosphere was often competitive. Dances that demonstrated order, grace, refinement and uniformity were highly praised, while dances that involved overly passionate displays or obscene figures were criticized.²²⁰ *Çengi* and *köçek* dances did not make an appearance, but dances performed by mixed gender couples were thought to

²¹⁷ Öztürkmen, "Individuals and Institutions," 186.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 186.

²¹⁹ Öztürkmen, "I Dance Folklore," 132.

²²⁰ Ibid., 131-35.

prove that Turkish traditions had always been egalitarian. Movements for boys and girls were distinct, displaying a dual gender system and celebrating heterosexual couples.²²¹

Öztürkmen notes that, although the People's Houses were intended to bridge the intellectuals and the peasants, "the peasant population formed only 14 percent of the People's Houses membership. The activities of the village development sections became merely routinized village visits."²²² This continued division between the upper and lower classes would remain a trend during the early Republican Era, despite the Kemalist regime's talk of populism and social equality.

New Men and Women in Public Spaces

Women were at the center of Atatürk's reforms between 1923 and 1938. They were given the vote, the right to be appointed to official posts and to be elected to Parliament. Divorce by repudiation was made illegal and divorce was made equally obtainable by both men and women. The principle of equal pay for equal work was established. Compulsory and free primary education for all children was instituted by law. Adult literacy classes were organized and were required for illiterate men and women. In addition, women were allowed to join the army. Along with the prohibition of the fez for men, the veil was officially discouraged in 1925 and women were urged to wear Western clothing. In 1935, local municipalities were empowered to enforce prohibition of the veil in public spaces. Atatürk encouraged women to enter the public

²²¹ The folk and "national" dances played an important role in the education of young people and were taught at the Ankara State Conservatory.

²²² Öztürkmen, "Individuals and Institutions," 187.

spheres of education, politics, and the military. The veil was perceived as a symbol of Islam and therefore understood as a method of keeping women in the private realm. Atatürk often stressed the contribution of women to the new nation in his speeches and made a point to include his unveiled wife and daughters on official tours of the country, encouraging women to participate in public debates. Atatürk's reforms in the area of family law reflected a shift of focus from the extended to the nuclear family and an emphasis on the individual over the collective.²²³ More importantly, perhaps, this period marked an increase in public control over what were previously considered private matters to be dealt with by families in the home.²²⁴

Deniz Kandiyoti and other Turkish scholars have pointed out that emancipation for women in the early Turkish Republic was more of a rhetorical strategy of state-sponsored "feminism" aimed at improving the state of the nation.²²⁵ As in many parts of the Western world, women's primary roles in the early twentieth century were those of wife and mother. This "New Woman" was an efficient homemaker, responsible for her family's morality and contribution to the success of the nation. Zehra Arat explains, "Kemalist reforms were *not* aimed at liberating women or at promoting the development of female consciousness and feminine identity. Instead, they strove to equip Turkish women with the education and skills that would improve their contributions to the

²²³ Yaseen Noorani claims that "there is little evidence that such a unit as the conjugal family was even conceived as a social category or a miniature society" in early Islamic texts (unpublished paper).

²²⁴ John L. Esposito and Natana J. DeLong-Bas, *Women in Muslim Family Law*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 93.

²²⁵ See Deniz Kandiyoti, "Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case" *Feminist Studies* 13 (1987), 317-38.

republican patriarchy by making them better wives and mothers.”²²⁶ It is important to note, however, that both men and women would have to change in order to become citizens of the Turkish Republic. This was achieved in part through the establishment of public spaces in which the social functions and identities of modern Turkish men and women could be negotiated and formulated. The discourse of Turkishness relegated overt sexuality and emotional displays to homosocial Ottoman domains such as the coffeehouse and the harem, while heterosexual, romantic love could be displayed in modern, public spaces such as the Republican ballrooms. Leila Hudson suggests that modern environments facilitate imagined collective sovereignty and inscribe visual grammars of power on the land. Perhaps more importantly, the inhabitants of the new environments are literally habituated in the principles of new cultural spaces.²²⁷

Fariba Adelkhah’s work addresses how transformations in concepts of Iranian citizenship are signaled by the creation of public spaces in the post-Revolution era. Modern spaces such as parks, suggests Adelkhah, actually create certain kinds of citizens. For example, public parks order nature in certain ways that avoid wild or overgrown spaces where people can hide socially dangerous behaviors. Parks also generate various habits. For example, jogging paths invite Iranians to exercise, part of the modern practice of caring for the self. Modern Iranians are also encouraged to sit on public benches rather than a rug on the ground.²²⁸ Similarly, Sibel Bozdoğan explores modernism and

²²⁶ Arat, 58.

²²⁷ Leila Hudson, “Late Ottoman Damascus: Investments in Public Space and the Emergence of Popular Sovereignty” *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Summer 2006), 152.

²²⁸ Fariba Adelkhah, *Being Modern in Iran* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 18-20.

nation building in terms of architectural culture in the early Turkish Republic.²²⁹ She notes that the modernism of the 1930s valued rational, functional public spaces that could be easily controlled. Modern architecture was “hailed as the visible proof that Turkey was a modern European nation with no resemblance to the exotic and Orientalist aesthetic tropes by which the Ottoman Empire had typically been represented in the past.”²³⁰ The new capital city of Ankara²³¹ provided the opportunity to create modern spaces that were utterly opposed to the decadent, imperialist architectural traditions of the Ottoman capital, Istanbul.²³²

Bozdoğan emphasizes that architecture is not just about buildings but about public spaces, such as parks and municipal gardens. Such spaces, she proposes, were

powerful expressions of the republican vision of a thoroughly Westernized, mixed-gender public, dining in style, listening to jazz bands, and dancing without inhibition. These spaces, many of which still bear their original aesthetic and environmental qualities, had important democratic implications even when actual access to the more refined establishments remained the province of a small elite... The presence of women in these public spaces was in itself a celebrated theme, ‘a gendering of the modern’ underscoring the Kemalists’ pride in having liberated Turkish women from the oppressive seclusion of tradition.²³³

Whereas in the Ottoman system power was vertical and access to the private, protected space of the palace signaled power, European modernity privileged a public sphere as a place of ‘real’ power. Therefore, to be liberated women must be exposed. The presence of women in these spaces was meant to signal the progress of the modern nation.

²²⁹ Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2001).

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

²³¹ Ankara was established as the capital of the Turkish Republic in 1923 in order to distance the new regime from its Ottoman past. More practically, due to its central location in Anatolia, Ankara was more militarily defensible than Istanbul. Furthermore, the city of Istanbul in the early Republic was still populated by a majority of non-Turks who had competing alliances with, or at least questionable allegiances toward, Western powers.

²³² Bozdoğan, 67.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 78-79.

Although public spaces did offer Turkish women new freedoms, they also regulated people's behaviors and controlled their movements in space. Their orderly and clean appearance modeled modernity for Turkish citizens and foreign observers and introduced new social norms. The gender segregation of Ottoman subjects was, to the European observer and the pro-Westernization Turk, the result of oppressive Islamic restrictions that would disappear under a modern, secular regime. While the Ottoman gender system allowed for spaces controlled by women (such as the *hammam*, or bathhouse, and the palace harem), modern public spaces discouraged homosocial networks and emphasized mixed gender socializing. Although ideally such spaces were egalitarian, patriarchal norms still dictated the behavior of both men and women. As explained above, organizations by and for women were rejected in the Republican era as separatist. The norms of public space dictated that men and women socialize together.

The sign of Turkey's progress was the presence of women in public spaces. Images of Atatürk's daughter in her military uniform, for example, signaled all that the new Republic stood for: equality, secularism, and national pride. She was a new role model for Turkish women, who were encouraged to contribute to the making of the modern nation. Photographic images circulated by the state press of women ballroom dancing and attending public ceremonies worked to endorse women's public visibility.²³⁴ As Nilufer Göle points out, photographs of women imitating European lifestyles presented the modern way of life, with its ways of standing and dressing, and celebrated "the republican individual":

²³⁴ Suzan Ilcan, *Longing in Belonging: The Cultural Politics of Settlement* (Praeger Publishers, 2002), 22.

Tea saloons, dinners, balls, and streets were defined as the public space for the socializing sexes; husbands and wives walking hand in hand, men and women shaking hands, dancing at balls, or dining together, reproduced the European mode of encounter between male and female.²³⁵

Specific sites, such as the Republican ballrooms, circulated new signs and codes for modern Turkish behavior. Above all, these new signs were visible on the bodies of women. Along with attending balls, Turkish women in the early twentieth century were encouraged to dress in modern styles, attend social gatherings, get an education and even become professional pilots, teachers, or medical workers. Carole Woodall notes that the appearance of the modern-dressed Turkish woman participating in public activities became a banner for the Republican ethos.²³⁶

Like the proscenium stage, the ways that public spaces invited people to move and behave contributed to the construction of modern selves. For example, the Republican ballroom described by Zsa Zsa Gabor in the introductory anecdote included tables and chairs, not rugs on the floor, which required a certain way of sitting. It is safe to assume that in such a setting, European manners of eating were also employed. Guests likely ate from their own plates instead of sharing dishes, using utensils rather than fingers, and likely sat in mixed gender company. Gabor also notes that Atatürk was inebriated, so the serving of alcohol can be surmised. Finally, the presence of a dance floor clearly invited the guests to dance together, not in a presentational way (as would be indicated by a stage) but in a social way. The manner of dress of the guests and the sounds of a Western orchestra contributed to this very modern scene in which Turkish

²³⁵ Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (University of Michigan Press, 1997), 14-15.

²³⁶ Carole Woodall, "The Turkish 'Modern Woman': Two Press Articles, 1924 and 1926," in *The Modern Middle East: A Sourcebook for History* Ed. Camron Michael Amin (New York: Oxford U.P, 2006), 193.

elites were invited to embody and enact modern selves. Along with parks, museums, and other new public spaces, the space of the ballroom was created for the performance of modern selves.

The State and Sexuality on Display: The Role of Republican Ballrooms in State-Building

Ballroom dance in the early Turkish Republic was essential to the Kemalist project of modernization. In particular, the waltz was an official social dance that dominated the Republican balls.²³⁷ Along with his legal and political reforms, Atatürk introduced and enforced Western ways of socializing, perceiving public space, and defining the role of women in that space. An analysis of ballroom dance in the early Turkish Republic highlights the importance that was placed on gender and the body in these formative years.

Legislation about dress, education, and women's involvement in the public sphere points to the state's attempt to impose disciplines on the body and to address its needs. This was not unique. At the turn of the century, ballroom dance in Europe and the United States also served as a vehicle for acceptable social engagement. However, ballroom dance in the Turkish Republic is an important area of analysis because it demonstrates the Kemalist concern with creating modern subjects and the disciplines imposed on Turkish citizens by the state. Furthermore, ballroom dance marked a major shift in concepts of gender and sexuality in the region, expressing modern norms of gender and sexuality and

²³⁷ The waltz had its origins in Austria in the eighteenth century. Although considered scandalous at first by much of Western Europe, the waltz was accepted by the upper classes in England in the nineteenth century and became a popular social dance in the United States in the twentieth century.

reflecting a specific relationship between the nation-state and its citizens. Although Ottomans attended official balls arranged by foreign embassies in the *Tanzimat* period, statesmen did not bring their wives and Turkish men and women did not dance together.²³⁸ In the Republican period, Turkish bureaucrats attended state balls with their wives and danced with various partners.

The term "ballroom dancing" is derived from the Latin word *ballare* which means "to dance." Ballroom dancing in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe was a form of socializing for the privileged, while folk dancing was considered for the lower classes. Many of the movements and formations in ballroom dancing actually originated in folk dances, but utilize the uplifted and unbending torso of ballet. Ballet originated in the courts of Renaissance Italy and France as an instrument of political power and social mobility, and embodied the ideals of proper courtly behavior. Louis XIV held balls two or three times a week and eventually established the Royal Academy of Dance in the 17th century. In the Victorian Era, ballet evolved in its own direction while social dancing took a backseat. However, in the late nineteenth century an expanding and upwardly mobile class system created a new public space for social dancing that combined the courtly ideals of the past with European folk traditions. This new space contributed to and reflected the concurrent shift in Western Europe from an emphasis on the extended family as the primary social unit to the nuclear family. The couple took on a new importance which coincided with the principles of Romantic love.

²³⁸ Yılmaz, 72.

There was a trend in Europe in the nineteenth century to publish etiquette manuals on everything from table manners to how to throw a party. The rules and rituals of the ballroom were detailed in several such manuals. Men were instructed on how to ask a lady to dance and the appropriate conversation for specific contexts, and women were instructed on the latest fashions and how to display demure and modest behavior when dancing with a man. *The Fashionable Dancer's Casket or the Ball-Room Instructor: A New and Splendid Work on Dancing, Etiquette, Deportment, and the Toilet* written by Charles Durang in 1856 advises men, "As ladies are not entitled to the privilege of asking gentlemen to dance, it is the duty of gentlemen to see that ladies shall not sit long waiting for partners, as it is one of the greatest breaches of good manners, that a gentleman can be guilty of in the ball-room, to stand idling whilst ladies are waiting to be asked."²³⁹ Furthermore, advises Durang, modesty is the most important characteristic of a true gentleman, and signs of affection should never be displayed in the ballroom.²⁴⁰

By the early twentieth century, dancing was promoted as a healthy physical activity meant to keep women in shape and to offer them an acceptable way to appear in public. The new fashions showed off women's bodies, which were not expected to be thin and well-shaped. Along with dancing, upper class European and American women were playing tennis, bicycling, and participating in physical activities for the sake of exercise. Changes in women's fashions and social roles allowed for new dances to emerge that involved faster rhythms and more intricate footwork. Exercise manuals were

²³⁹ Charles Durang, *The Fashionable Dancer's Casket or the Ball-Room Instructor: A New and Splendid Work on Dancing, Etiquette, Deportment, and the Toilet* (Bedford, Massachusetts: Applewood Books, 1856), 17.

²⁴⁰ Durang, 189.

published for women along with manuals titled 'Modern Dancing.' Like so many social activities of the early twentieth century, ballroom dancing consciously embodied the ideals of modernity and offered elites the opportunity to display the manners and customs of the 'civilized.'

Dance teachers were able to fill a social niche in major cities such as London and Paris, as people wanted to keep up on the latest dance trends. Colleges and universities added dance courses to their curriculum for women's physical education because dance was considered healthy for women, both as physical exercise and as an emotional release. Instruction in ballroom dance included lessons in how men and women of a particular social class should interact and even dress. Gender roles were also taught: the man was to be commanding and strong, the woman demurely responsive to his will. In most ballroom dancing even today, men and women have different steps and ways of moving assigned to them, and women have to accept and follow the lead of their male partners. Ballroom dance, with its strict gender and etiquette codes, is a useful tool for socialization.

The movements of ballroom dance are highly systematized, rather than improvised. The waltz, for example, involves basic patterns and steps that the dancers must learn, even though the phrases are not choreographed. Two individuals dance together, one leading and the other following, so that the leader can communicate cues through physical contact of the upper or lower bodies. Although couple dancing had existed in Europe in the 18th century, only one couple danced at a time and the point was to present the couple to the group. Steps were choreographed and the concept of leading

and following had not yet been introduced. The dances of the late 19th and early 20th century, on the other hand, emphasized the couple moving interdependently, as a unit, and were meant to be a public display of mutual confidence and teamwork.²⁴¹ Such intimate contact between men and women was unheard of among Muslims in the Ottoman Empire where gender segregated social dancing was the norm. In the late Ottoman period, ballroom dance was considered an “un-Islamic” activity that non-Muslims indulged in along with drinking and musical entertainment. However, in the secular Republic, couple dancing was elevated to the status of ‘modern.’

Ballroom dancing was likely introduced to Turkey by European, American and Australian military men in World War I. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, various dances such as the Charleston were in vogue in Istanbul dance halls. In Ankara, Republican balls were arranged to celebrate the anniversary of the Republic and private balls were also organized by state officials and bureaucrats’ wives. Instead of the ‘wild’ dances of the Istanbul dance halls, the waltz and tango were the preferred dances because they were thought to enact more appropriate social behaviors, such as modesty and grace.

Enacting the State

Atatürk’s nationalist reforms in the early twentieth century introduced a modern gender system to Turkey, one that was performed on the ballroom dance floor. As part of the Kemalist project of modernization, Atatürk’s cadres were encouraged to strip

²⁴¹ Jonas, 123.

themselves of their former Ottoman identities and replace them with a single Turkish national identity. Opposed to the pre-modern Ottoman gender system, which was based on segregation of the sexes in public space, in the modern Republican ballrooms Atatürk enforced the companionship of men and women. Naila Minai repeats a well-known story in which Atatürk invited his officials and their wives to a ball. “Since most Turkish men had never exhibited their wives to one another before, they were as stiff as boys at their first dance,” Minai explains. “Ataturk coaxed and teased them to stop staring at one another and dance.”²⁴² Göle tells it this way: On the one year anniversary of the Turkish Republic, diplomats and bureaucrats were invited to a reception at which Atatürk noticed that only the men were dancing. “My friends,” he said to the women, “I cannot imagine any woman in the world who would refuse a Turkish officer’s invitation to dance. I now order you: spread out through the dance hall! Forward! March! Dance!”²⁴³ Atatürk’s insistence that men and women dance together indicates the significant role of gender relationships in his project of state-building.

As discussed above, modern Turkish women enacted the nation and were responsible for its progress. Yaseen Noorani points to the development of a new image of woman as beloved in late nineteenth century Egypt, “a refined, literate, sensitive human being, who stimulates love, a morally ordered affect, in the heart of her suitor or husband. This ennobling beloved, the same woman who is a rational mother and an

²⁴² Naila Minai, *Women in Islam: Tradition and Transition in the Middle East* (New York: Seaview Books, 1981), 67.

²⁴³ Göle, 61.

efficient manager, is likewise shown to be indispensable to national advancement.”²⁴⁴ Femininity, Noorani suggests, was wrapped up in the moral obligations of the nation, which required self-sacrifice and the negation of desire. “The new woman,” he writes, “stands for the negation of desire, the moral process itself.”²⁴⁵ The public sphere was a site in which the new relationship between morality and desire was constructed. The private, concealed realm of desire was replaced by the bourgeois ideal of companionate marriage, as a moral relationship between heterosexual couples, and “brought into the light of publicity.”²⁴⁶

Ballroom dancing was suitable for encouraging mixed gender settings because it did not ideally involve sexually explicit movements or displays of desire. The social etiquette that Turks inherited through the rules of ballroom dancing maintained concepts of male guardianship and womanly modesty. The ballrooms of the Republic were constructed as desexualized spaces where bourgeois norms of discipline and self-control were played out. Women were “stripped of a rich sexual explicitness and they strove to produce their unveiled bodies as disciplined and chaste.”²⁴⁷

Yaseen Noorani argues that discourses of self-sacrifice made modern gender reforms the key to the realization of national order and advancement.²⁴⁸ If woman is the source and object of man’s desire, then controlling the expression of that desire is

²⁴⁴ Yaseen Noorani, “The Moral Transformation of Femininity and the Rise of the Public-Private Distinction in Colonial Egypt,” unpublished paper, 1-2.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁴⁷ Abu-Lughod, “Remaking Women,” 9. Deniz Kandiyoti, in the same book, proposes that women’s entrance into public space mandated new forms of Puritanism.

²⁴⁸ Yaseen Noorani, unpublished, 2.

virtuous and contributes to social order. Self-negation, then, is the moral condition of national order. The woman does not have an *actual* role in such a concept of order. She merely enables men to achieve the nation. A metaphor for this male-female relationship can be constructed with reference to the waltz, where men frame women in their arms and lead them across the floor. Ballroom dancing provided modern men the opportunity to enact virtue and display their mastery over sexual desire.

Men and women did not enter public spaces together to find themselves free from social constraints; their behavior and movements were regulated by new patriarchal norms. As Atatürk apparently stated when a foreign lady attempted to lead him to the dance floor, “Madam, when a man and a woman are together, it is best to give the lead to the man.”²⁴⁹ Ballroom dancing embodied new ways of understanding and using the body in public space, particularly for the purpose of socializing, couched in familiar terms. However, the introduction of European aesthetics and values regarding gender pushed dance practices into social spaces that enacted a new kind of sexuality. The way people danced in Turkey in the early years of the Republic both reflected and affected these new social formulations.

Atatürk disavowed the dance traditions of the Ottomans and adopted the European ‘smooth’ ballroom dances such as the waltz, tango and foxtrot. In the newly built state ballrooms, Atatürk intended to demonstrate how a modern body moves. The dancing couple both enacted the nation and promoted elite ways of being in a kind of

²⁴⁹ Andrew Mango, *Atatürk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey* (Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, 1999), 410.

living propaganda. Opposed to the sexual connotations and excessive movements of the *köçek* and *çengi*, ballroom dancing brought men and women together on the dance floor to socialize in ways deemed appropriate by modern standards. Ballroom dance presents “hyperfeminized women” and “overdetermined men” and offers a template not only for gender dichotomies but also for race, sexuality and nationalism.²⁵⁰ Rather than performing solo, improvised movements, women were now marking certain patterns and steps framed in the arms of their male partners, a coupling that represented a new emphasis on social order, the nuclear family, and the companionate relationship between a man and his wife. “Belly dance,” on the other hand, represented a deviant and Oriental form of sexuality not supported by the new state. In 1930, the Ministry of the Interior prepared new laws against prostitution that threatened foreign entertainers at bars, cafes and music halls with deportation.²⁵¹ Clearly, the association of solo, female performers with immoral activities had survived into the Republican era.

The Sultan Did Not Dance

According to Ernest Jackh, it became a tradition of the young republic for Atatürk to hold public balls at the annual celebration of Independence Day, which he would always open with the first dance.²⁵² It is significant that Atatürk, the head of the new Turkish Republic, danced in public. The sultans of the Ottoman Empire certainly would not have been caught dancing. This is not to say that they were not supporters of the

²⁵⁰ Caroline Joan S. Picart, *From Ballroom to DanceSport: Aesthetics, Athletics, and Body Culture* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 6.

²⁵¹ Mark Wyers, personal communication.

²⁵² Ernest Jackh, *The Rising Crescent: Turkey, yesterday, today and tomorrow* (New York and Toronto: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1944), 208.

performing arts. As discussed above, many of them were patrons of the arts and organized music and dance troupes that would perform for the aristocracy of the palace.²⁵³ But the sultan was always separated from his subjects, not one of ‘the people.’ Although he may have enjoyed watching performances, he himself did not dance. A short satirical column in the March 15, 1856 issue of *Punch*, a British weekly magazine, pokes fun at Sultan Abdülmecid for protesting with tears against his invitation to a ball by an English Ambassador. The story claims that after the sultan was finally convinced to dance, he went on to drink wine and eat pork chops.²⁵⁴ This is likely a farce, but it points to the fact that dancing was clearly aligned with other things Muslims did not do, such as drinking alcohol and eating pork.

Atatürk, on the other hand, was often accompanied by personal photographers who depicted the new leader in Western clothes and engaged in modern social activities such as dancing and socializing with women. “Thus,” writes Esra Özyürek, “Atatürk came to represent and embody the new nation and the ‘new man’ that the republic aimed to create.”²⁵⁵ Atatürk was participating in a social activity that had not been typical for the Ottoman courtiers. He sought to construct his public image as a new kind of leader, a leader who understood the people, not hiding away in his palace but on the dance floor for the public to see. Bozdoğan emphasizes the importance of visual culture to the Kemalist program of the 1930s in her analysis of Republican architecture. Ballroom dancing also presented the aesthetic canons of modernity to the Turkish public. Atatürk’s

²⁵³ Carla Coco, *Secrets of the Harem*, 131.

²⁵⁴ “Outrage Upon the Sultan,” *Punch* Vol. 30, Issue 766 (Mar. 1856), 101.

²⁵⁵ Esra Özyürek, “Miniaturizing Atatürk: Privatization of state imagery and ideology in Turkey,” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 377.

top-down reform policies would not have been effective to the extent that they were if they had remained only at the level of legislation. His reforms were effective because they worked at the level of socialization. He modeled, with his own person, the way people were to dress, eat, speak, and move in the modern nation-state. In the Republic ballrooms, dancing the waltz in his top hat and tuxedo, Atatürk performed modernity and invited other social elites to participate in the performance.

Dancing Class

Atatürk's reforms were couched in the language of emancipation and certainly did offer Turkish women new rights and status, such as the right to vote, to choose their own spouses, and to initiate divorce. It is important to realize that the ability to exercise these rights was highly uneven, however, as there existed a large gap between urban upper-class and rural lower-class women.²⁵⁶ Kandiyoti remarks that, despite the confidence with which images of young girls in school and women in evening gowns in ballroom dancing scenes were disseminated by the Republic in the 1920s and 30s, the "republican reforms were a remote and unrealized ideal for the vast majority of rural women."²⁵⁷ In fact, Anatolian peasant women may have even been further marginalized by Atatürk's reforms because their access to modern institutions was mediated by men. Gülsüm Baydar Nalbantoğlu propounds that within the city of Ankara itself the urban and the rural often met in awkward encounters that revealed the earlier days of the capital's foundation and the tensions between tradition and modernity. Citing an episode from

²⁵⁶ Arat, "Turkish Women and the Republican Reconstruction of Tradition," 57.

²⁵⁷ Deniz Kandiyoti, "Gendering the Modern: On Missing Dimensions in the Study of Turkish Modernity" in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997), 125.

Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's famous novel *Ankara*, Nalbantoğlu demonstrates the class divisions that shaped everyday life in Ankara:

Inhabitants of old Ankara have gathered on New Year's Eve outside the monumental entrance of the Ankara Palas hotel on İstasyon Avenue to watch the elite arrive at the ballroom. They engage in the following conversation: "So you think you have seen it all from here, hah, hah," one says to another, who replies with a grin, "I know what they do inside, but I won't say it." "I will," interferences a third, "there is tango inside." "Who is tango?" asks another.²⁵⁸

The class divides that Turks experienced in Ankara in the Republican Era are reminiscent of divisions between Westernized, Istanbul elites and rural Anatolians in the late Ottoman period. Palmira Brummett describes a political cartoon published in the Ottoman revolutionary press:

The cartoon is entitled, "Returning from the Benefit Ball for Those Stricken by Drought and Famine in Anatolia." It shows a beggar approaching a prosperous couple who are leaving the ball; the man is in tuxedo, the woman in low-cut European gown. "Be compassionate," says the beggar, "In the country my child is dying of hunger." The smiling woman ignores the petitioner while her escort snarls, "What an ingrate you are! We were just now working for your benefit."²⁵⁹

The social spaces of dancing, then, shaped interactions beyond the ballroom. The training in ballroom dance that elites received in the Republican era was unavailable to the lower classes, and the spaces in which most balls took place were inaccessible. For the upper classes, however, dancing became interwoven into the fabric of their daily lives. Bozdoğan points out that the homes of the elite often had thoroughly Western interiors that emphasized mixed-gender entertaining, especially dancing. Model homes in popular magazines of the 1930s "designated their spacious halls of salons, their wide terraces, and their flat rooftops as possible dancing floors for appropriate occasions."²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ Gülsüm Baydar Nalbantoğlu, "Silent Interruptions: Urban Encounters with Rural Turkey" in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997), 195.

²⁵⁹ Palmira Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908-1911* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 183.

²⁶⁰ Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building*, 212.

The Critics of Ballroom Dancing

Tensions revolving around dancing were not only defined by class divisions. Religious and moral debates about the activities of young Turkish women centered on this new form of socializing in the 1920s and 30s. In the 1920s, shifting discourses regarding womanhood and morality in the public places of Istanbul contributed to the formation of new Turkish subjectivities. At the same time that Atatürk was fashioning his image of ballroom dancing in the new capital city of Ankara, Turkish modernity was being formulated in specific and local ways in Istanbul's dance halls.²⁶¹ As discussed above, the moral order of the new nation-state depended, at least symbolically, in large part on the position of women in public spaces. To Turkish cultural critics, jazz dancing was opposed to a virtuous society and represented the moral decline of women in the face of Westernization. Dancing was associated with other deviant behaviors, such as drinking, doing drugs, gambling, and prostitution.²⁶²

The Ottoman state in the late nineteenth century had taken an official line against couple dancing. Woodall writes, "Although late-19th century dances, namely the waltz, kadrille, and mazurka would not necessarily strike the contemporary reader as all that scandalous, the transposition of western-style dances suggested a potential moral and social corruption."²⁶³ But in the early twentieth century, it was well-known that the head of the new nation-state, Mustafa Kemal himself, enjoyed social dancing. During Kemal's first to Istanbul after the War of Independence, he apparently visited a café to jazz with

²⁶¹ Carole Woodall, "Sensing the City: Sound, Movement and the Night in 1920s Istanbul" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 2008), 6-7.

²⁶² *Dansöz*, or female dancers, were employed to dance with men in the dance halls and were considered socially deviant characters.

²⁶³ Woodall, "Sensing the City," 8.

the flappers.²⁶⁴ This was fuel to the fire of conservative critics who claimed that the Republic was headed in the wrong direction. Woodall remarks that until 1930, when Turkey became a one-party state, Kemal fluctuated in his support of Western dances. Although Woodall characterizes Atatürk's stance on dancing as ambiguous ("should the Republic jazz or Zeybek?"), I suggest that the state's circulation of images that portrayed the head of state dancing in Republican ballrooms may have been an official attempt to take control over the dancing craze and steer it in a certain direction. If the wives and daughters of state officials were going to learn how to dance, let it be the waltz and let it be an effective marker of women's successful entrance into the public sphere. For example, Woodall notices that the etiquette and dance manuals of the period did not include any of the jazz dances.²⁶⁵

Much like the political cartoons of the previous era, the 1920s Istanbul press also circulated images that marked dancing in certain ways. Foreign dance teachers and young Turkish women were particularly potent targets. In descriptions reminiscent of critiques leveled at "belly dance," the cultural critics attacked jazz dancing as sexually explicit and indecent. "In the 1920s, jazz music and its dance forms, the perceived discombobulated movements of legs swinging to and fro, and the in-between split legs movements suggested sexual intimacy. Women's bodies thus become the markers of the crisis."²⁶⁶ "The Charleston Debate," as Woodall has termed the debate that circulated in Istanbul-based magazines of the 1920s, appealed to modern ideas about the body that

²⁶⁴ Woodall, "Sensing the City," 233.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 258.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

were circulating worldwide in the early twentieth century. As noted in an earlier chapter, dancing in Europe and the United States came to be defined as exercise, a healthy activity for women to engage in. In an interesting appropriation of Western medical discourses, the critics of the Charleston warned women of the harmful effects that the wild movements could have on their physiology. Critics referred to dancing as a contagious disease that was infecting Turkish youth with excitement and threatening the purity of young women. Woodall remarks, “On the one hand, this discourse is a continuation of a late-Ottoman concern with healthy versus diseased bodies depicting the late-Ottoman state, or nascent Turkish republic. On the other hand, the pseudo-medical discourse attached to the Charleston, specifically, but to women’s public access in general again reiterates the multiple levels in which writers framed the ‘crisis.’”²⁶⁷

The dance floor is often a space where new ideas from young generations or minorities can be negotiated.²⁶⁸ Woodall highlights the role of Beyoğlu as a space for transcultural encounters, particularly in dance halls, bars, cinemas and other locales of night activities.²⁶⁹ The Garden Bar was a place where entertainers, foreigners and young city dwellers gathered to enjoy music, dancing and socializing. Critics claimed that Turks did not frequent the bar and defined it as “non-national” and foreign.²⁷⁰ This discursive move contributed to the Republic’s attempt to distance the new capital city of Ankara from the old Ottoman capital in Istanbul by associating one with the past and the other with the modern. Furthermore, the foreignness of Istanbul, with its multi-lingual,

²⁶⁷ Woodall, “Sensing the City,” 11.

²⁶⁸ Jonas, 108.

²⁶⁹ Woodall, “Sensing the City,” 40.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 126-7.

multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural atmosphere, was opposed to the Turkishness of Ankara, where songs were sung in Turkish and the performers on stage were Turkish.²⁷¹ Woodall cites one cultural critic, Habil Adam, who recommended that the western-style social places of Istanbul be officially monitored by the state, that dances take place in the afternoon instead of at night, and that official dance academies be established.²⁷² Adam's appeal for municipal regulation signals the difficulty that the Republic had in trying to bring Istanbul under its thumb. Unlike Ankara, which had been created according to the principles of Kemalism, Istanbul was a city that continued to subvert the social norms the state attempted to impose.

As has been discussed in this paper, female social networks were displaced in the Turkish Republic. Women in the Turkish Republic were supposed to be companions to their husbands, above all other family ties. Marriage was re-imagined as romantic and companionate, while homosocial spaces and social bonds, polygyny, and homosexual practices were disavowed as backward and pre-modern. Because the promise of modernity was the public visibility of women, nationalism depended on a discourse of protection of women. Their honor had to be protected, just as the honor of the nation had to be defended. Najmabadi notes that this "modern-yet-modest" woman suffered a duality that left many women in a state of uncertainty.²⁷³ Woodall not only captures the ambiguous nature of the project of modernity for the city of Istanbul, she also homes in on this sense of duality that women struggled with as they attempted to embody the ideals

²⁷¹ Woodall, "Sensing the City," 131.

²⁷² Ibid., 133.

²⁷³ Najmabadi in Deniz Kandiyoti, *Women, Islam and the State*, 66.

of modernity. “Not only was she meant to be active in the public domain,” Woodall points out, “but she also had to present an appropriate visible image becoming her role as mother and/ or daughter of the family and citizen of the nation.”²⁷⁴ A press article that appeared in Turkey in 1924 in a monthly publication called *Resimli Ay* (The Illustrated Month), translated into English by Woodall, was written by an anonymous woman and titled “How I began to dance for the first time and how I felt.” It presents a personal and somewhat ambiguous view of the direction society was moving under the Republic.

The anonymous woman explains that at first she was opposed to dancing, but she suggests that this was because it takes time to get used to having new rights. Dancing, she says, was what allowed her to adjust to the idea of being modern. She writes, “Given that this was the fashion, given that one had to accept these [trends] to be modern, it was necessary to embrace these [things] before being labeled.”²⁷⁵ She claims that in order to prepare herself for her first ball, she took lessons from a Greek lady for three months. When she finally attended a ball at her friend’s house, dancing with other men caused her husband to be jealous. She describes how her husband’s eyes followed her around the room all evening so that she could not feel comfortable and she admits to being afraid that he might “act out his Easternness.” However, determined to be a modern woman, she continues to dance. At one point a young blond man asks her to dance and she hesitates, but decides it would be rude to refuse his invitation. She dances with him all

²⁷⁴ Woodall, “The Turkish ‘Modern Woman,’” 194.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 195.

night, forgetting completely about her angry husband and falling into a kind of trance.

She writes:

I don't know if the thing that made me drunk was the embarrassment of dancing in the arms of a young man, or his touch on my body, the intoxicating music, or the warmth of his breath. Amongst these couples who ran hither and thither in merriment from the exuberance of the music, I don't know how I was dancing or whether my steps fitted the music. The touch that turned me, the hot breaths that descended to my soul made me sweat and made me faint to the point that I lost all my senses.²⁷⁶

Later in the evening, she notices her husband dancing with another woman and decides he must be taking revenge on her. She dances on until morning. She writes that after that first ball, she was able to let go of her hesitations completely and dance freely. "Now, I could dance with whomever and wherever." Her reservations do not completely go away, however. "I sometimes think that this new life ruined the old one and that one day we will face the danger of missing [the old life]. Nevertheless, I feel that the necessity of accepting all the requirements of modern life is pushing me toward this sacrifice."²⁷⁷

The anonymous author of this article clearly has feelings of desire and finds her own emotions getting out of control. Her descriptions of sweaty bodies and hot breath provoke erotic images and make apparent the "electricity" that must have been felt in such situations. The author is clearly attempting to align herself with elite tastes and the prestige of modernity, but her transition into new social spaces involves a complicated process of assimilating new gender norms and subjecting them to trial and error. One possible analysis of this scenario recognizes that the transition to modernity was not seamless and the implementation of the Republican ideal of the chaste, disciplined woman was not entirely successful. Furthermore, the marriage bond is not enforced

²⁷⁶ In Woodall, "The Turkish 'Modern' Woman," 197.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

through dance in this story, but rather put into danger when the husband becomes jealous at seeing his wife dance with other men. However, ballroom dancing provoked feelings that were new to the author, and perhaps this is precisely what it was intended to do. In this way ballroom dancing created new kinds of subjects, subjects who thought and felt in modern ways.

Conclusions

Turkish nationalism required a unified sense of ethnic identity that could appeal to the 'local' without contradicting the goals of secularization and modernization. The Turkism of Ziya Gökalp was a blueprint for inventing this national, secular Turkish identity. The dances of the folk were romanticized as a primitive expression of the Turkish spirit, so the Kemalist regime carried out several activities involving the collection of folklore from the rural parts of Turkey. The People's Houses' annual celebrations in Ankara gave folk dance official recognition and a national platform. *Çengi* and *köçek* dances did not make an appearance at these celebrations, but dances performed by mixed gender couples were believed to display a dual gender system and celebrated heterosexual couples.

Women were at the center of Atatürk's reforms and the sign of Turkey's progress was the presence of women in public spaces. Specific sites, such as the Republican ballrooms, circulated new signs and codes for modern Turkish behavior, visible on the bodies of women. The ways that ballrooms invited people to move and behave contributed to the construction of modern selves. Atatürk's insistence that men and

women dance together indicates the significant role of gender relationships in his project of state-building. In the Republican ballrooms, Atatürk intended to demonstrate how a modern body moves. The dancing couple both enacted the nation and promoted elite ways of being in a kind of living propaganda. Rather than performing solo, men and women now danced in each other's arms. Ballroom dancing embodied a new emphasis on social order, the nuclear family, and the companionate relationship between a man and his wife. "Belly dance," on the other hand, was disavowed as a deviant and Oriental form of sexuality not supported by the new state.

CONCLUSION

I set out in this thesis to discover the role of dance in shaping Turkish modernity. I mapped dance practices from the Ottoman Empire to the early Turkish Republic in order to navigate modern transformations of gender and sexuality. Instead of texts and discourses, dance practices provided the material for interpretation, giving me access to a history of embodiments. I argued that dance is productive and formative, rather than simply reflective, and that certain dance practices played a significant role in shaping modern concepts of gender, sexuality and public space in the late Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic.

By offering a historical perspective, I hoped to demonstrate points of continuity and change in modern Turkey. Beginning a history of Ottoman dance with the solo, improvised and homoerotic dances of the Ottoman palace entertainers makes the contrast to later descriptions of the Republican ballrooms obvious. However, along the way I noted points of continuity and change between the late Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic, particularly with the *Tanzimat* and Young Turk eras. The developing theatrical performances of the *Tanzimat* and Young Turk eras are poignant examples of the process of transformation that occurred in the late Ottoman Empire, when performers and audiences employed means of self-discipline in order to bring themselves into modern ways of being. It should be clear that modernity did not liberate people as much as subject them to new forms of social control.

I have defined dance as a cultural practice through which social and gendered identities are constructed. Dance practices act upon bodies, impacting human action and

transforming the people who experience it. In the Ottoman gender system the differences between male and female had been less distinguished and the concepts of love and beauty were not located in women alone. Dancing boys elicited socially acceptable forms of attraction. Due in large part to European criticism, however, the dance practices of the *köçek* and *çengi* underwent enormous transformations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Innovative theatrical styles such as *kanto* and *tuluat* emerged as forums for negotiating ideas such as nationalism and women's entrance to the public sphere; at the same time, they contributed to the definition of beauty as a female trait while male beauty, represented by the *köçek*, was renounced. With the disappearance of male figures on stage, only the female was left as the receptacle of sexual desire.

Homosocial networks were further displaced in the Turkish Republic when Atatürk encouraged women to enter the public spheres of education, politics, and the military. Atatürk's reforms reflected a shift of focus from the extended to the nuclear family and an emphasis on the individual over the collective. The Republican period marked an increase in public control over what were previously considered private matters to be dealt with by families in the home. Although public spaces did offer Turkish women new freedoms, they also regulated people's behaviors and controlled their movements in space. Republican balls narrated social meanings and were particularly useful in the Kemalist modernization project because they entailed performances of highly defined gender roles. But dancing in the early Republic did not just display new gender norms; dancing actually produced them.

Although every society employs body techniques, in modern nation-states the institutionalization of these techniques is totalizing, leaving no shady corners. Foucault has suggested that the conjunction of totalizing and individualizing techniques is unique to the modern era. Modern nation-states work at the level of disposition rather than imposition by introducing new social institutions and ideologies. In other words, disciplinary interventions are absorbed rather than imposed. The will of the Kemalist state had to penetrate every aspect of social life, impacting bodies through the details of dress, manners, food, music, and dancing. Atatürk's project was precisely to homogenize the diversity of Ottoman modes of being and create one people. His vision was no less than a will to reconstitute people's way of thinking and feeling, to create new Turkish selves, and this vision was enacted on the dance floor. Atatürk's insistence that men and women dance together indicates the significant role of gender relationships in his project of state-building. In the Republican ballrooms, Atatürk intended to demonstrate how a modern body moves.

Throughout the thesis, I asked how the state acts on subjects and in turn how subjects act on the state. The juxtaposition of the Ottoman sultanate with the person of Atatürk offered insights into shifting regimes of knowledge and power. The Ottoman sultans performed their sovereignty with elaborate displays of wealth and power. By employing professional entertainers in palace festivals, the sultans demonstrated their wealth, benevolence and tolerance. Their all-encompassing power was enacted directly on their subjects, imposing the imperial will on people's ways of moving and behaving. For example, the everyday norms of gender and sexuality could be put on hold by order

of the sultan as a sign of his all-encompassing power. In the Republican period, the publicity and spectacle of the Sultan gave way to a “political technology of the body.”²⁷⁸ Atatürk’s reforms were not meant to force Turks into complicity, but rather to shape new subjects through the imposition of modern disciplines. The thoughts and feelings, the very Subjecthood, of Turkish citizens were the targets of new social controls. Their lives would be reshaped and reoriented toward modern, Western ways of being.

Kemalist policies penetrated beyond the levels of politics and legislation to impact manners of dress and ways of speaking and moving. Atatürk performed Kemalist morality with his own person as an example for ‘the people’ of acceptable, modern behavior. Ballroom dancing was at once a spectacle of modernity and its embodiment. Elite men and women danced not for the sake of dancing alone, but as a discipline that would shape the very nature of their lives. As Rebecca Bryant notes, “A body disciplined within particular conventions becomes a means to realize a particular kind of self.”²⁷⁹ The Republican cadre of Turkish bureaucrats and their wives subjected themselves to the body techniques that modern social spaces required: mixed couples touching, talking, and dancing together. The transition from one *habitus* or gender system to another was not merely a matter of ideology, but of practice.

²⁷⁸ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977) on the “political technology of the body” and “docile bodies.”

²⁷⁹ Rebecca Bryant, “The Soul Danced into the Body: Nation and Improvisation in Istanbul,” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 32, No. 2: 224.

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