

### III. Rewriting History, Rewriting Religion

The present chapter addresses rewritings of history and religion in the works of two authors of Turkish American literature: Halide Edip and Elif Shafak. My comparative approach will highlight the remarkable continuities that link the work of Edip and Shafak and show how both reclaim Turkish history and religion from the predominantly patriarchal visions of Kemalism and Islamic orthodoxy, 'rewriting' them into a matrifocal perspective that exalts the voices of feminine subalterns. Besides, by showing a net of correspondences that link Edip's and Shafak's works, I will highlight a continuity of strategies, imagery, and concerns between two of the most representative exponents of Turkish American literature.

The first section of this chapter will present Halide Edip's autobiographical volumes, *Memoirs of Halide Edip* (1926) and *The Turkish Ordeal* (1928), as pioneering works of Turkish American literature, as they establish a transatlantic connection between Turkey and America on literary, cultural, and ethical grounds. These two works construct America and Turkey as countries that share a fervid love of independence and conceived comparable revolutionary projects. Edip's writings found resonance in the later work of Shafak, who retrieves situations, facts, and images from Edip's memoirs, empties them of their nationalist significance, and reframes them into a multicultural context.

After providing an introduction to Edip's 'subversive' historiography and to the reasons why her work should be read in a transnational perspective, this chapter's focus will shift to Shafak's reworking of Edip's themes into a neo-Ottomanist framework in the early 2000s. Used by Edip to legitimize Turkish sovereignty over Anatolia and to underline the dramatic necessity of a Turkish struggle for independence, historical *loci* such as ferries and orphanages assume an almost oppositional value in Shafak, who turns them into spaces that celebrate multi-ethnicity.

If Edip's and Shafak's rewritings of history aim to substitute patriarchal ideology with what are claimed to be collective experiences of women, their rewriting of religion goes into the same direction, focusing on the renegotiation of womanhood within the patriarchal logic of Islam. Edip's and Shafak's rewritings do not merely share a focus on the transition of women from silent, marginal objects to subjects endowed with voice and the power of description; I also want to suggest that, in the texts that constitute the focus of this chapter, the discussion of gender generally runs parallel to the attempt to reconcile Islam and Christianity

by emphasizing affinities and downplaying differences. In both cases, the systematic search for parallels between Islam and Christianity is carried out in a markedly American perspective. Edip's and Shafak's commitment to bridge the gap between what Edip problematically calls "the Moslem mind and the Western mind" (*Ordeal* 119) goes beyond the necessity to mediate between the East and the West, but can be read in an explicitly binational, transatlantic perspective connecting Turkey and the United States. Earlier studies have suggested that Edip's vision of a universalist Islam, the values and figures of which are compatible with those of Christianity, is the result of her early education at an American college for girls. Shafak tries, through her writing, to mitigate the global climate of tension that followed the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Her celebration of Sufi Islam as a possible way of alleviating the "troubled framework" (Shafak, "The Religion of Love" n.p.) of post 9/11 society will provide a starting point for my research in this chapter and the following.

### **Between Imperialism and "Wholesome Curiosity": Halide Edip's Benevolent America.**

"They laughed and told me that Avrupa (Europe) had sent them to do it all, and that they would never leave us in peace. That man Avrupa must be told, daughter: he must leave us, the poor peasants, alone. What have we done to him?"  
Halide Edip, *The Turkish Ordeal*.

Halide Edip Adıvar<sup>61</sup> (1884–1964) was a prominent Turkish novelist, journalist, social activist, feminist, and a "figure of controversy" in modern Turkey (Göknar, *Orhan Pamuk, Secularism and Blasphemy* 150). During the early stages of the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1923), Edip used to be a very close collaborator of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and an active member of the nationalist movement. The relationship between the future prime minister and the writer gradually deteriorated when Kemal's ambition to emerge as a charismatic leader and 'Father of the Turks' started to collide with Edip's inclination to consider the establishment of the Republic a collective achievement, made possible by a plethora of more or less influential figures maneuvering the conflict from behind the scenes. After the war, Edip and her second husband, a highly esteemed Istanbulite doctor, were accused of treason by the one-party Kemalist government and forced into exile, first to London, later to Paris. In 1926, Edip left Turkey not to return until İsmet İnönü's pardon in 1939. In exile, Edip intensified her

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61 Halide Edib is another common spelling of the author's name.

intellectual activity and penned a two-volume autobiography in English that would be remembered as one of the most controversial works of Turkish literature. The two volumes, *Memoirs of Halide Edip* (1926) and *The Turkish Ordeal* (1928), present an account of Turkish history perceived and narrated through the eyes of a woman: from the last years of the empire down to the Young Turks' revolution (1908), the War of Independence, and the birth of the Turkish Republic (1923). The autobiography, written and published in English, challenges the narratives of Kemalist historiography, substituting the myth of Kemal as infallible patriot and national hero with more nuanced narratives that exalt the people of Turkey, especially women, as the real protagonists of the conflict. Hülya Adak has suggested that Edip's autobiography, in particular *The Turkish Ordeal*, should be regarded as a historical counternarrative that questions the identification of Mustafa Kemal with the nation of Turkey and dismantles the quasi-religious cult of Kemal as a transcendent, unchallengeable, prophet-like leader (see Adak, "National Myths and Self-Narrations"). By interweaving her own biography with a collection of stories of women, Edip reconstructs Turkish history from a feminine-plural rather than a masculine-singular perspective.

Edip's autobiography can be read as a highly significant historical work marking a moment of rupture and one of continuity. Firstly, it marks what Clifford describes as "a fissure in which time stops and restarts," allowing the recovery of effaced stories, and the imagining of different futures (Clifford 318). While the newly born Turkish Republic embraced Atatürk's historiography and policies of detachment from Ottoman and Islamic traditions, Edip articulated her discordant historical narrative in an international, Anglophone sphere. Therefore, the 1920s represent a node in Turkish historiography, or a "fissure," witnessing the emergence of a second version of history, challenging the official one, and developing independently. Secondly, Edip's version of history strongly differs from the Kemalist one as it establishes a fundamental continuity with Turkey's Ottoman tradition of multiculturalism. Yet, Edip's text never broke through the monopoly of Kemalist historiography and dwelt, as Adak puts it, in a state of "potential resistance" (Adak 524). Written in English and published in London, the book was intentionally situated outside the boundaries of the Turkish national literary market, and primarily addressed Western readerships. This implies that Edip's is a pioneering work as it projects Turkish literature from a national level to a global one, but also that her autobiographical volumes are – much like the author herself – self-exilic subjects, as Edip deemed them not to be suitable for Turkish audiences and extracted them from the national literary scene.

Edip discusses her choice of writing and publishing her memoirs in English towards the middle of *The Turkish Ordeal*, in a passage that describes a heated argument with Atatürk:

I knew very well that he would never forget the incident of that evening, but that he would appear as if he had, and that I would be expected to go on working as though nothing had happened. But just then I couldn't: I would try to tell the story of Turkey as simply and honestly as a child, that the world might some day read it – not as a historical record nor as a political treatise, but as a human document about men and women alive during my own lifetime; and I would write it in a language far better fitted to reach the world than my own. It was that very night, as I lay in bed after the scene with Mustafa Kemal Pasha, that I determined to write my Memoirs and to write them in English. (*Ordeal* 132)

The passage represents perhaps the most effective, although belated, 'introduction' to the book's origins and purposes. Two crucial elements emerge. First, the idea of writing an autobiography appears to be the product of an argument with Atatürk, which he ends rather abruptly: "I don't want any consideration, criticism, or advice. I will have only my own way. All shall do as I command. [...] You shall obey me and do as I wish" (*Ordeal* 130). After this divergence, Edip consolidates her refusal to submit to Atatürk's abuses by dissociating from his vision of history, and choosing to develop her own. Secondly, the text poses a question of implied readership. The choice of English, "a language far better fitted to reach the world than my own" (132), implies that the text is directed to an international rather than national readership. Edip was probably aware of the fact that her book would be ostracized by the Kemalists once they had settled into power, and addressed it to more receptive readerships. To the present day, Edip's autobiography hardly found its way back to the home country and is still dwelling in an Anglophone sphere: the first translation of *The Turkish Ordeal* into Turkish appeared in the 1960s with the title *The Turkish Ordeal with Fire*. The translation contained massive modifications to the text in English and betrayed the message of the original by paradoxically endorsing the myth of Kemal as the nation's prophetic leader (Adak, 524).

Multiple attempts to interpret Anatolian culture to the West and adopt a Western perspective confirm that Edip's memoirs are primarily (although not exclusively) oriented toward a non-Turkish readership. "It is impossible for a Westerner," she explains, speaking of Smyrna/Izmir between Greek and Turkish occupation, "to imagine the desolation of the city and the horror of the stories one heard" (*Ordeal* 306). Since the book was written in London and Paris, but printed and published in England, one could expect Edip to address a primarily European or British readership, but the extremely positive portrait of America emerging from

the text, combined with relentless criticism of European powers, suggests that the autobiography's implied readership is an American one.

In order to demonstrate that Edip's memoirs are not merely a text to be read in a European context, but in a transatlantic one, I will focus on *The Turkish Ordeal*, depicting the struggle of the Turkish people against the Allied powers, which aimed to dismember and portion out the territories of the empire. In this scenario, the United States appears to be the sole recipient of the narrator's esteem and appreciation, being the only Western country capable of engaging in a sincere dialogue with Turkey in the midst of what Edip calls a conflict between two ideals "which in those days were known as the *Garb-Mefkuressi* (the Western ideal) and the *Shark-Mefkuressi* (the Eastern ideal)" (*Ordeal* 119). The next section will present three areas that illustrate Edip's portrayal of a 'benevolent'<sup>62</sup> America and provide evidence of how *The Turkish Ordeal* hopes to establish an exclusive transatlantic connection and cultural kinship between Turkey and the United States. The contrast between America's supposedly benign presence and the imperialist designs of European states in Edip's text is so conspicuous that it will eventually result in a reconfiguration of the notion of 'West.'

Edip's autobiographical works and their persistent investment in bringing to the surface cultural affinities between Turkey and the U.S. can be contextualized as part of a general interest in the improvement of Turkish-American relations which was widespread the 1930s. On the occasion of the two-hundredth anniversary of George Washington's birth, American Ambassador in Turkey Joseph Grew (1927–1932) declared it was "impossible [...] not to see the analogy between the American Revolution of 1775 and the Turkish Revolution of 1920, not to see the similarity between George Washington and Mustafa Kemal" (Yilmaz 227). Still, Edip's work is unique for a variety of reasons. First of all, as Şunhaz Yilmaz points out in "Challenging the Stereotypes: Turkish-American Relations in the Inter-war Era," interventions that strengthened and celebrated the Turkish-American

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62 The term "benevolent," with reference to American overt or covert expansionism, also appears in Heide and Poiger's *Transactions, Transgressions, Transformations*: "in the decades since WWII, U.S. producers and commentators have frequently imagined American culture [...] as explicitly anti-colonial. At the same time, they, like U.S. politicians, have affirmed a 'benevolent supremacy' of the United States over both the formerly (formally) colonized and the former colonizers" (Heide and Poiger xxiv, emphasis added). In *Modernism and the Middle East*, Sibel Bozdoğan compares the Istanbul Hilton to "'a little America,' the paradigm of benevolent and democratic capitalist society that the DP [Democratic Party] regime embraced as its model" (Bozdoğan 120, emphasis added).

friendship were mostly the work of Americans. “Turkish propaganda activities to improve their image in the United States,” Yilmaz reports, “had been almost non-existent” (229) in comparison with the extensive efforts made by American politicians, diplomats, and intellectuals.

Therefore, the fact that a (female) Turkish public figure such as Edip produced this kind of texts, participating in a prominently American discourse that aimed to rehabilitate Turkey’s image abroad, is per se exceptional. Secondly, the tone of American speeches and publications was celebratory, as they mostly praised the reformative spirit of the Turkish republic, applauded Atatürk as a ‘Western’ leader, and repudiated the stereotype of the ‘terrible Turk.’ Edip’s work goes into a different direction, as she attempts to boost Turkey’s reputation in the eyes of American readerships not by reminding them of the extraordinary nature of Turkey’s achievements, but by underlining how culturally affine the two nations are, and especially by indicating that the Turkish nationalist struggle is not unlike the American. Yet, Edip did not shy away from exposing the pitfalls of Kemalist nationalism and separated the value of the Turkish nationalist cause from its all too charismatic leader. Yilmaz credits Edip for “significantly contribut[ing] to publicizing the improvements in Turkey through her publications and speeches in the United States” (230): my analysis takes Yilmaz’s judgment further, to demonstrate that there is more to Edip’s contribution to diplomatic relationships between Turkey and the United States. To Edip, Turkey and the United States were more than diplomatic allies: they shared political ideals, moral principles, and cultural practices.

## **Imperialism and Humanitarianism**

In the 1910s and 1920s, *Entente* powers including Britain, France, and Italy hoped to profit from the partition of the Ottoman Empire and gain the most from its dismemberment. In spite of the fact that America, associated with the *Entente* but not truly part of it, showed little interest in taking a mandate over the newly born Republic of Armenia and was not among the signatories of the Treaty of Sèvres, it would be inaccurate to claim that the American presence in Anatolia was exclusively motivated by humanitarian reasons. In fact, in 1919, the American Chamber of Commerce for the Levant stated that “the opportunities for American expansion in the Middle East [were] unlimited [...], with the conclusion of peace, there [was] the structure of an empire to be developed” (Housepian 57). Nevertheless, Edip’s autobiography adamantly condemns European imperialist designs on the former Ottoman territory and depicts a selfless

America, acting as a *super partes* observer in the conflict between the Muslim Turks and the alliance of European powers and Ottoman Christian minorities.

In describing the European and British presence in Anatolia, Edip resorts to imperial terminology, condemning their desires of territorial gain and exposing a mischievous alignment of the Allied powers and the Ottoman Christian minorities. To Edip, Europeans in Anatolia are occupiers, persecutors, and invaders (*Ordeal* 61, 106) whose ultimate goal is “converting Turkey into a series of colonies” (112). David Lloyd George’s England appears “determined to exterminate Turkish rule in Asia Minor and replace it by a vast Greek empire” (162). Edip enthusiastically vouched for the American protectorate as the most reasonable option for Turkey’s future, regardless of the fact that this idea clashed with the nationalists’ repulsion for external limitations on Turkey’s sovereignty (314). In fact, the hypothesis did not meet Atatürk’s favor, and eventually drove the leader to brand Edip as a traitor of the Turkish cause.

Under the shadow of an ugly partition the enlightened Turks naturally turned their eyes to President Wilson and America, which showed no desire for territorial acquisition in Turkey. [...] America was to help Turkey financially and economically, send experts and advisers for a certain number of years, guarantee a period of peace in Turkey, and give the Turkish nation a chance to start a new regime and set up internal reform. (*Ordeal* 12)

Edip stresses that America, differently from the European powers, had no interest in political expansion on the former imperial territories, and that its presence was motivated by purely humanitarian reasons. This is understandable in so far as during the War of Independence American interests in Anatolia were not yet declared or perceived as imperialistic (Başci 119). Throughout the War of Independence American missionaries “conveniently dissociated themselves from European imperial powers,” allowing the U.S. to maintain a “privileged position” in the Turkish public opinion, as opposed to Europe (*ibid.*). Later texts covering the same age are much less naïve in assessing the American presence in Turkey. Marjorie Housepian’s *The Smyrna Affair* (1966), for instance, while at times extremely appreciative of American humanitarian missions in Turkey, describes American intervention as Janus-faced: “one face is miss liberty, the other eagle-eyed and imperialist looking for opportunities of expansion” (Housepian 56).

To Edip, the American protectorate appears as the solution “enlightened” Turks most naturally wished for, in contrast to “the shadow of an ugly partition” which would have handed over the fragments of the Ottoman Empire to the Allies. Through a dramatic contrast of darkness and light, Edip portrays America

as a salvific agent capable of rescuing Turkey from the darkness of European expansionism. Seçkin Ergin and Ahmet Beşe indicate that Edip's light-and-dark symbolism might be "reminiscent of her Anglo-American education" (Ergin and Beşe 160): in fact, this duality features prominently in the missionary imagery. Pelin Başçi underscores that missionary rhetoric "emphasized the opposition between the light diffused by the progress of Christian civilization and the darkness of other traditions and cultures" and that "the missionary enterprise was perceived as a 'universal struggle between the children of light and the children of darkness'" (Başçi 107).

### **True Christians and very Unchristian Christians: American Humanitarianism in the Empire Territories**

What links Edip's work, Christian missionary rhetoric, and the United States is Edip's direct experience with missionary education at the Üsküdar American Academy for Girls. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the Ottoman Empire became increasingly Westernized due to a series of structural reforms, "schools run by the missionaries opened one after another," enabling upper-class Ottoman girls to access a 'Western' or 'American' education (Ergin and Beşe 98). Edip graduated from that college in 1910, and spoke fondly of it. In a eulogy written for the Turkish press, Edip admits to having "love[d], love[d], love[d] everything about the college" (Edip in Sönmez 83). Başçi regards Edip as a product of Western education and indicates that the writer was "embraced by the missionaries as one of their own" (119). Ergin and Beşe describe Edip as a product of her time, a representative of "a group of Turkish intellectual women with a good command of English, and familiarity with the Anglo-American culture" who became involved in politics and attempted a transfer of American values and ideals on Turkish soil (103). Thanks to their experience at American missionary schools, this group of women developed an intellectual and emotional bond with the United States. This bond is of central importance the work of Edip, who felt "culturally affiliated" to the U.S. (ibid.).

Historian Anat Lapidot-Firilla defines the years between 1880 and 1920, including the Turkish War of Independence, as "The Golden Age of missionary enterprise in the Middle East," but the work of American missionaries in Anatolia began as early as 1820 (Lapidot-Firilla 154). Among missionary associations and organizations, the Near East Relief (NER) was the most prominent. The influence of this organization, Lapidot-Firilla explains, was "immense": its affiliates ran colleges, schools, rescue homes for women, refugee camps, hospitals, bazaars, and



orphanages (156); the orphanage in *The Turkish Ordeal* that appears later in this chapter is also a NER facility.

The role American missionary and relief organizations played in the establishment of American political interests in Anatolia is the object of controversy, and therefore very hard to assess (see also Başçı 101). To put it with political scientist Jeremy Salt, the place of relief institutions in imperial and colonial history is “idiosyncratic,” as these “unreliable allies” of Western governments did disseminate Western values, but did not feel attached to any temporal power, as they believed to be doing God’s work exclusively (Salt 310). Lapidot-Firilla assesses NER influence in terms of “informal diplomacy [...] of compassion” (167) emphasizing that, although the priority of NER activists was at all times the well-being of the local populations, they indeed “contributed in further establishing American informal diplomacy and American consumerism” (156) and “served American interests in the Middle East” (159). Başçı dispels ambivalences by labeling missionary facilities as “instruments to transform minds and to reconstruct [a] society” in which “the ‘Anglosaxon mind would steadily gain influence over the course of events’” (Başçı 103–104). On a similar note, Ann Stoler argues that euphemistic denominations for forceful occupation and humanitarian ventures – i.e. “imperial guardianship, trusteeships, delayed autonomy, temporary intervention, conditional tutelage, military takeover in the name of humanitarian works, violent intervention in the name of human rights, and security measures in the name of peace” – do not redeem imperial projects: to the contrary, they are constitutive of them (Stoler 8).

This is particularly relevant because in her autobiographical work Edip insists that the American presence in the Middle East was driven by exclusively humanitarian motives: figures of American missionaries and activists populate Edip’s text and her narrator never questions their interest in bringing relief to the destitute populations of Anatolia. By contrast, Edip’s account hypothesizes a link between European political expansionism, aiming to “exterminate Turkish rule in Asia Minor” (*Ordeal* 162), and mass-conversions carried out by former imperial minorities, aiming to weaken the predominance of Islam by Christianizing masses of Muslim children. This parallel corroborates the portrayal of imperial minorities as the agents of European imperialism and exemplifies the narrator’s conviction that Turkish identity was being attacked from several fronts and by different means. To Edip, not only was Turkey threatened by external enemies trying to secure a piece of the empire’s territories, but also eroded from within. In the following passage Edip narrates how Armenians, put in charge of orphanages, converted masses of Turkish children:

There were a large number of Turkish orphanages in Anatolia filled with Turkish children whose parents had been the victims of the Armenians. [...] Some Turkish families had taken Armenian children out of kindness and pity without any desire to make them Moslems: for the Moslem Turks do not have the missionary instincts of the Christians of the West. [...] Somehow the Turkish orphans got the worst of it. [...] [They] were being Armenianized daily. The children who were brought to the association were left in the care of the Armenian women, and these Armenian women, either by persuasion or threats or hypnotism, forced the Turkish children to learn by heart the name of an Armenian woman for their mother and the name of an Armenian man for their father. [...] When the children were brought in large numbers from the orphanages of Anatolia they were sent to the Armenian church in Koum Kapou, a hotpot which boiled the Turkish children and dished them out as Armenians. Some children tried to run away but were always brought back. (*Ordeal* 12–13)

Horrorific rhetorical devices like the “hotpot” metaphor suggest a parallel between conversions and cannibalistic practices, and the accounts of psychological violence on Muslim children, hypnotized and abused in the hands of their Armenian tutors, foreground a distinction on ethical grounds between the fraudulent Christians, including Europeans and former Ottoman minorities, and the morally superior Turkish Muslims, who, in the case at hand, “do not have the missionary instincts of the Christians of the West” and therefore act out of “kindness and pity” (12–13).

American missionaries in Turkey emerge as “rare genuinely Christian people among very unchristian Christians,” endowed with “admirable ability, tact, and broad-mindedness,” and, most importantly, with a “strong sense of justice [that] made [them] very sympathetic to the Turkish cause” (139). Edip adds that, if on the one hand the care and concerns of American missionaries were naturally directed towards the Anatolian Christians, on the other their exceptional humanity made them “very sore at heart” over other Christians’ misdeeds and prone to embrace the Turkish standpoint instead (139). When Miss Allan, an American missionary, is invited to visit the Anatolian mainland, devastated and plagued by “Greek atrocities” (231), the narrator of *Ordeal* admits to feeling “very sorry for her, for [she] knew how she hated to see misdeeds done by Christians” (*ibid.*). Americans, Armenians and Greeks may share the same religion, but the narrator is certain that, in the face of the crimes perpetrated by the minorities in the name of Christianity, Americans will be inclined to reconsider their original sympathies for overseas Christians and judge according to a universal sense of morality. In spite of their different creeds, Edip believes that a kinship on a moral and ethical basis, stronger than religious affiliation, unites Turks and Americans: a “fundamental oneness of all those who, regardless of race and creed, dare to believe in truth and reality” (9). Edip describes figures of American women

missionaries in very positive terms and acknowledges that they “were the only foreigners who stayed with the Turkish people from the beginning to the end of their historic struggle, and they were regarded with sincere respect and affection by Turks of all classes” (139). Here Edip elaborates on the supposed closeness between American and Turkish sensitivities, possibly triggered by the conviction that the two countries might share similar aspirations to independence.

Edip’s differentiation between true and deviant Christianity resonates with missionary rhetoric, which viewed Protestantism as the ‘true’ Christianity and dismissed the other Christian creeds as aberrations. The goal of American missionaries in Anatolia was in fact “to carry Gospel truth to the *nominal* Christians of the Eastern churches” and eradicate “untruth”: which included Islam and “the churches of the Eastern rites” as well (Salt 288, emphasis added). In addition, American missionaries viewed Ottoman Christians as “subservient” to their Muslim rulers (Başçı 114). In *Ordeal*, Edip appropriates this label and depicts them as obedient auxiliaries of European imperialism instead: Edip sees Ottoman Christians as an instrument for the Allies to inflict pain and humiliation on the Turks. She laments the “sense of injustice which the Allies were inflicting by means of these native Christians” (318) and denounces Greeks and Armenians as “agents” of the West: “the West was universally hated in Turkey on account of the massacres and oppression she had suffered at the hands of its agents, the Greeks and the Armenians” (119). Considering Edip’s account on the terrible reputation of the West in Turkey, the “sincere respect and affection” “Turks of all classes” feel for American missionaries (139) becomes even more striking.

Edip’s exclusion of American missionaries from the imperialistic axis connecting European powers and former Ottoman minorities is in need of further questioning. As Edip herself observes, many of these orphanages that were theatres of mass-conversions were run by the American Near East Relief, wherefore a complete American estrangement from such practices was not credible. In fact, American missionaries in Anatolia undoubtedly had a certain amount of political influence, as they stayed in contact with American politicians, keeping them informed on local developments. At times missionaries pressured their government into military intervention, often with the goal of protecting the rights of Ottoman Christians.<sup>63</sup> “Missionary involvement,” Salt reports, “was instrumental in highlighting the need for foreign governments to protect Ottoman Christians,

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63 This, for example, happened on the occasion of the Armenian Massacres of 1894–1896, when outraged American missionaries demanded military intervention from the U.S. government (Salt 307).

and therefore strengthened the case being argued [...] for European intervention on humanitarian grounds” (Salt 307). Contrary to Edip’s expectations regarding a moral affinity between American Christians and Muslim Turks, which would theoretically lead any ‘true Christian’ to sympathize with the Turkish cause, American missionaries mostly intervened in favor of the Christian minorities of the empire.

### **An Imaginary Us and an Imaginary Them**

The polarity between Turks and Americans and the morally ambiguous Anatolian and European Christians is mirrored in more concrete political alignments featuring European powers and their agents – Armenians and Greeks – on one side, Turks and Americans on the other. *The Turkish Ordeal* claims that the former imperial minorities fully identified with the agenda of the European powers. The former section illustrated how Armenians allegedly enforced Western policies and contributed to the weakening of Turkish hegemony by mass conversions. In the following passage, reporting the account of a peasant woman on the ransacking of a Turkish village at the hands of Greek soldiers, the narrator shows how the Greeks brought devastation on Europe’s account:

“[The Greeks] laughed and told me that Avropa (Europe) had sent them to do it all, and that they would never leave us in peace. That man Avropa must be told, daughter: he must leave us, the poor peasants, alone. What have we done to him?” [...] The Greeks have made the Sakaria people in general understand that Europe was the responsible power behind—even the stupidest knew it. (233–234)

The narrator’s last comment, captioning the woman’s story, emphasizes how the Greeks were merely executing Europe’s orders or acted on their own initiative enjoying Europe’s tacit approval. Not only, in Edip’s discourse, do Greeks and Armenians endorse European policies, they also hold significant power over the European states: the “armies of occupation,” the narrator states, “saw the Turks with the eyes of the Greeks and the Armenians” (Edip 4).

Edip’s delineation of an imaginary ‘us’ and an imaginary ‘them’ results in a curious reconfiguration of East and West, and, by the same token, also of the conflict between the *Garb-Mefkuressi* and the *Shark-Mefkuressi*, the Eastern and the Western ideal (Edip 119). Edip’s West, an inimical entity blinded by the dream of territorial gain and deaf to the people’s suffering, includes Europe as well as Anatolian Christians: “The West was universally hated in Turkey on account of the massacres and oppression she had suffered at the hands of its agents, the Greeks and Armenians” (Edip 119).

Conversely, America does not fall within such definition, not does it ever figure among the oppressors, a category that includes Western as well as Eastern elements:

There was the sultan's government preying on the people; there were the French occupying Cilicia and sending Armenian legions to persecute the people too; there were the Greeks around Smyrna massacring, burning, ravaging, and violating every human law; there were the Allies in Istamboul oppressing the Turks at their pleasure – there was the whole Western world with its everlasting “Down with the Turks!” There were Western statesmen insisting that the big stick should always be used with Orientals, with the unspeakable Turks. (Edip 119)

The narrator enumerates the powers threatening Turkish independence. Remarkably, she refers to the “Sultan's government” as one of them, implying that not only was Turkey being sieged by external potential colonizers, but also kept hostage by internal ones, namely, the Ottoman Christians and the Sultan, whom Edip exposes as another agent of European imperialism: “as not only the sultan but the entire Turkish government seemed entirely in the hands of the English and the Allies” (86). Edip's account covers a period of history when, to put it with Landry, “postcolonial resistance was enacted against the imperialist, and sometimes colonialist, ambitions and armies of external Great Powers but also against internal imperial Ottoman institutions” (Landry 154). While the Europeans embrace the point of view of the Christian minorities and integrate their colonial resentment into their expansionistic policies, only America refrains from adopting the perspective of Armenians and Greeks, supporting the Turkish cause.

In view of the extreme difficulty of getting the Turkish side of the question published inside and outside the country, Turkey owes a great debt to the individual fairmindedness and the wholesome curiosity of the American correspondents at this period. They came to us of their own accord, and it is through their efforts that the Turkish standpoint gradually leaked out through the dense cloud of prejudice and hatred, and the political obstruction of the West. (*Ordeal* 15)

Relying on qualities such as “wholesome curiosity” and “fairmindedness,” American correspondents, like American missionaries, appear as independent and *super partes* observers, subscribing to the truth and validity of the Turkish struggle for independence. The perceived moral kinship of Turkey and the United States is thus accompanied by an affinity on political grounds, a brotherhood of nations which underwent a struggle for independence. In fact, the narrator repeatedly states that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was to become Turkey's George Washington (*Ordeal* 99).

Edip played a prominent role in the struggle for Turkish independence and in the shaping of Turkish nationalism, yet her autobiography presents a subversive idea of nationalism, far removed from the racial policies and historiographical practices of Kemalism, and much less interested in endorsing the personality cult that developed around the figure of the Turkish leader. Most importantly, as Hülya Adak observes, Edip's autobiography is located in the Western autobiographical tradition, which concerns itself with the development of a changing self, moving from naivety to maturation (Adak 519). Edip's idea of nationalism follows the same trajectory. If in *The Turkish Ordeal* the narrator does not hesitate to express her belief in the superiority of the Turkish race, labels the Ottoman minorities as traitors and condemns their lack of morality, she ultimately acknowledges every ethnic group in the former Ottoman Empire its share of suffering, and allows shared pain to eventually level ethnic and religious differences.

Towards the end of the book, the narrator acknowledges that governments, not the people, are uniquely responsible for the horrors of war:

The war seemed inevitable on our side. The enemy was in our very homes, and, fighting or no fighting, those homes turned into ashes and our people put to the sword. Why? Simply because a politician or a few politicians had a capricious desire to change the map of Asia Minor. And the Greeks too were caught by the promise of gain and glory without effort. But already they were seeing what it was costing them [...]. Poor Turks ... poor Greeks ... poor world! ... (195)

As *The Turkish Ordeal* nears its end, the narrator comes to the realization that even the Christian minorities were nothing but pawns on a chessboard on which every move had been orchestrated by European governments.

While Kemal sets out to eradicate Turkey's imperial past from the annals of history and assert the hegemony of Turks in Anatolia, Edip ultimately reconfirms the validity of the Ottoman ideal of solidarity and unity among the diverse ethnic groups that composed the multicultural texture of the empire. Kemal's nationalism – with its emphasis on the creation of a monoethnic, monocultural society – was in line with Western nationalisms. Edip's nationalism, instead, was a multiethnic one. Because of this and other discrepancies between Edip's thought and the Kemalists', the destiny of this subversive counternarrative was one of exile. Disconnected from its home country, the autobiography was published abroad and addressed to a Western implied readership – an American one in particular.

The American education Edip received may have led her to reserve for America a privileged position in her narration of history. Edip was the product of a missionary school, which greatly impacted her perception of politics and religion. Edip's work, Başı writes, "reflects the influence of the missionaries" and her understanding of religion can be summarized as a "fusion of the spiritual teachings of Islam and Christianity" (112). It is important, however, to mention one more reason that might have influenced Edip's benevolent, hopeful representation of America in her autobiography. Before leaving Istanbul to join the nationalist army in Ankara, Edip entrusts her two children to Charles Crane, an American diplomat, with the request of taking them to America and provide for their education (*Ordeal* 58). When describing the scope of her autobiography in *The Turkish Ordeal*, Edip writes:

I thought of [my autobiography] as an attempt to touch people whom I had never met, and would never meet – an attempt to reach distant firesides where human hearts are yearning for true contacts with other human beings who are too far away from them to meet in flesh. But in reality it was to be written above all for the little folk who were just setting out to cross the Atlantic. (133)

Edip admits that her book had been written "above all" for her children. In a way, this detail confirms that, if not at an American readership, the autobiography was at least primarily directed at one located in America.

Although Edip never became a Turkish American subject herself, her autobiography is a pioneering text of Turkish American literature. Since its publication, the book has situated itself on an international literary market, more specifically an Anglophone one. Thus disconnected from the Turkish literary scene, the autobiography develops a transnational trajectory connecting America and Turkey on different levels, and constructs a cultural, moral, and even religious kinship between the two countries. In the preface to her non-fictional book *Turkey Faces West* (1930), Edward Meade Earl, Professor of History at Columbia University, described Edip as "a voice to which Americans can listen to with sympathy and confidence [...] not new to American readers" (Meade Earl in Edip 19, 21). Most importantly, Edip's writing reverberated in the work of younger authors who deepened the transatlantic connection between Turkey and the United States. Shafak, for instance, has re-elaborated some of Edip's salient images and symbols – such as orphanages and Istanbul ferries – weaving them into a post-national narrative.

## Ferries and Orphanages: Rewriting the Legacy of Edip's Memoirs

Two powerful woman storytellers meet [...],  
both working at strengthening the ties among women while  
commemorating and transmitting the powers of our foremothers.  
Trinh Min Ha, *Woman, Native, Other*

My study will proceed by exploring how Edip's autobiography resonated in the more recent writings of Elif Shafak. By comparing two passages from *The Turkish Ordeal* with texts by Shafak, I will show that Shafak retrieves and rewrites iconic urban symbols (the Istanbul ferries) and grey zones of Turkish history (the orphanages during the War of Independence) that appear in Edip's autobiography. I argue that both writers present ferries and orphanages as key spaces reflecting dynamics of conflict and coexistence among Ottoman ethnic groups. If Edip's ferries and orphanages indicate that unbridgeable differences exist between the Ottoman elite and the subject populations and thus reinforce nationalist discourses, Shafak, conversely, presents them as spaces of multiculturalism and reconciliation, suggesting that what unites Ottoman ethnic groups is stronger than what divides them. The representation of Otherness emerging from the episodes at hand reveals how both texts renegotiate dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, reconfigure the borders of East and West, and "write back" to Western or local hegemonic narratives.

In spite of this fundamental divergence, Shafak's writing is indebted to Edip's legacy, as she shares some of Edip's prominent concerns. For instance, the centrality of women and children in the making of subversive historiographical narratives is crucial to both writers. Edip's text shows how the nationalist bias against Ottoman Christians was latent in the everyday life of Turkish women, yet, as the narrator gradually renounces her nationalist standpoint to embrace an all-encompassing idea of Ottoman citizenship, women and children will be the catalysts of her change of perspective. For Edip, women, the sole inhabitants of cities and villages in times of war, are the ultimate guardians of every nation. Correspondingly, works by Shafak such as her first novel in English, *The Saint of Incipient Insanities* (2005), her best-selling book *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2007), and the newspaper article "Life in the Islands" present a predominantly feminine universe. In other words, both writers work toward the creation of a matrifocal historiography.

Another element that unites Edip's and Shafak's reconstructions of Turkish history is the choice of English as their literary language, a decision that raises a



host of questions regarding reception, implied readership, and ambivalent ways of relating to the country of origin. Edip's and Shafak's historical narratives are in fact characterized by a constitutive ambivalence: considering their present-day reception in Turkey and abroad, they are both mainstream and subversive. Even if Edip is now acclaimed as one of the founders of the modern Turkish nation and a pioneer of Turkish feminism, her autobiography, conceived for an Anglo-phone market, was severely ostracized and did not find its way back to Turkey until the 1960s, the year of publication of the first controversial translation in Turkish. Shafak is a best-selling author, gathering ardent fans among observant AKP supporters as well as among the secular offspring of past Kemalist regimes (see Adil n.p.). Yet, she was repeatedly attacked by ultra-nationalist fringes of Turkish society and tried for having 'insulted Turkishness' according to article 301 of the Turkish penal code, which prohibits Turkish artists and public figures from disrespecting the state and its institutions. Both Edip and Shafak are therefore prominent writers, grounded in the history and society of their home country, but also part of the international literary arena, and very much involved in ongoing debates on cosmopolitanism.

### **Hullabaloo on the Bosphorus Ferry: The Development of Othering Strategies from “Borrowed Colonialism” to Nationalism**

The ferry anecdote, taking place sometime after the end of World War I and the signing of the 1918 armistice with the Allied powers, is part of a larger section of *The Turkish Ordeal* which documents the situation in Anatolia after the arrival of the Allied forces: “with the entry of the Allied armies,” Edip notes, “the insolence of the Greeks and the Armenians and the treatment of the peaceful Turkish citizens in the streets became scandalous” (5). The passage effectively expresses the narrator's outrage at seeing the city of Istanbul, stronghold of the Ottomans, taken over by former imperial subjects and foreign powers. However, the ferry scene, worth quoting *in extenso*, is particularly poignant as it focuses on the articulation of difference between the Ottoman ruling elite and the imperial subjects after the empire had collapsed, and shows the overlapping of imperialist and nationalist discourses in Edip's autobiography:

In those days one cause of the disorder in the boats was the fact that the Christian women who had second-class tickets came and sat in the first-class cabin. The attendants and the controllers are mostly Turkish; the company is an old Turkish company. The violent-looking rabble (mostly servant class) who swarmed the first-class cabin always threatened the controllers with the Allied police if they insisted on demanding and getting the difference between the first and second class [...]. On this particular occasion, as

usual, most of the Christian women in the first class had second-class tickets, and I noticed particularly a Greek woman in brilliant yellow who had pushed two women over on each other's laps to be able to get a seat. When the controller came she announced proudly that her ticket was second-class but that she always traveled first-class when she had a second-class ticket. The controller did not look as mild as she expected. "All the Turkish women who take a second-class ticket sit in the second class," he said. "They are Turkish," she answered, "I am Greek, and I am protected by the English and the French. I won't sit outside and catch cold. [...] You dirty Turk, you abomination," and springing up she slapped him on the face and tried to spit on it as well. In another instant she was being carried out in his arms like a child, he holding her away from his face and she trying to reach his head with her fists. "I will tell the French, I will tell the English," she was screeching. [...] Her language was such that the inspector ordered her to go away; but before the cabin had settled down she came back, and, sitting between two closely veiled Turkish women, she began to swear in Greek as an outlet to her roused passions. Among the epithets with which she was honoring the Turkish women beside her was the word "prostitute." [...] She managed to fire a last shot at an old-fashioned elderly Moslem lady who had been very quiet throughout the whole scene. "Dirt and abomination of the Christians, you dog of a Moslem," she cried. The old lady gasped and fainted. (*Ordeal* 7–8)<sup>64</sup>

The episode highlights a crucial moment of passage from the late *Ottoman* ways of defining Otherness to the development of Othering strategies proper of *Turkish* nationalism. At first sight, the difference between upper-class Turkish women, like the narrator, and the Greek agitator seems to be configured in terms of class, religion and ethnicity, and to reflect the classic Othering strategies of the Ottoman elite. In the classical age of the empire, Ussama Makdisi confirms, "religion and ethnicity were crucial makers of difference in the Ottoman system – they helped define what it meant to be an Ottoman: a member of the ruling elite, urban, above all aware of multiple ethnicities." Yet, Makdisi continues, being Ottoman entailed a "fusion of privilege, urbanity, class, patronage and Sunni Islam" (773); therefore, class was also a crucial criterion determining inclusion and one the narrator is aware of.

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64 It is of course impossible and beyond the point of this study to assess the historical accuracy of this event, as well as whether such behaviors were as widespread as Edip wants her reader to believe. I am inclined to consider the ferry anecdote, as the autobiography as a whole, a product of fiction. Either way, it is noteworthy that the anecdote expresses a fierce resentment towards the Christian minorities of the empire. The target of the narrator's evident scorn and outrage is not the woman in yellow alone – who may or may not have existed and may or may not have behaved in this unseemly fashion – but the entire category of "Christian women" who allegedly disrespect the institution of the ferry.

Yet, Edip's description of the colonial Other is complicated by a phenomenon typical of the last years of the Ottoman Empire, one that Selim Deringil, in his influential article "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Postcolonial Debate," calls "borrowed colonialism" (314). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Deringil argues, the Ottoman elite adopted the mindset of their enemies, the Western imperialists, and began to apply Othering strategies proper of Western colonialism to their own imperial subjects, describing them as having a "wild nature," "living in a state of savagery," and "only deserving contempt" (Deringil 317). Even though Deringil refers principally to the Ottoman periphery as the main target of 'borrowed' Othering strategies, Edip's autobiography proves that similar Othering practices targeted the Christian residents of Istanbul as well. Christian women on the ferry are described as animal-like, barbaric, and uncivilized: a "violent-looking rabble [...] who swarmed the first-class cabin." The Greek troublemaker dresses in an inappropriate manner, she wears "brilliant yellow" garments, while it was considered advisable for women of the upper classes to wear black. She acts in a violent and unrestrained way, giving vent to her "roused passions" by swearing horribly at the other passengers. The text underscores the enormous distance between the "violent-looking rabble" of Christian women and the modest-looking, properly-behaved Turkish women: a distance that is dramatized by the short exchange between the Greek woman and the "old-fashioned elderly Moslem lady," who is so overwhelmed at the insults directed at her that she faints. In addition, minorities are addressed as childlike and requiring constant monitoring, as demonstrated once again by the narrator's description of the Greek woman, who the controller carries away "like a child."

The ferry scene in Edip's text is an example of "borrowed colonialism." The incompatibility of subject populations with modernization and technology is another crucial point and the focus on ferries is in fact hardly a coincidence. When Sultan Abdulhamid II issued a memorandum containing a series of measures to ensure the modernization of the provinces of the empire, means of transportation were of central importance. According to Deringil, public transport was equated with modernization and Westernization, and represented an important aspect of a "somewhat naïve civilizational mission" the Ottoman elite meant to carry out in the province (Deringil 320). The fact that the Christians of Istanbul could not internalize the behavioral code required on such items of progress as ferries and busses confirmed that their barbarism was unredeemable. Support for this interpretation comes from the insistence, on Edip's part, on how Istanbulite Christians could not come to terms with the functioning of means of public transportation. Another

passage in *Ordeal* shows an Armenian bus conductor “taking the Christian women in and pushing the Turkish women out,” a practice that caused much distress as “if [the poor women] failed to get on [they would] have to pass through unsafe and dark streets in order to reach their homes” (*Ordeal* 18). The Armenian conductor who had exposed Turkish women to potential violence in the dark streets of the city is finally scolded and dissuaded from persevering in his unprofessional behavior by a “big manly” Turkish police officer, who “found the courage to stand for a Turkish woman whom he did not even know” (18).

If on the one hand Armenians and Greeks are described as incapable of adapting to the civilized, urban environment of Istanbul, Turks, on the other hand, are impeccably-mannered models of self-control and urbanity. Men are virile (“big” and “manly,” 18), good-natured, and compassionate, women modest and aristocratic. In the last phase of the empire, the awareness of a profound difference between the ruler and the ruled, drawing on the European colonial experience, replaced more malleable boundaries between the elite and the non-elite that had characterized the Ottoman Empire before its modernization. Starting from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Deringil and Makdisi argue, the Ottoman rulers appropriated Western Othering strategies as an unprecedented enforcement of the imperial center was needed in order to compete with the European empires and avoid being relegated to a subaltern position. This late-empire racialism (Makdisi 770) was rooted in the Western Enlightenment and re-cast the ‘white man burden’ philosophy in an Ottoman context, where Turkish tutelage was needed in order to lead the imperial provinces from a pre-modern condition of barbarism into modernity.

The description of the Christian Other emerging from Edip’s ferry scene is clearly informed by late-Ottoman Othering strategies, but it simultaneously shows how these are being hybridized by a nationalist ideology in the making. Especially in the episode involving the ferry, Edip’s autobiography laments the incompatibility of ‘barbarism’ and ‘civilization,’ represented in the text by Christian minorities and Turks respectively, as well as the failure of the Ottoman *mission civilizatrice*. In other words, Edip makes use of the late-Ottoman rhetoric of power, but there is no trace of an imperial civilizational mission any more. Therefore, the arguments that were once used to legitimize Ottoman rule over subject populations continue to be employed with a different purpose, namely, to vouch for Turkish national independence and sovereignty over the Anatolian territories that had been occupied by the Allies.

Although I had watched the scenes of violence in the cabin with self-control, the atmosphere of the deck began to stir me very strangely. Here were the poorer women, dressed in loose black *charshafs*, their faces always unveiled. I found their quiet ways

very soothing, and they always made a place for me to sit among them. But in spite of this apparent calm I was becoming conscious of something subtle and penetrating about them. They did not talk much; still, I felt that they were profoundly affected and sad. They were neither articulate nor demonstrative, yet one could see that they had a sense of the doom of the Turkish nation; in fact, contact with the masses in Turkey made one feel that the doom of total extermination decided on by the powers was tangible enough to be felt by the simplest among them. (8)

This passage further illustrates the urbane, composed behavior of Turkish women, independent from social extraction. Moreover, Edip's benign description of women of the lower classes sitting on the deck confirms that difference in Edip's text is not so strongly articulated in terms of class, but principally along ethnic and religious lines. The bond felt by the extremely class-conscious narrator with the "poorer women" on the deck signals that Ottoman markers of difference are shifting and a sense of national belonging on an ethnic basis is starting to emerge. Most importantly, the narrator and the other women passengers are united by "a sense of the doom" looming over "the Turkish nation." In spite of the clear reference to a nationalist mindset in the mention of a "Turkish nation," the sense of doom is not merely a product of the military occupation of Anatolia, but also, and in the same measure, of the failure of the Ottoman imperial mission.

The fact that Ottoman ways of configuring difference may partially coalesce with Turkish nationalist Othering strategies is not new in itself. "Subaltern studies as well as authors such as Benedict Anderson and Timothy Mitchell," Deringil argues, "inevitably see nationalism as something that follows European colonialism. In the case of the Ottoman 'borrowed colonialism' we have something that develops side-by-side with it" (314). Here Deringil specifies how, in the Turkish context and in the last decades of the empire, colonialism and nationalism can be envisioned as two parallel phenomena: this parallel appears in Edip's *The Turkish Ordeal* as well. More specifically, the ferry episode shows that Edip's autobiography embodies the overlapping of imperial and nationalistic Othering strategies. The same arguments employed by the imperial elite to justify its rule over the empire's subject populations are appropriated by Edip to denounce how Turks – a civilized and modern people – are denied sovereignty over Anatolia and forced to suffer humiliation at the hands of their former subjects. It is now appropriate to conclude with some further remarks on how Edip's ferry episode renegotiates categories of inclusion and exclusion, East and West.

While emphasizing the unbridgeable difference between Ottoman elite and Christian subject populations, Edip also highlights a series of affinities between Turkey and the West. She does that, firstly, by defining difference in a way that draws on how European colonialist states represented their colonial subjects,

and by Orientalizing the subject populations of the empire according to the very principles of Western Orientalism. Secondly, Edip presents her narrator and the Turks as models of urbanity and progress. To Edip's Western readership, who was likely to find the narrator of *The Turkish Ordeal* very similar to upper-class ladies in the West, or to the heroine of a Western novel,<sup>65</sup> the occupation of Turkey might at that point have looked paradoxical. Edip's powerful description shows Western readers that the Allied powers in Anatolia were not containing the insurgence of a barbaric empire, but severely limiting the independence and sovereignty of a perfectly humane population, formerly committed to a similar civilizing mission. Thirdly, Edip constructs Turkish modernity as informed by Western notions of progress, technologization, urbanity, and the rise of a national conscience. Edip's desire to look Western to Western readers comments on Turkey's "indecisive relationship with Europe" (Helvacioğlu 516). In spite of her fierce opposition to European colonialism, the narrator harbors mixed feelings towards the West,<sup>66</sup> as it is typical of Turkish nationalism, which configures the West as "both the enemy and the object of desire" (Helvacioğlu 518).

Edip's ferry can conclusively be regarded as a space that exposes the conflict between Muslim Turks and the Christian minorities of the empire. Christians are Orientalized according to the 'borrowed' canons of Western Orientalism and therefore depicted as backward, beastly, and unaware of codes of behavior that regulate life in a Westernized, urban environment such as Istanbul. The ferry functions in this context as a metonymy of progress, an item that reflects, on the one hand, how effectively the empire has been modernized by its Ottoman rulers and, on the other hand, how ineffective the empire's civilizing mission proved in the case of Ottoman Christians, who remained in a state of 'savagery.' On the ferry, the very notions of East and West are, once again, re-negotiated: this time Edip's narrator casts Greeks and Armenians as part of a backward Orient, while collocating Muslim Turks in a Western narrative of rationality and progress. As I established in the previous section, however, the narrator also branded the Ottoman minorities as part of the Western imperialist project. Interestingly enough, the position of the minorities is highly ambivalent and always antipodal to Turkey: Western when Turkey sides with America (which, as the previous section suggested, occupies an idiosyncratic position within the 'West'), Eastern when it identifies with Western narratives of progress.

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65 Adak reminds us that Edip's autobiography closely follows the Western tradition, which "narrates the development of a 'Self' moving from *childhood* or *naïveté* to *gradual maturation*" (Adak 518).

66 None of this ambivalence, however, affects Edip's representation of the United States.

## Ferries Rewritten: Elif Shafak's "Life in the Islands"

Shafak's article "Life in the Islands," published on *Turkish Daily News* in 2006, offers a very different perspective on the role of ferries in relation to diversity in imperial and post-imperial Turkey. The article focuses on the relevance of the Istanbul islands – Büyükada, Heybeliada, Burgaz, and Kınalı – in today's cultural imagery. The islands appear as a "sanctuary [of] inner peace and tranquility," but most importantly they embody "an ages-old, deeply-rooted cosmopolitan culture and a way of life that Istanbul [...] has long lost" (Shafak, "Islands" n.p.). The ferry to the islands share the same connotations.

The first hints of that culture are revealed on the way to the islands, in the ferryboats that commute back and forth between the city and the four islands. There, you will encounter a variety of people, a motley cluster of individuals from all walks of life, and hear a variety of languages and idioms, being spoken all at once. Greek and Jewish, Armenian and French, English and Ladino will intermingle with Turkish. Every now and then you will hear a sentence that had started in Turkish to be completed in Jewish. Sometimes a talk in Turkish will be replete with Armenian expressions. You will hear them all. You will happen upon mothers who speak French with their children, Turkish with their husbands. You will see women who enthusiastically, unreservedly and almost endlessly gossip in one particular language, but then choose another language when they want to "get serious." Next to these seasoned islanders, most of whom have either been born on the island or spent most of their childhood and adolescence here, you will catch sight of the visitors – Istanbulites of all professions, here for a daily escapade from the hustle and bustle of the city, and numerous tourists, composed of mostly Arabs, British, and Russian. The Arabs come with their families, children and all, the British come with their partners, couples holding hands, and the Russian come with their dreams. All are welcome in the islands. ("Islands" n.p.)

Once again, ferries stage the interaction among different ethnic groups, who find themselves sharing a restricted space where difference is magnified. Yet this time the scenario is radically different: one immediately realizes that, on the ferry, class and ethnic difference is celebrated and exhibited. Shafak, writing in English for both Turkish and non-Turkish readerships, proudly presents ferries as spaces where a miniaturized image of Istanbul's "gracefully intense and vivid cosmopolitan culture" ("Islands" n.p.) can be experienced. Edip's and Shafak's ferries are both predominantly feminine spaces. In Shafak, however, the emphasis on women, children, couples, and families conveys the vision of a reassuring environment devoid of conflict, where passengers of all classes and ethnicities interact amiably. Women from different social backgrounds, creeds, and ethnic groups relate to each other by "enthusiastically, unreservedly and almost endlessly gossip[ing]" ("Islands" n.p.), a statement that sets Shafak's ferry in a stark

contrast with Edip's, permanently staging ethnic, religious, and class conflict, especially among women. Edip resorts to late-Ottoman Orientalism to bolster the argument that Muslim Turks are the most suitable to govern post-empire Anatolia and singles out the poor behavior of a Greek woman on a ferry as evidence of the mishandling of power in the hands of underserving, improvised oppressors.

More than eighty years after the foundation of the Turkish republic, Shafak rewrites the significance of the Bosphorus ferry and turns it into a vehicle for a critique of Turkish nationalism, the very ideology Edip promotes in her own ferry anecdote:

And you will lament the gradual loss of this astonishingly, gracefully intense and vivid cosmopolitan culture, once present in almost every nook and cranny in Istanbul and Turkey, but now confined to particular spots and those only. Turkey has lost countless minorities in its recent history – so many non-Muslim families have left this country, step by step. Though they are gone, from each and every family something remains behind – remnants of a past not that far away. As it has moved away from being a multilingual, multiethnic, multireligious empire towards a secular, modern nation-state, it is indeed true that Turkey has accomplished a major transformation unheard of in other regional contexts. And yet the flipside of this story is that a gradual loss of cosmopolitanism has accompanied Turkey's recent political history. [...] It is time to learn not to be afraid of differences – be it ethnic, religious or cultural, and celebrate, once again, multiculturalism. ("Islands" n.p.)

Shafak's text acknowledges the Republican years as a period of progress and advancement, but it mostly expresses concern for the "flipsides" of nationalism: most notably, the disappearance of Ottoman multiculturalism, replaced by policies of assimilationism to an exclusively "Turkish" national identity, and the rupture with the country's imperial history and tradition.

A crucial aspect that characterizes Edip's and Shafak's ferry scenes as antipodal is the approach to the Christian minorities of the empire. "Turkey has lost countless minorities in its recent history," Shafak writes, "so many non-Muslim families have left this country, step by step. Though they are gone, from each and every family something remains behind – remnants of a past not that far away" ("Islands" n.p.). Shafak denounces the effects of nationalist discrimination that led non-Muslim minorities away from Turkey. Thus, after having been the object of Edip's contempt, Greeks and Armenians are now regarded as part of Turkey's multicultural identity and mourned as an overwhelming absence. The ferry on the Bosphorus and the islands around Istanbul stand as mementos of a forgotten past, and, by the same token, remind Turks that reconciliation and coexistence are indeed possible.



The analysis of ferries in this chapter can be read in the light of cultural mobility theory. The goal of mobility theory is, in fact, to transcend the dichotomy between “transport research and social research” and to “connect different forms of transport with complex patterns of social experience” (Buchenau 56). The ferry space enables “complex connections to be made, often as a matter of social (or political) obligation” (ibid.): the travelling crowds on Edip’s ferry are forced into coexistence and this reluctant proximity re-enacts larger social dynamics in a miniaturized space. In Shafak, the fortuitous encounter of people on a ferry recreates the conditions for the cultural intermingling that characterized the Ottoman classical age. The role of ferries in Turkish American literature fits easily with Greenblatt’s understanding of mobility theory as an instrument that connects “literal movement” with the “exchanges, interactions and the flux that are at the core of literature and culture” (Greenblatt in Buchenau 57).

### **Little Stories of Independence: Orphanages**

Orphanages are also involved in the process of rewriting Turkish history from a nationalist perspective into a multicultural one. Often operated by American institutions such as the Near East Relief, orphanages were theatres of ethnic conflict in the years following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and appear in both Edip’s *The Turkish Ordeal* and Shafak’s *The Bastard of Istanbul*. Once again, Edip’s and Shafak’s representations of orphanages reveal telling differences and similarities. The main differences stem from the antithetic ideologies informing the two novelists’ works – nationalism on the one hand, multiculturalism and neo-Ottomanism on the other. The similarities, instead, revolve around the attempt to construct subversive historiographies that downsize the male-singular experience and the historiographical practices that constructed Turkish history around the figure of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, coalescing, in Hulya Hadak’s words, the man and the nation (Adak 516). In both cases, these historical accounts are written in English and placed on an international market.

The representation of orphanages in Edip’s memoirs has already been addressed in this chapter. In her discussion of the poor management of orphanages in the interstitial years between the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the birth of the Republic, Edip denounces Armenians as exponents of a deviant form of Christianity, subjecting Turkish children to barbaric forms of conversion. “[T]he Armenians,” Edip reports, “were not content with occasionally wresting a Turkish child from its nationality; they wanted every child brought there to be pronounced an Armenian without exception. So far even the American missionaries could not go in their Christian zeal” (*Ordeal* 13). Edip casts abused Turkish children as a symbol of the

oppressed Turkish nation, struggling to retain its sovereignty and identity. The following passage illustrates the dramatic effort of a Turkish child, Kiazim, to resist conversion.

A Turkish boy called Kiazim, from Adana, had been taken as an Armenian but did not submit easily. The boy was the son of a Turkish official in Adana. His father had died. As he had no mother either [...] the boy was pronounced Armenian. He had stuck to Nakie Hanum, crying and begging to be saved. But the commission was obdurate. Then the boy had stood up and said, "Kiazim is small, Kiazim is weak, his fists cannot protect him, but the time will come when Kiazim will be strong: then he will show the world that he is a Turk." [...] The pain of the little creature affected me strangely [...]. To me he was a symbol of the helpless Turkish nation at the moment. He had been small and weak. (*Ordeal* 13–14)

Besides women, Edip also integrates children in the Turkish nationalist cause. The narrator establishes a parallel between children and armed resistance (stressed by the fact that Kiazim's father was a Turkish officer) and praises Kiazim's promise of vengeance against his Armenian tormentors, once his fists would have grown into those of a soldier. Not only does the narrator celebrate Kiazim's resistance, she identifies with it. Kiazim's touching story embodies her frustration with the amount of power the Allied bestowed on the former imperial minorities, who, in her view, plotted to annihilate their former Turkish rulers. Not only does Kiazim rise as a symbol of his country, helpless and vulnerable in the hands of the Christian minorities (but nevertheless conscious of its superior physical and moral strength), the little boy's story also exemplifies a deeply rooted rivalry between Turks and Armenians, which escalated with the birth of an Armenian national movement and the Armenian genocide. The narrator designates a passionate child, the emblem of innocence and honesty, as a champion of anti-Armenian resentment. By doing so, the struggle for the preservation of Turkish identity and independence emerges as a most justifiable cause, one even children understand.

In spite of her focus on the oppression of Turkish children, the narrator of *The Turkish Ordeal* also states that "these orphanages had taken Armenian children as well and made them Moslems," but rushes to clarify that this "was wrong" (12) and immediately adds that "some Turkish families had taken Armenian children out of kindness and pity and without any desire to make them Moslems" (12–13). In *The Bastard of Istanbul* Shafak offers a different portrayal of orphanages, as she focuses on Armenian children being converted to Islam. The most salient difference, as previously mentioned, is in the two novels' contrasting ideological priorities. If Edip's work concentrates on the establishment of Turkish national identity, Shafak's concern lies with the rights of the Ottoman minorities. *The*

*Bastard of Istanbul* gives prominence to the conversion of Armenian children to Islam and references to the reverse process are nowhere to be found.

Shushan Stamboulian, later renamed Shermin Kazancı, is an Armenian child who, after having lost her family to the Armenian genocide, is brought to an orphanage. In the orphanage she is given a Muslim name, Shermin, and a number, 626, emphasizing the feeling of de-personalization and uprooting that followed the children's permanence at the orphanages. Unlike Kiazim, Shushan/Shermin accepts conversion for the sake of her own survival, but she will undergo a delayed awakening to her real name and ethnicity later in life, after marrying a Turk and becoming a mother. The following lines show that Shushan/Shermin preserves the memory of her Armenian family, represented by a pomegranate brooch, throughout her life as a Muslim.

Shushan never forgot the pomegranate brooch. Not when she dropped half dead on the road to Aleppo and was left behind; not when the Turkish mother and daughter found her and took her into their house to heal her; not when she was taken by bandits to the orphanage; not when she ceased to be Shushan Stamboulian and became Shermin 626; not when years later Rıza Selim Kazancı would fortuitously chance upon her in the orphanage and [...] decide to take her as his wife; not when she would the next day become Shermin Kazancı. (*The Bastard* 324)

Through the story of Shushan/Shermin, converted to Islam and reintegrated into society as an obedient Turkish wife, Shafak denounces the late-Ottoman and Kemalist policies of discrimination against former imperial minorities, and the practices through which they were assimilated into an idea of Turkishness that underpinned the creation of an ethnically homogeneous Turkish nation. As political scientist Yılmaz Çolak explains, “the Turkish reformers’ main intention was to end the Ottoman multicultural and multinational legacy and melding all differences under the name of Turk” (591). Such process granted Turkish citizenship to non-Muslim minorities such as Greeks, Armenians, and Jews as well as to Muslim immigrants from the former imperial territories. In spite of the apparently generous extension of Turkish citizenship to different ethnic groups present in Turkey, Robert L. Daniel deems Kemalist nationalism as exclusive and xenophobic (Daniel 54–55). He explains how, in the first years of the Republic, non-Turkish doctors were denied their license, while in schools all over the nation history, geography, and civics had to be taught by Turks, in Turkish, and from Turkish textbooks (Daniel 55). Finally, Ömer Taşpınar points out that “the new Turkish Republic recognized non-Muslims as Turkish citizens but engaged in a de facto discrimination against them” (Taşpınar 5). The superficial inclusion of former imperial minorities into the category of Turkishness coincided

therefore with severe limitations of the minorities' civic liberties, driving most of them on diasporic itineraries away from Turkey.

Shafak warns her readers of the dangers connected to the homogenizing, assimilationist approach of Kemalism. Years after her forced conversion, Shushan/Shermin drastically severs the bonds with her Turkish family after rediscovering her Armenianness, a gesture her husband interprets as a betrayal. Most importantly, the novel suggests that her destiny, forced conversion, and ultimately, departure, brought a curse on the entire Kazancı family, one that will prematurely kill its male members for many generations to come.

As in the case of ferries, Edip describes orphanages as sites where Armenians convert Turkish children to Christianity, thus weakening Turkish identity. By contrast, Shafak gives more visibility to the conversion of Armenians to Islam. The significance of orphanages in the shaping of Turkish identity varies greatly in the two accounts. On the one hand Kiazim's story exposes practices of forced conversion perpetrated by Armenians on Turkish children. Kiazim's resistance towards conversion elevates him to a symbol of the Turkish cause. Through Shushan/Shermin's story, instead, Shafak denounces violence perpetrated on the Armenian population, and shows how it affected the future of Shushan/Shermin's Turkish family as well as her own. She also warns that the legacy of the Armenian genocide is going to reverberate negatively on the future of Turkey, should the government not relinquish its negationist position. Shafak's treatment of orphanages connects effectively with her advocacy of multiculturalism in Turkey as an alternative to the failures of nationalism, which she deems responsible for the rupture between Turks and the minorities of the empire, and between modern Turkey and its Ottoman history.

Surely readers are provided with a variety of contradictory representations of missionary enterprises in Anatolia. An article by Armenian American activist and writer Aghavnie Yeghenian in the *New York Times* provides further evidence as to how these accounts differ. Motivated by widespread enthusiasm about the figure of Edip in the United States, Yeghenian's article is an outraged revision of Edip's role in the War of Independence.

She [...] had charge of a vast numbers of Armenian orphans [...]. So this little woman who so often boasts of her American ideals of womanhood [...] after her calmly planning with her associate [i.e. Jemal Pasha, considered one of the masterminds of the Armenian genocide] forms of human tortures for Armenian mothers and young women undertook the task of making Turks of their orphaned children. The allies knew of her complicity in these crimes [...]. (Yeghenian n.p.)

In Yeghenian's description of orphanages, Armenian children were assigned Turkish ethnicity. Not only does Yeghenian contradict Edip's account, she also accuses Edip of playing an active role in these 'conversions' and of torturing Armenian women.

These obscure and contradictory representations of American orphanages in Anatolia during the War of Independence demonstrate that orphanages were sensitive spaces where a new national identity was being defined. This negotiation of identity happened on a practical level – as the orphanage authorities forcibly converted children and ethnic identities were sometimes arbitrarily assigned – but also on the level of literary representation. The divergent depictions of orphanages presented in this section show how different ethnic groups claimed space, autonomy, and recognition within the new republic, struggling to define their roles, Othering and being Othered in turns.

The fact that orphanages were run by Americans is not without relevance. Firstly, Americans appear as silent but omnipresent witnesses of ethnic conflict in Anatolia. Secondly, by addressing their accounts to American audiences, Edip and Shafak assign America the role of the ultimate judge on issues that concern local politics and ethnic struggles. All of these accounts seem to expect, demand, or hope that America may intervene, supporting one claim to sovereignty or the other. Edip calls on the American missionaries to condemn the cruel treatment of Turkish children and share the Turkish cause; in *The Bastard*, Shushan is eventually rescued by her brother and taken to the United States; Yeghenian implies that Edip has abused the American values she had absorbed in her formative years, and interrogates her American audience: "Is this the ideal of American education which we wish to impart to the new generation of Turkish women?" (Yeghenian n.p.). Ultimately, Edip's and Shafak's pleas for American acknowledgement reveal a more or less explicit desire to shape Turkish national identity along the lines of American thought and values.

## **Towards Ottoman Sisterhood**

In spite of the substantial differences dividing Edip and Shafak, it is still possible to claim that the two share considerable similarities, and it would be legitimate to envision Shafak's writing as indebted to Edip's. Shafak doubtlessly writes back to Edip's nationalist imagery, reverting and rewriting it into a discourse of multiculturalism and reconciliation. Yet, in their English publications, both Shafak and Edip fiercely advocate what Mike Featherstone calls "the lesser tradition of history, the suppressed history of outsider groups such as women [and] ethnic minorities" (Featherstone in Çolak 588). Both Edip's and Shafak's works are highly

critical of the Kemalist vision of history, a national myth constructed around the figure of a male leader.

E dip, although a vocal supporter of Turkish nationalism at first, questions the Kemalist doctrine on many levels. Towards the end of *Ordeal*, the narrator recedes from her racist standpoint and realizes that all former Ottoman subjects, independently from creed and ethnicity, are united by common suffering. The mutated attitude towards Christian minorities, especially women, is striking, since the way *Ordeal* ends contradicts its beginnings:

Two young Greek women sat on the ground on each side of the old woman, reclining on her knees in a consciously graceful attitude. "Do come this way, Kirya," called out the old woman in Turkish. The next moment she was telling me her story, seasoned with most obvious flattery for the Turks and for myself. (277)

I could visualize the tragic scene at the station where the Turkish girls were dragged off and violated in public. "Were there no Greek officers who could stop this criminal lunacy?" I asked. She answered, "Yes, two of them shouted frantically: they fired at the men, and it is due to them that I escaped..." Well, it is those two officers who represent for me a Greece which lives and prospers and has a place in the world. (305)

The first excerpt differs enormously from the ferry episode analyzed earlier in this chapter. At this stage, Greek women appear capable of behaving gracefully and respectfully towards the Turks, as emerging from the older woman's kind invitation to the narrator to join them, and from her willingness to open up and "tell her story" to her Turkish interlocutor. The insults targeting Muslim women on the Bosphorus ferry feel very distant from the gracious appellative "Kirya" (madam), with which the Greek woman addresses the narrator. The narrator herself seems apologetic and invested in constructing an inter-ethnic sisterhood that was nowhere to be found on her ferries. The second excerpt, instead, counterbalances the initial bus episode, where an Armenian conductor indirectly exposes Turkish women to violence and abuse by not letting them on his bus and forcing them to walk home alone at night. Here, conversely, two Greek officers save the honor and, possibly, the life of Turkish women. Ultimately, the responsibility for the war is lifted from the shoulders of the Christians: "I was very sorry for the irresponsible<sup>67</sup> Greek population who were uprooted from their homes and often made to pay the price of the blind nationalism of the Greek politicians, or of the perfidious policy of the Allies who had launched the Greeks into

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67 "irresponsible" is to be read, presumably, as lacking responsibility. Yet, the narrator is not unfamiliar with the practice of infantilizing the former imperial subjects. In this light, the term could also be interpreted as clueless, or 'not able to bear responsibility.'

this ugly adventure” (*Ordeal* 305). The Greeks ultimately emerge as the victims of Western scheming, a fate they share with the Turks and the other minorities. In *Ordeal*, the solidarity among Muslim and Christian subjects of the empire in the face of suffering and death gestures to the intrinsic validity of an ‘Ottoman’ identity. The newly-found unity among ethnic groups inhabiting the Anatolian peninsula, in fact, obliterates the need for the ethnic purism of Turkish nationalism, reconfirming Ottoman multiculturalism as the foundation onto which a post-imperial identity can be constructed.<sup>68</sup>

As the two excerpts demonstrate, along with the ferry and bus episodes, individual stories of women are central to Edip’s autobiography. Firstly, women are the ‘privileged’ witnesses of the Turkish war of Independence and they are invested with enormous responsibility: with the men gone to the front, it was their task to “keep themselves and the country alive” (*Ordeal* 249). Secondly, personal stories of women and children on the ferries, in the orphanages, and in the devastated villages of Anatolia accompany the narrator’s trajectory from Kemalist nationalism to a renewed faith in Ottoman multiculturalism as the basis for national identity. The inclusion of minorities in the process of history- and identity-making in Turkey does not make Edip’s nationalist fervor vacillate. Yet, the nationalist narratives articulated in the course of *Ordeal* dismantle those of Kemalism. They do so by configuring the nation not as one imagined community requiring ethnic and religious assimilation, but as a plurality of imagined communities where definitions of self, Other, nation, and minority are in a constant process of revision and negotiation. Through the several individual stories presented in *Ordeal*, Edip retraces moments in which “particular individuals had power (or were powerless) to redraw (or remake) national categories of belonging or exclusion” (Mills 396). Amy Mills would categorize Edip’s nationalism, one made of personal stories and memories, as an “embodied nationalism” (*ibid.*) in which everyday life and individual identities invalidate state-authored identitarian narratives.

Ottoman solidarity and the feminine perspective on history are central themes in Shafak’s writing as well, and the story of Shushan/Shermin confirms

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68 Edip’s celebration of Ottoman sister- and brotherhood is not an innovative concept. Quite the reverse: it is rooted in late-Ottoman, *Tanzimat* mentality. “Beginning with the *Tanzimat*,” Makdisi argues, “Ottoman reformers identified with [Ottoman subjects] as potential fellow citizens with whom they should be united in a newly defined modern Ottoman patriotism. They also saw them as fellow victims of European intrigue and imperialism” (Makdisi 770). Still, in Edip’s narrative, this late Ottoman cautious openness towards multiculturalism prevails over the paradigms of Kemalist nationalism.

the assumption that Turkish nationalism disrupted the intrinsic solidarity of Ottoman populations. In *The Bastard of Istanbul*, the narrator briefly mentions that a Turkish woman and her daughter rescued Shushan/Shermin from the street where she collapsed and welcomed her into their house, where they healed her (324). Only later did bandits take Shushan/Shermin to the orphanage where Rıza Selim Kazancı found her. The succession of events suggests a clash between a sisterhood of Ottoman women, represented by the Turkish women helping an Armenian little girl with no regard to race or creed, and the disruptiveness of male intervention, symbolized by the bandits (in all likelihood male bandits) and especially by Rıza Selim Kazancı, who, in good faith, finalizes Shushan's assimilation to the Turkish homogeneity sponsored by Kemal's nationalism.

### **Women and Children First: Founding a 'Subaltern' Religion**

The representation of Islam offers one more occasion for a comparative analysis of Edip's and Shafak's work, validating the continuity of concerns and imagery in Turkish American literature. The process of reconstructing history giving prominence to feminine voices, repressed or marginalized by patriarchal historiography, also extends to the realm of religion, whose capacity to relate to the female sensitivity is often questioned. Another area where Shafak's and Edip's works overlap is in fact the destabilization of the Koran's male-centered perspective and the renegotiation of women's space within Islam. Edip's and Shafak's 'rewriting' of Islam from the perspective of women lays the basis for the deconstruction of a series of simplistic images of Turkish womanhood that informed the Kemalist discourse, namely, as Zehra Arat suggests, either as "a secluded and inert mass oppressed by the harsh patriarchal rules of Islam," or as "liberated by and living within Mustafa Kemal's Atatürk's secular state" (Arat 4).

Remarkably enough, Edip's and Shafak's rewriting of Islam, which aims to reconsider and expand female subjectivity, coincides with another, parallel project that establishes a compelling connection to the goals of my study. For both writers, rewriting Islam corresponds to bringing it closer to a Christian readership, and to the establishment of a transatlantic connection with a specifically American context. By proposing a Christian reading of episodes and figures of the Koran (Edip) or through the constant effort to create an image of Islam that talks back to post 9/11 Islamophobic discourses (Shafak), the two authors carry out a 'domestication' of Islam that aims, as Said puts it, "to cancel, or at least subdue and reduce, its strangeness and [...] its hostility" (Said 87). The following section provides evidence that while Edip and Shafak renegotiate the space of femininity within religion, they also rewrite Islam within a specifically American frame.



## Halide Edip: Rethinking Prophets and Fathers of the Nation

While *The Turkish Ordeal* is a political text dedicated to undermining the hegemony of Kemalist historiography, the previous volume of Edip's autobiography, *Memoirs of Halide Edip* (1926), covers a more intimate dimension and, in the tradition of the Western *bildungsroman*, accompanies the narrator in her formative years. Yet, the two volumes have as common denominator the goal of "re-narrat[ing] personal and cultural history through an alternative feminine voice" (Ghaussy 5). The narrator of *Memoirs* may differ widely from that of *Ordeal*, but both articulate unauthorized histories that dismantle the narratives of patriarchy.

In *Ordeal*, the male-centered perspective of Kemalist historiography is counterbalanced by multiple stories of women, so as to replace the masculine-singular subject of history with a feminine plurality. This process finds a correspondence in *Memoirs*, where the transmission of historical knowledge is de-masculinized through the figure of young Halide's tutor, Ahmed Aga. The figure of Ahmed Aga is meant to create a contrast with the narrator's previous tutor, a polygamous man who "classed his wives according to their capacity to cook pilaf" (*Memoirs* 114). Ahmed Aga appears as the representative of a non-normative masculinity: no mention of his marital status is given and the most salient trait of his personality seems to be his remarkable intellect. In the narrator's account, Ahmed Aga appears as "a short small man [...], dark, sly and intelligent, a man who could read and write and handle, or rather rule, his masters with psychological insight" (115).

From [Ahmed Aga] I got great deal of my early education. [...] It was by a mere chance that I fell under the influence of a man of his type, but it was this chance that opened to me the folklore, the popular Turkish literature. [...] I lived only when Ahmed Aga was reading stories. (115–116)

The stories the young narrator hears from Ahmed Aga revolve around the "epic, [...] long, bloody, and cruel" battles fought by male heroes (116, 117). Yet, in spite of the exposure to masculine heroism, the education in history and literature the narrator receives from Ahmed Aga is an intensely hybrid experience. His vision of history is one in which the oral and the written traditions, facts and imagination, historiography and folklore intertwine. Ahmet Aga's stories are drawn from history books, but are transmitted orally to the narrator, who is free to overlook the "meager historical facts" and fantasize on the "Oriental imagination" instead (116), choosing her own focus and perspective on the narrated facts. Edip's views on history are reminiscent of feminist theorist Trinh Min Ha's, who locates truth in hybridity, as "being truthful is being in the in-between of all regimes of truth" (Trinh 120). Ahmed Aga emerges therefore as the champion of a malleable

notion of history, including the realms of tale, legend, myth, fiction, literature, the factual as well the fictional.

Thanks to Ahmed Aga's lessons, the narrator develops a fascination for what can be called a 'subaltern history,' deliberately ignoring the perspective of male conquerors to concentrate instead on the subaltern: women, children, and the less privileged social strata. By shifting the focus from male heroes to women and children, Edip tries to construct history as the sum of multifarious experiences.

The book [on the Persian hero Abamouslin Horassani] seemed to squeeze my heart in an iron band, tightening it with the ugly passions and demonstrations of power of the famous heroes. I wondered all the time what the simple little children were doing when all this bloody and cruel struggle was going on in a country, whether they dared to go into the streets and play, and what sorts of nights they had and what dreams they dreamed. [...] Whenever I see or read of a great military hero performing his deeds, and of history or literature recording them, I wonder in the same way, not about the children only, but about the simple grown-up people as well. (118–119)

Not only does this recurring shift of focus from a hegemonic male perspective to a subaltern one bind *Memoirs* and *Ordeal* with significant ideological continuity, but it also extends from history into the realm of religion. Edip's construction of Islam obeys the same criteria guiding her rewriting of history, with particular emphasis on the role of women.

Edip's rewriting of Islam presents a movement from orthodoxy to heterodoxy, and from a patriarchal understanding of doctrine to a semi-matriarchal one which awards equally representative roles to male and female characters. One illuminating example for this are her considerations on a Sufi poem depicting Mohammed as a child, in the arms of his mother Emine.

It was perhaps my objection to the exclusiveness of orthodox Islamism which made me love the simple and beautiful birth poem of Mohammed by an early sixteenth-century poet of the mystic order of the Mevlevi – Suleiman Dede. [...] He makes Emine, the mother of Mohammed, describe the child, when only a few minutes old, as having its little face turned to the wall, its eyes full of tears, mourning and praying for the low and sinful who were destined to eternal fire. (159–160)

The significance of this poem can be articulated on two levels. One aspect involves the renegotiation of the space of the feminine within the patriarchal logics of Islam. By making Emine "describe the child," the poem invests a female figure with prominence, centrality, and the power of description. The second aspect is the characterization of the Prophet Mohammed as a vulnerable child in the arms of his mother. Deprived of the connotations of conqueror and father of Islam,

Mohammed is caught in a situation of partial dependency on his mother's protection<sup>69</sup> and, above all, he appears as the object of her description.

Both aspects point towards the necessity to rethink the space of masculinity within Islam, in order to increase the presence of women as subjects and interpreters of doctrine. In other words, the symbolic and literal downsizing of Mohammed's masculinity in combination with the expanded figure, voice, and role of his mother hopes to "transform a century old silence into a presence of women and subjects in every aspect of existence" (Braidotti 266). For Sohelia Ghaussy, the act of "remembering the mother's body" – indeed what Edip invites religion to do via the Sufi poem she embeds in her narrative – goes into the direction of "resurrecting the lost memory of a female past [...] repressed through an aphasia and voicelessness concerning women's past experiences within patriarchal discourses" (Ghaussy 6). Again, the 'archeological' practice of retrieving a disavowed past gains unquestionable prominence in Turkish American texts.

The figure of Emine does not crush or annihilate that of her child; instead, she seems to act as a mediator, pointing towards him as well as towards herself as the no longer silent "groundwork of male subjectivity – the condition of possibility for his story" (Braidotti 266). Male and female agents in Edip's vision of Islam do not exclude each other – as Emine's tender maternity scene confirms – but are represented as complementary. The mother's body, enlarged and endowed with voice, gently focalizes the reader's attention on her child, which illustrates the interdependence and interconnectedness of the feminine and the masculine. The Sufi poem is therefore a fitting embodiment of Edip's subversive historiography, as in both her autobiographical volumes, to put it with Ghaussy, "women's voices indeed come to form the dominant discourse [...] without, however, constituting a dominating 'master narrative'" (Ghaussy 1)<sup>70</sup>.

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69 Mohammed is dependent, but not utterly helpless: depicted while praying for the "low and sinful," the Prophet seems to be already entitled to some form of agency.

70 It must be added that, although precious to the purpose of my argument, the Sufi poem and the use Edip makes of it in *Memoirs* is not as disruptive of patriarchal or Kemalist doctrine as the more poignant feminist discourse in *Ordeal*. Connected to the domain of motherhood and child bearing, the figure of Emine is still firmly lodged in Kemalist nationalism within which women did enjoy a greater measure of independence but were portrayed by nationalist rhetoric as strictly subordinated to male authority – as Durakbasa and Ilyasoglu point out, Kemalism defined women as "breeders and educators of the new generations, daughters of the republic, and enlightened mothers of the nation" (Durakbasa and Ilyasoglu 195).

The renegotiation of the figure of the Prophet, represented as a newborn child, creates a compelling parallel to *Ordeal* and its relentless erosion of the myth of Mustafa Kemal as the prophet-like, superhuman father of the nation. In *Ordeal*, Edip exposes Kemal's "ambition for despotism" (*Ordeal* 12), describing him as histrionic, cowardly, "by turns cynical, suspicious, unscrupulous, and satanically shrewd" (128), prey to Napoleonic attitudes, and likely to cast Turkey into a "reign of terror" (263, 273). The focus of the *Ordeal* lies on the creation of a "human document" (132) that eradicates the personal myth of Atatürk, presenting the Turkish War of Independence and the birth of the republic as a collective effort instead of the achievement of one lone conqueror. To put it with Adak, *Ordeal* "emphasized the network of identities, the interdependence of leaders and people in the Struggle. Such a depiction of interdependence contrasts with the myth of the sole hero, the prophet of the republic, instead describing the republic as a collaborative effort" (Adak 520).

*Memoirs* and *Ordeal* are therefore united by the urge to rethink the role of fathers and prophets within historical and religious narratives of pluralism, where a multitude of marginal voices rise to complement and question patriarchal rhetoric. The marginalized experiences of women and children gain a position of centrality at the expense of the stature of male agents – from orthodox teachers of Islam down to Mustafa Kemal and Mohammed himself.

### Sufi Madonna with Child

The implications of the Sufi poem with Emine as its protagonist go beyond the desire to restore the prominence of female characters. Its closeness to one of the most popular themes of Catholic and Orthodox<sup>71</sup> religious iconography, the Madonna with Child, is very much in evidence here. I want to suggest that the significance of this poem in *Memoirs* develops into two parallel dimensions: it

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71 Edip's representation of Christianity is very general. She hardly acknowledges the existence of several doctrinal dimensions within Christianity and blends elements from disparate Christian traditions. The image of Emine holding Mohammed is strongly reminiscent of traditional Marian art, typical of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, but the characters of simplicity, sincerity, and asceticism arguably establish a stronger link to Protestantism. This is not surprising as American missionaries in Anatolia, although being Protestant, worked in close contact with Christians of several confessions, including Orthodox Greeks and Gregorian Armenians. It is legitimate to think that Edip, during the time at the missionary school, might have been exposed to heterogeneous Christian practices, hence, the boundaries between reformed and non-reformed Christian churches in her writing are sometimes blurry.

renegotiates the space of women within Islam and simultaneously creates a connection to Christianity that reinforces the specifically American frame of Edip's autobiography.

The context in which the poem is embedded provides further evidence of Edip's search for common grounds between Islam and Christianity. The narrator's appreciation of the Sufi poem on Mohammed's birth comes as a response to Islam's incapability to satisfy some of young Halide's longings, expectations and concerns:

Islamism taught by an orthodox person is very clear and full of common sense, but like everything very orthodox it lacked a certain mystic emotion, and this led me to long as I grew older for the mystic tendencies of the dissenting spirit of the tekkes.<sup>72</sup> [...] I performed my obligatory Arabic prayers very carefully at the set times, but after each one I had a Turkish prayer, almost a talk, with Allah. I asked him mostly questions about the reasons which control men's cruel acts and thoughts, and about the position of the non-Moslems, which seemed to me the primary injustice of my religion. Why not the same measure of goodness and holiness for everyone? (158–159)

The excerpt suggests that orthodox Islam, like official historical narratives celebrating male military heroes and conquerors, is unfit for the sensitivity and most pressing concerns of a little girl. To the distant divinity of orthodox male teachers, the narrator prefers a God capable of universal love and compassion, democratically offering “the same measure of goodness and holiness [to] everyone” (ibid.), independently from their creed. Democratic forgiveness and universal benevolence are certainly virtues a Christian readership would approve of and identify with. Yet, it is not only a palatable version of Islam that Edip is offering her Anglophone readers: not only is she emphasizing the common grounds between the two religions, she is also carefully averting occasions of conflict, since what the narrator considers “the primary injustice of [her] religion” is “the position of non-Moslem” (ibid.).

Being aware of the narrator's “genteel racialism” (Makdisi 793) and frequent disparagement of Ottoman Christian minorities, one assumes that she mostly has Western Christians in mind when she expresses her tactful detachment from Islam's exclusion of non-Muslims from holiness and salvation. It is principally her “objection to the exclusiveness of orthodox Islamism” that drives the narrator to appreciate the verses of a Sufi poet and to embrace “the dissenting spirit of the tekkes” (158). Edip's own definition of *tekkes*, described as a “Moslem institution, something of the character of Christian monasteries,” hosting dervishes of

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72 Buildings where Sufi brotherhoods gather to worship.

“non-orthodox mystical tendencies” (ibid.), is an example of her investment in creating a parallel between Christianity and Islam, and in familiarizing Islam for Western audiences. She does so most prominently through the theme of Sufism, a mystical current of Islam that she sees as closest to the New Testament message of Christianity, or at least to her understanding of it. Duygu Köksal confirms this assumption when she affirms that Edip categorized Christianity with the Sufi tendency of Islam, due to its simple and sincere representations, and its ascetic and monastic features (Köksal 88). Köksal also defines Edip’s Islam as contemplative, pacific, and feminine, with a pronounced universalist vocation (87). Erdağ Göknaç also underscores this function of Sufism in Edip when he writes that Edip “rel[ies] on Sufism as a dominant trope to manage cultural paradoxes” (Göknaç, *Orhan Pamuk* 152).

Most importantly for the purpose of this analysis, Başı traces a direct connection between Edip’s writing and the work of American missionaries in Turkey, reiterating that Edip went to the American school for girls in Üsküdar, Istanbul, and that her literary success had been later instrumentalized by the missionary propaganda to demonstrate the beneficial impact of American missions in Anatolia. “Among the achievements missionaries considered to be their very own,” Başı explains, “Halide Edip – her personality and work – almost always topped the list” (111–112). In light of recent observations, and considering the specific American imprinting Edip received in her youth, the “religion axis” theorized by Köksal to illustrate how Edip’s notion of Islam “transcends the East-West dichotomy” (Köksal 87) can be narrowed down to a Turkey-U.S. axis.

### **Undermining Myths of Masculinity and the “Threat of Islam”: Ali’s Religion of Love**

Ali, Prophet Mohammed’s son in law and central figure to Shia Islam and Sufism, represents another instance of how Edip challenges the canons of mainstream masculinity and virile heroism, simultaneously establishing a compelling connection with Christianity. The passage where the narrator expresses her sympathy for Ali, a chivalrous, gentle hero, is preceded by familiar considerations on history and his protagonists:

the fighters of great battles, the slayers of men, even when these are the enemies of their countries, are admired, but feared at the same time. [...] Napoleon or Alexander have not kept their position; but the heroes of the popular mind, the killers of dragons, are eternally beloved, whether it is the northern Siegfried, the Russian St. George, or the Arabic Ali. In some way they express the fight against darkness and fear, the hero who does not stand in the historical arena for personal success but for the peace of his fellow-men’s minds and their moral security. (*Memoirs* 118)

The excerpt outlines the difference between male conquerors who used their power to achieve personal success, and those whose main scope was protecting the common people. The first category includes figures of doubtless historicity, such as Napoleon, Alexander, and certainly Atatürk. The second, instead, comprises figures of religion and folklore. The assumption that the protagonists of folkloric legends live longer in the popular imagination than awe-inspiring historical figures appears arguable. Nevertheless, through this distinction, Edip lays emphasis on the desirability of a more flexible vision of history encompassing the factual and the fictional (Trinh 120).

The figure of Ali introduces a concept that features prominently in Shafak as well, namely, the coexistence, within Islam, of a stern, intimidating component and a more compassionate, accessible one.

From the material and the political point of view, Ali is the least successful Islamic hero. Every adversary of his takes advantage of his nobility of heart. In the Battle of Saffein his enemies, unable to conquer him in fair fight, put Korans on the ends of their spears and appeal to his veneration for the sacred word. Ayesha, the great woman warrior and orator, the widow of Mohammed, merciless when she wins, is forever taking advantage of his chivalrous respect for women and of his admiration of the Prophet. He finally dies unsuccessful but undaunted, always morally clean, manly and humane to his enemies, tender and good to the weak. (*Memoirs* 118)

The passage displays a clash between two tendencies Edip locates within Islam: the more humane approach, represented by Ali's "nobility of heart" (*ibid.*) and chivalry, is regularly crushed by the dominant tendency, embodied by another prominent Muslim figure, Ayesha, here a "merciless" warrior. The emergence of a "religion of love" – "contemplative, pacific, feminine," to recall Köksal's phrasing (87) – side by side with a "religion of fear" (Shafak, "Religion of Love" n.p.) within the heterogeneous field of Koranic interpretation is a salient topic and will be returned to later. For the time being it suffices to say that, from a 'patriarchal' perspective (represented, remarkably enough, by Ayesha), Ali is "the least successful Islamic hero" (118). At the same time, the narrator reminds the reader that "there are so many religious sects [sic] that worship [Ali], not only as a great hero but even as the incarnation of Allah" (*ibid.*), and thus she clarifies that Ali's gentle heroism, too, enjoys significant favor among the Muslims. It is remarkable that, in this case, Edip does not mention Ayesha's central role in the battle against Ali's army, which went down into history as "The Battle of the Camel" (Basra, Iraq: 7 November 656). Due to her involvement in the struggle and her oratory skills, Ayesha is remembered as one of the first Muslim female leaders, but Edip chooses to focus on the figure of Ali, in all likelihood because of his affinities with the figure of Jesus Christ. By the same token, Edip prefers to award centrality to

Emine rather than Ayesha, as the figure of the Prophet's mother can be easily juxtaposed to the mother of Christ, while Ayesha does not find immediate correspondents in the Christian traditions.

The figure of Ali in Edip's autobiography contributes to the familiarization of Islam for Christian audiences, and of her attempt, in Edward Said's word, to reduce Islam's hostility (87) and reconcile it with Christianity. The explicit comparison between Ali and Jesus makes an even stronger case in favor of this argument. "The Western mind's conception of Christ's achievement of success in the highest spiritual domain, obtained at the cost of suffering, shame, and a humiliating death," Edip writes, "has its counterpart in the mind of the Moslem in the personality of Ali" (*Memoirs* 119). The 'Western mind' and the 'Muslim mind' are therefore brought together by the figure of Ali and Jesus, highlighted as each other's "counterparts." Such correspondence serves the purpose of reminding Christian audiences that the ideals of Christianity are also to be found in Islam.

A reference to Mustafa Kemal completes Edip's discussion of myths of masculinity, establishing a parallel between religious and political narratives of dominant/deviant masculinity. Kemal's opinion of Ali is unsurprisingly disparaging. "I was interested to observe [Kemal's] contempt for what he considered Ali's weakness. 'Ali was a fool,' he used to say" (*Memoirs* 119). As the reference to Kemal demonstrates, historical and religious myths of masculinity in history and religion are interdependent and interconnected. The image of the lone conqueror, the prophet-like leader and father of a nation, informs Turkish historical as well as religious narratives, centered on male singular protagonists such as Kemal and Mohammed. Through the figure of Ali, Edip's text, once again, highlights the presence of a different message in the Koran, more fit to the needs of the 'subaltern' – women, children and the lower classes. For them, Ali is the ideal hero.

But I found my hero at last in Ali, the fourth caliph, the Lion of Allah and the son-in-law of the Prophet. The stories of Ali were also war-tales, but I never wondered about the fate of children and the simple crowd under his sway. On the contrary I felt confident that they had a greater peace of mind and felt safer simply because Ali lived among them. (*Memoirs* 119)

Once again, Edip's portrayal of Ali has two functions: first, it challenges male-dominated historiography and religion through figures who transcend canons of masculinity, second, it is part of a process of familiarization of Islam for Edip's American and Western readerships. Islamic doctrine in Edip's autobiography is, as Said would put it, "presented in a form that would convince Christians" (60)



through the emphasis on parallels between the “Western and the Moslem” minds (*Memoirs* 119). This way, Islam is “transubstantiated from resistant hostility into [...] partnership” (Said 92). Moreover, Edip’s insistence on a more compassionate, benevolent, and democratic version of Islam contributes to dispel what the West was inclined to consider the “threat of Islam” (*ibid.*).

### **A Religion of Love and a Religion of Fear: Mitigating the East/West Divide in the Aftermath of 9/11**

Edip’s memoirs highlighted two different readings of Islam: one stressing features that could appeal to what she perceives as a Christian ethos, such as love, universal salvation, compassion for the lowly, and openness towards women, and another, less approachable, distant from the strivings of individuals and dominated by male figures.<sup>73</sup> Eighty years after the publication of Edip’s memoirs, a similarly dichotomous understanding of Islam resurfaces in Shafak’s fictional and non-fictional writing. The following section illustrates how Shafak’s journalistic articles and *The Bastard of Istanbul* configure these two doctrinal dimensions. The texts that constitute the focus of this section show how Shafak used the dichotomy between a religion of love and a religion of fear in the same way Edip did, namely, to renegotiate the position of women within Islam and, correspondingly, to highlight affinities with Christian sensitivity in an American perspective.

In a 2003 interview, Shafak highlighted a dualism between two distinct interpretations of Islam she had experienced in her youth, *Jamal* and *Jalal*. Each of these was introduced to the writer by one of her grandmothers:

In Turkey, in early childhood, there was a time when I found myself moving between two cities, two grandmothers, each in utterly different worlds. The grandmother on my father’s side in Izmir was quick to teach me “fear.” Her Jalal (punishing and masculine) God was an ever-watching eye, always watching you and seeing every single move you made down here. Returning from that house I was full of fear and the thrill of the thought of being watched constantly was inscribed in every move I made. (Shafak, “Migrations” 56)

The same considerations appear in a different article, entitled “Women Writers, Islam, and the Ghost of Zulaikha” and published on *Words without Borders* in 2005.

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73 This binary approach to Islam, featuring prominently in both Shafak and Edip, seems to contradict their shared concern with building connections and promoting reconciliation.

The *Jalal* side of Allah appealed to [my paternal grandmother] more than anything else. She taught me about the patronizing, paternal, and celestial gaze always watching me from above to then make a note of all the sins I committed down here. I came back from her house slightly traumatized, unable to go to the bathroom for fear of being seen naked by Allah, ashamed of the body given to me. (“Women Writers” n.p.)

It is the paternal grandmother who makes the writer acquainted with the *Jalal* god, “punishing and masculine” (ibid.), and with a religion of fear. This might be a further attempt to connect the *Jalal* side of Islam with patriarchy and orthodoxy, and connote it as essentially masculine in spite of its female practitioner: the narrator’s grandmother. This approach limits the narrator’s personal freedom, as she imagines to be constantly kept under surveillance. The second excerpt addresses issues of gender more explicitly, blaming the *Jalal* tradition for inducing women to be ashamed of their body.

Shafak’s maternal grandmother embodies the antipodal approach:

my grandmother on my mother’s side introduced me to a very different idea of God – a Jamal (beautiful and feminine) God – one that was based on love and with whom you could always negotiate. Her understanding of religion was more fluid, like water, and it was also full of superstitions. A tradition of faith that sees human beings in the image of God and venerates the individual in his/her totality. In time, I came to realize the tension between those who prioritize Jamal and those who prioritize Jalal as aspects of God, that these might have serious implications in daily life, especially for women. (“Migrations” 56)

In contrast to the *Jalal* god, the maternal grandmother’s *Jamal* god is a “feminine” entity (ibid.), and the passage suggests that the position of women in society very much depends on which of the two interpretations is followed. Should the *Jalal* interpretation prevail, women would be confined to the margins; should the *Jamal* be prioritized instead, women would be awarded centrality and relevance. Another considerable difference is the regard for the individual. The *Jamal* tradition has a strong ‘humanistic’ vocation, implying that man can “negotiate” (ibid.) with God on equal terms. The term “venerate” (ibid.) is tellingly used in reference to “the individual in his/her totality,” instead of the deity. Therefore, Shafak’s notion of *Jamal* God mitigates two aspects of Islam that the West may find most perplexing: the condition of women and the claims Islam allegedly lays on individual freedom.

Let me reiterate that Edip’s effort to reconcile Islam and Christianity in her writing is grounded in her early formative years at an American missionary school, causing her to develop a broader, more fluid idea of religion that may be compatible with both her Muslim background and the memory of her American teachers. It is plausible that 9/11 and its consequences sparked Shafak’s similar

interest in serving as a mediator of Islam in the West and the United States in particular. Shafak's 2006 article "The Religion of Love" expresses the urgency to distinguish Islam from the misrepresentations that flooded the media after 9/11 and contrast the rise of Islamophobia in the West. The article expands on the difference between a religion of love and a religion of fear within Islam, the latter being a result of the politics of fear in the aftermath of 9/11:

we live in an increasingly polarized world in which the number of people who believe in a "clash of civilizations" between Islam and the West is escalating by the day. Hard-liners in one country produce even more hard-liners elsewhere. Amid this troubled framework, one fact that is frequently ignored is how heterogeneous, vibrant and dynamic the Islamic world is. ("Religion of Love" n.p.)

The excerpt reflects on a growing fear of the Other in the "troubled framework" (ibid.) of post 9/11 society. Through these first lines, Shafak implies that a more detailed knowledge of doctrinal differences within Islam may abate the perceived conflict between "Islam and the West" (ibid.). Furthermore, Shafak presents herself as an advocate of the Islamic world as a heterogeneous reality. Shafak's 2010 novel *The Forty Rules of Love* can be read as another attempt to dilute the alleged threat Islam poses to an Islamophobic West. Yet, despite Shafak's plea to acknowledge the doctrinal complexities of Islam, *Forty Rules* severs Sufism from its doctrinal context and presents it as a malleable creed that can be effortlessly adapted to the American spirit. The impact of a specifically American understanding of Sufism on *Forty Rules* will be returned to in the following chapter.

"The Religion of Love" proceeds by reiterating the love/fear dualism within Islam, addressing it in terms that are reminiscent of the 2003 interview analyzed earlier:

There is a noteworthy difference between exoteric, orthodox, mainstream Islam and esoteric, mystical and the heterodox versions of Islam. The second path has always been more flexible, more individualistic and more open to women. It is sad that in today's contemporary world of politics, all these subtleties are lost and Islam is thought to be one big monolithic bloc. ("Religion of Love" n.p.)

Once again, heterodox Islam is presented as "flexible, individualistic, and more open to women," and the values of humanism, universalist spirituality, and femininity are emphasized throughout the second part of the article. If Edip professes that the position of non-Muslims was "the primary injustice of [her] religion," Shafak readily reassures non-Muslims by revisiting the infamous concept of *Jihad*, constructed by the media as a tangible threat to Western society.

Take the nowadays notorious notion of jihad, for instance. For the Sufi, jihad means only one thing: an inner journey for self-improvement and the battle against *nefs* [aspects

of one's personality that privilege egotism] that come along. It has nothing to do with "collective war against infidels," it is not outer-oriented. If anything, it is internal and therefore private and individual. ("Religion of Love" n.p.)

Not only is the idea of *Jihad* emptied of violence and situated in a thoroughly metaphorical dimension, it is also an indication of the major role the individual plays in his/her own spiritual enhancement. Shafak reformulates the notion of a collective war into an individual journey: flexible, negotiable, and designed to fit each believer's needs.

If Edip uses the figure of Emine, Mohammed's mother, to reinforce women's voice and centrality, Shafak does so by rewriting the figure of Zulaikha, the Koranic queen who attempts to lure Joseph into adultery and, after he refuses, accuses him of having violated her. Zulaikha is a crucial figure in Shafak's writing, so much so that the author describes her work as "a tribute to Zulaikha" ("Women Writers" n.p.). In the orthodox doctrine, Shafak explains in "Women Writers, Islam, and the Ghost of Zulaikha" (2005), Zulaikha figures as a thoroughly negative character, dominated by lust and hedonism. "For the Sufi," Shafak continues, "Zulaikha simply represented someone purely and madly in love" (ibid.). Shafak touches upon the dual interpretation of the figure of Zulaikha once again in a column for the Turkish newspaper *Hurriyet*:

for the Sufi, Zulaikha is the symbol of a person lost in love. Nothing more, nothing less. For the orthodox-minded, however, she is nothing but an immoral woman unable to control her desires and needs, and thereby corrupt and immoral. These two utterly different interpretations of Zulaikha in the Islamic narratives are representative of the existing variations in the history of Islamic thought. ("The Sufi Way" n.p.)

By defining her work as a tribute to Zulaikha, Shafak attempts to redefine the role of women, and women writers, within Islam. Shafak's celebration of the Koranic Zulaikha coalesces with her demand for space, visibility, and acceptance for women writers in Islamic contexts. Moreover, Shafak acknowledges the central role of Sufism in the rehabilitation of female voices within Islam.

Through the figure of Zulaikha, Shafak aims to reconcile Islam not only with a dimension of femininity, but also with love and sexuality. "For many Westerners," writes Shafak, the juxtaposition of the terms Islam and sexuality evoke gloomy pictures of "honor killings, virginity tests, polygamy, homophobia, and the erasure of the female body behind veils" (ibid.). She reminds the reader that "sex and sexuality in the Middle East is [sic] *not only* about customs and prohibitions, much less captivity and confinement, [but] *also* about delight and joy, physical pleasure, emotional gratification and spiritual euphoria" (ibid., emphasis added). Shafak suggests that both approaches – confinement and exaltation of femininity

and sexuality – are intrinsic to Islam, but while the former pertains to orthodoxy, the latter is typical of heterodoxy and Sufi mysticism.

Shafak's domestication of Islam, although well-intended, suffers from a major drawback. Despite Shafak's frequent reminders that Islam must not be regarded as "one big monolithic block," her own division of Islam into two opposed currents is also highly dissatisfactory. In other words, although Shafak celebrates Islam as a "heterogeneous, vibrant and dynamic world," her actual representation of it is far from doing justice to "the nuances in the terrain of Islam" ("Religion of Love" n.p.), namely, the multiplicity of currents and traditions constituting the multifarious Muslim world. Shafak seems more inclined to divide Islam into two Manichean categories: on the one hand the orthodox, masculine, dictatorial religion of fear, on the other hand the humane, feminine, pacific Sufi tradition, the religion of love.

In conclusion, Edip's rewriting of religion is permeated with references to Christianity and aimed at American readerships. The same is true for Shafak's, which reassures Western readers that the representation of Islam provided by the media after September 11, 2001 is limited and biased. In the process of familiarizing Islam for Western readerships, Edip and Shafak abundantly stress the crucial role Sufism plays in the rehabilitation of feminine perspectives within Islam and in the establishment of cultural affinities between Turkey and America. The following chapter will expand the discourse on Sufism in Turkish American literature, giving prominence to its contribution to the construction of a shared Turkish American literary tradition.

