Representations of Turkish Women: Objects of Social Engineering Projects or Individuals?

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The emblem of the social and legal reforms which converted the Ottoman Empire into a secular Republic (1923) was the change in the status of women. The state ideology set out to create a modern society where political, economic and social equality between the sexes was of paramount importance, as opposed to the teachings of Islam which stressed the spiritual equality of women as members of the community of faith, and regulated the relations between the sexes.

Division of space was an important part of this Islamic regulation where the home was the sphere of the females and the outside world belonged to the males; and by asking the females to cover themselves, Islam also obtained visual proof of obedience. The literature suggests that the wide-spread institutionalized seclusion of women in Ottoman society began after the sixteenth century when not only was the clothing of women regulated, but also their presence outside the home was restricted to designated areas of the towns.¹ Beginning with the Westernizing reforms of the nineteenth century in the Empire, the clothing of women and their emergence from the sphere of the home to mingle with the males in the outside world became the core of the argument between the traditionalists and the modernists in Turkey. Women in veils, bound to the ‘inner’ domain by Islam and by tradition, were seen

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as obstacles on the way to modernization. During this period three definitions of women appeared in the society: the 'Westernized Ottoman woman' who was alien to her own culture and traditional values, who was educated and upper class, and whose clothing imitated the fashionable French women of the times; the 'Muslim woman under the oppression of Islam', who was alien to civilization in general; and the 'Anatolian woman'. It was this Anatolian woman that the new Republic and its populism aimed to exalt through its reforms. In the words of Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic,

It has been the sublime, self-sacrificing, blessed Anatolian woman who has [always] farmed the land, brought in the wood, gone to the market, kept the home fires burning, and [it was she] who carried ammunition and provisions to the soldiers at the front, on her cart or on her back with her children in her arms, despite the rain, the winter, or the heat.

In a poor and mostly rural early twentieth-century Turkey, which depended heavily on the endurance of its female population, the Anatolian woman was exalted by almost all political factions. She was neglected and left ignorant for centuries under the oppression of a male-dominated tradition. Yet she had sacrificed many fine sons to the unending wars. The adoration of the Turkish male for the 'mother' was also supported by Islam. It was Mohammed who said 'Heaven lies under the feet of mothers'. And now, the Republican reforms were supposed to free her from the oppression of Islam and of tradition, and she in turn would give life to the ideals of the new Republic. At this point, in the state policy, the 'Anatolian woman' was transformed into the 'secular daughter of the Republic'.

Secular Daughter of the Republic
The state ideology of Kemalism (after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) exalted the nation over and above the individual. Development had priority over democracy, state over civil society, uniformity over difference, and sacrifice over desire. The Turkish Republic needed all members of society to work towards the creation of a modern secular nation, and the women were not only asked to take part in the realization of this goal by working in the public domain, but they were also to raise the generations that would be the pillars of the new nation envisaged by the founders. The reforms which were applied rapidly after the foundation of the Republic in 1923 were designed to create an ideal secular and modern Turkish society with ideal women. The Caliphate, Islamic schools and Islamic law

2 Nilüfer Göle, Modern mahrem (İstanbul: Metis Yayınlan, 1992), 56.
3 Ibid., 56.
4 Turkish secularism is inspired by the French 'laïcité' (separation of church and state). However, in Turkey religious affairs are regulated and controlled by the state.
courts were abolished, sects and orders were banished and a unified educational system was installed. The Turkish Civil Code of 1926, although not perfect, was prepared according to the constitutional principle of equality before the law. It was gender-neutral in character, and among other things, it declared polygamy illegal and civil marriages obligatory. The clause referring to Islam as the religion of the state was removed from the Constitution; the Arabic alphabet was replaced by the Latin, and the metric system was adopted as was the Gregorian calendar. Traditional and religious costumes were outlawed (although the veil was never outlawed at national level). In 1934, women were given the right to be elected to office. Unveiled Turkish women in their Western-style clothing became the symbol of modernization that the Republic wanted to promote. Those who led traditional segregated lives, and women who wore the Islamic veil, were regarded as 'reactionary' and 'uncivilized'. They were the symbols of the past: uneducated, backward and carriers of a mentality which was hostile towards republican values.

It was, however, difficult for women to fulfil the expectations of the state. The ideal woman of the Republic had to be educated to Western standards but would be aware of her traditions and culture; she would be both free in mixing with males but also careful about her virtues, and she would have a strong sense of morals. She was expected to suppress her sexuality and individuality, be serious, unassuming, compassionate and motherly. The early representatives of the republican woman 'wore modern clothes and adopted certain western codes of conduct, but nevertheless remained traditional, especially regarding relations with men and their self-perceptions within the confines of the family. They became simulated images of modernity. Their clothes symbolized the political ends of the republican elite'.

Women from non-privileged, usually rural backgrounds received two conflicting sets of messages, and were put under pressure to conform to two different sets of values. They received a modernizing and secular message from schools and state authorities (including the media), and an Islamic and traditional message from the social environment they had to live in. Hence, the official ideology of secularism and egalitarianism remained meaningless for some women because it was not translated into their everyday lives. Islamic values always lingered in the background and religious explanation was always accepted without questioning. Even for women of the social elite who had freed themselves of traditional norms, total social equality did not exist in working life or in intra-familial relations.

6 A. Kadioglu, 'Women's subordination in Turkey', 653.
A prominent Turkish woman writer, Adalet Ağaoglu, who grew up in a large village, in her novel *Lying down to die* (Ölmeye yatmak) tells the story of a university professor who as a dedicated secularist has tried to live according to the ideal republican image designed for her. Although she is a Westernized, sexually liberated, professional woman, she finds it difficult to convince herself and others that she, a woman, has any value. The image which a male society drew for her has determined the limits of her experiences and how she is to see the world. Largely relying on her own memories, Ağaoglu presents vivid images from the childhoods of the first generation of women who completed their primary school education during the early years of the Republic. Her satirical and compassionate description of a graduation ceremony in a traditional small town is the representation of a social reality seen through the eyes of a woman.

The ceremony is organized by a teacher who is eager to prove his loyalty to the regime and to Westernization (of which he only has a received description). The head teacher who ‘looked more like a hodja than a head teacher’, (however ‘at that time, any middle-aged person who managed to write his name with the Latin alphabet, provided he looked on the new reforms kindly, could be a head teacher at a small town’) is worried about the ‘polka’ that the teacher has decided to include in the programme.

Choir is fine. Tableaux of professions is good. Songs, very good. Epic of Ergenekon: alright, excellent ... Well, why does he insist on the polka? The directive from the centre requires that ‘a window to the West should be opened’. Fair enough, the daughter of the state prosecutor will play the violin. Girls and boys will act in the play *Flowers and Bugs*. Was the polka necessary? In the polka the boys will embrace the girls. They will hold hands. Yes, maybe a window to the West will be opened, but the whole town is up in arms. Look at Enver the Blind, he resisted his daughter’s participation in the ceremony until the last minute. And now, when he sees me, he looks the other way. They say that he calls me a ‘pimp’ behind my back. I am not the ‘infidel hodja’ any longer.

However, the polka is danced, followed by a round dance.

Other than the children of the bureaucrats, they had heard the names ‘polka’ and ‘round dance’ because of this ceremony. Girls and boys were to touch each other for the first time. However, despite all the rehearsals, they were not able to. They got their steps wrong. When it was necessary to hold the partner, they were standing a metre apart from each other. [Later] even this much would lead to great loves between male and female pupils, one of them resulting in death by drowning in the river.

There is a division in the town between the secular dignitaries and their children who dress according to the dress code of the time.

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7 Adalet Ağaoglu, *Ölmeye yatmak* (İstanbul: Simavi Yayınları, 1992), 11.
8 Ibid., 17.
and behave in Western ways, and the locals who find it difficult to adjust. In this division, the children end up being persecuted for the failures of their parents who cannot conform to the new values. A little girl (the teller of the story) is humiliated because her long hair is left loose on her shoulders. Her mother has failed to braid it and put it up in the style understood as Western. The son of the Qur'an reciter not allowed by his father to take part in the dances, cries secretly in embarrassment because the only role given to him is to play the undesired 'dung beetle', wearing a black sack.

Ağaoğlu's description of the parents during the ceremony reflects a society crushed between conflicting values.

The desks of the school were placed side by side. The mothers, fathers, the relatives of some pupils, with their felt hats, caps, head scarves, had sat in their places. Some of them, some of the males, had thought of taking their hats off. Elderly women are covering their faces with their checkered scarves. They are quietly begging, praying ten times 'Oh my God, please do not write any sins' and spitting on their chests ten times. It is the first time men and women are present jointly in public.  

Meanwhile, only three women act comfortable: the wives of the governor and the town prosecutor who are wearing modern hats adorned with feathers, and the sister of the town physician.

Women's clothing and the division of space between the sexes had been the visual symbols of Islam, hence, in return, in order to prove their point, over-zealous adherents of Westernization forged what they believed to be a western life style and a physical image for women. The difference between the urban women who attended balls, socialized with males, and followed the latest Western fashion in clothing, contrasted bitterly with the experiences of the poor and the rural women. This alienation wounded the ideals of nation-building, and for a while it looked as if the 'secular daughter of the Republic' identity meant nothing more than Westernization in physical appearance.

In this context, defining the ideal Turkish woman did not lose its importance in the political discourse after the Republican reforms. In the 1940s (and well into the 1970s), the difference between the 'Westernized Ottoman woman' and the 'Anatolian woman' of the nineteenth century became a dichotomy between the 'urban woman', and the 'rural Anatolian woman'. The Republic had been established but the economic conditions had not improved, and the Republicans of the single-party regime were under suspicion for neglecting rural Turkey, and creating an urban based elite. The nationalists and the socialists exploited this theme in similar ways although for different aims. Now was the time to

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9 Adalet Ağaoğlu, Olmeyeyatmak (İstanbul: Simavi Yaymlan, 1992), 12.
celebrate the villagers and their values, and women were to be used again. The argument finds its best expression in the words of Remzi Öğuz Arık, a nationalist, when he describes the ideal Turkish woman in the late 1940s.

Women of rural Turkey ... The women of the majority of our nation! ... The creatures who become maidens without living their childhood, women without realizing their maidenhood, and turn to dust before enjoying their womanhood! This is the secret which has given us the pride to be able to say we have a nation, and a motherland. ... When we say 'rural women' we mean Turkish women, or the real Turkish women. ... The 'urban women' ... are a minority who lack the soul to represent the real identity of this nation. ... Today there are no sacred traditions they adhere to, no positive missions they have taken on. ... For centuries Anatolia was drained ... for the sake of its [the Ottoman Empire] colonies. If the human resources of Anatolia are still existent, ... we owe it only to rural women! ... [And] now, what is the place reserved for them in the life of the nation? Lower than nil.¹⁰

The multi-party elections of 1950 brought the Democratic Party (D.P.) to power, which had promised to look after the neglected rural Turkey and its traditions. It aimed to incorporate Islam as a living cultural tradition, and oppose the centralized secularism and positivist antagonism of the Westernized elite towards religion. Emphasis was placed on the idea that 'religious commitment and social development were not incompatible objectives'. Religion was increasingly invoked by the D.P. as a means of social and political control and a way to impede "communism", a term that was used to describe any position left-of-centre'.¹¹ When the control of religion by the state (secularism) ruled out alternative organized religious activity, Sufi Islam (particularly the Nakshibendi and its different lodges) went underground, and after 1950, the right-wing political parties established alliances with various Islamic groups and communities. Although the role of religion in the state began to expand gradually, Kemalist ideals and the secularity of the state, and the official image of the women as the 'secular daughters of the Republic' were not openly challenged.

The official view was that women were given all the rights that they could possibly hope for, and what was expected of them was to consolidate their traditional roles as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers with their roles as educated, asexual, sober professionals. Turkish law did not discriminate between the sexes, and if there was any discrimination, it happened in the rural areas because of lack of education, poverty and tradition. Nevertheless, the Republic did succeed in creating a cadre of women who considered family and work sacred, and by the early 1970s, the

number of professional women in Turkey far exceeded that found in Western countries.\textsuperscript{12} Decision-making and politics remained mostly a male domain.

During the 1970s, in a context of economic and social problems worsened by mass migration from rural Turkey into urban centres, young women in Turkey became politicized along with the rest of the society. Their presence (especially as university students) was more visible in leftist groups. However, the Left treated women with caution justified on the grounds that women were more apt to ‘go bourgeois’, and excluded them from all decision-making, and put them under constraints as to how to dress, behave and carry themselves in public. A stereotype called \textit{baci} (sister) was created.

This rustic and folksy-sounding word \textit{baci}, drawn from provincial speech, denoted an unsexed, depersonalized kind of ‘woman comrade’. Through the slogan ‘The people are my only love, and all women are my sisters’, male militants tried to protect themselves against women’s potential for introducing discord (\textit{fitna} in Islam) into revolutionary unity and solidarity.\textsuperscript{13}

Thus, some members of the younger generation of the ‘secular daughters of the Republic’ became ‘sisters’ of a new social order.

\textit{A Time of Fragmentation}

During the 1970s, different branches of the Nakshibendi (a Sufi brotherhood) had been developing networks in business, the mass media, and in the social and welfare services, but it was not until 1983, after Özal’s Motherland Party (M.P.) came to power, that they emerged as the most important group in politics. Özal himself had Nakshibendi affinities which he did not hide, and the Motherland Party used state power to promote religious groups. In the 1982 Constitution, following the military coup of 1980, state control over secular institutions of society, such as the labour organizations, unions and universities, was increased in an attempt to depoliticize the polity; and in order to fill the ideological vacuum in Turkey, the organs of the state began to promote a new ideology called the ‘Turk-Islam synthesis’ (which aimed to consolidate contradictory concepts like Kemalist secularism and Islam), and a conservative, nationalist, religious identity which it entailed.\textsuperscript{14} Under the new policy, while legal amendments


\textsuperscript{14} One reason for the introduction of ‘Islam’ into the equation was the need to integrate Muslim Kurdish separatists back into the system. For a criticism of ‘Turk-Islam synthesis’, see Bozkurt Güvenç, \textit{Türk İslam entezi} (İstanbul: Sarmal Yaynevi, 1991).
encouraged economic independence of the religious groups from the state as well as preserving the state’s economic support, Islamic financial institutions were financed directly, and they flourished using their gains to set up charity organizations which promoted Islamic ideology.

The promotion and spread of Islamic ideology implied the promotion of Islamic dictates and morals concerning women. Although different religious groups interpret women’s status in Islam differently, at the minimum a gendered division of space and labour, and control of women’s sexuality, can be agreed on by all sides. Republican Turkey had separated religion from public life and therefore had reduced Islam to a ritual to be practised by the individuals who wished to do so; however, according to the Islamists, Islam was about social order, and the veiling of women became the visual symbol of the success of the Islamists in their efforts to Islamize the way of life.

After 1983, the policies of the government had changed the Turkish economy into an export-oriented market economy. Turkey became a large consumer market, personal consumption taking the lead. The novelties and luxury items marketed in the shop windows were beyond the means of a large section of the Turkish population (such as the waged and the salaried, and peasants), and they found their income getting smaller because economic policy was oriented towards reducing production costs. However, Özal and his Motherland Party enjoyed popular support, and backing from the masses. What the masses liked was the understanding that the individual no longer existed for the ‘existence of the state’. The Republican ideal had made it clear that unless the nation worked as a whole for the well being of the state, it was not possible to reach a better life, and therefore individual interests were subordinate to the needs of the state. Now, difference and individuality were nurtured and encouraged as opposed to the uniform Turkish identity which was so carefully constructed in the 1920s. Prime Minister Özal defined the new Turkish citizen as being opportunistic, ambitious, practical, and in tune with the world.

In their personal lives, which they lived publicly, Özal and his family reflected all the controversies that existed in Turkey. The Özals were traditional and modern, liberal but religious. They promoted change but were conservative. Mrs Özal took part in fashion shows, smoked cigarillos in public places, and wore imported designer clothes, yet she also covered her hair and prayed. Özal the traditionalist made a public show of his visits to the mosque, but Özal the reformist inspected the troops in his shorts (a first in Turkish political history). He too enjoyed imported designer clothes, and frequented night clubs with his wife. They sang ‘arabesk’ songs with the singers to the
accompaniment of electric guitars.\textsuperscript{15} His sons and daughter married and divorced in public. Their family scandals were followed closely by the media and lapped up by the citizens. It was the first time in the history of the Republic that the personal lives of politicians were made so public. It looked as if nothing sacred and private existed in an era of the media, of information and of the free market.

The religious sector, which was treated as second best by the previous regimes and the media, became equal to its secular counterpart. A new, largely provincial elite of engineers-cum-businessmen who had strong Islamic views mixed with a pragmatic 'social engineering' approach to social issues became influential.\textsuperscript{16} Businesses with an Islamic orientation boomed, with chain stores, banks and insurance companies backed up by institutional infrastructure in the shape of Islamist employers' organizations, workers' and producers' cooperatives, and trade unions. Meanwhile, 'control over the key positions in the government and the bureaucracy enabled well-organized Islamic networks to recruit their own members into civil service jobs, diverting public resources to Islamic activities and businesses, and giving a boost to Islamic education and the training of new members and cadres'.\textsuperscript{17} Where the state was unable to provide for its citizens or left them to their own means, the Islamic activists were there to help: relief for the poor, child-care programmes, free board and food for university students, and jobs for the promising.\textsuperscript{18}

The secularist republicans were unarmed in the face of the new Islamic movement, the followers of which did not conform to any of the norms of behaviour, social and economic activity expected of them. All of a sudden the streets were filled with males in beards and traditional trousers, yet it was also possible to see followers of various sects and orders attending open-air meetings wearing jeans and short sleeved shirts and chanting pop music.

Different and controversial cultural, sexual, religious and political identities which were not considered a part of the mainstream culture a decade ago came out of the closet. Formerly suppressed or overlooked entities in the social structure lost their marginality,

\textsuperscript{15} 'Arabesk' is the name given to an urban popular music genre which became popular in the late seventies especially in the outskirts of big towns. It is a mixture of Turkish and Arab tunes with Turkish words. The themes of the songs are alienation, separation, unrequited love, and resignation to fate which appealed to acculturating urban migrants. It has not been allowed on the state controlled radio and television channels. Arabesk also came to represent a 'sub-culture' which is neither Eastern nor Western.

\textsuperscript{16} Modern mahrem. See also; Nilüfer Göle, 'Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: the making of elites and counter-elites', \textit{Middle East Journal}, li (1997), 47–57.

\textsuperscript{17} S. Ayata, 'Patronage, party, and state: the politicization of Islam in Turkey', 45.

\textsuperscript{18} Rusen Çakır, \textit{Ayet ve slogan} (Istanbul: Metis, 1990).
and their habits and traditions overthrew mainstream traditions or intermingled with them.\textsuperscript{19}

In Erendiz Atasü's \textit{Beautiful with him} (Onunla güzeldim), the author is looking for the hotel where her parents had got married. Instead of the magical, refined İstanbul of the past, she is confronted with 'the hamburger commercials in Taksim, words in English and Arabic, Arab tourists in their sleeveless cloaks, women in black veils, unemployed Turks wandering around, bewildered. ... Nostalgia is now found in raw rissole [Çiğ köfte] gulped down with whisky, and belly dance music played on the electronic guitar'.\textsuperscript{20}

\underline{Islamic Activists} \\
Unless they belong to a very peculiar group within or outside Islam, it is understood by all Muslims that Islam does not stop females from having an education since both the Qur'an and Mohammed himself advocate education for women. Therefore, it was not unexpected that some of the woman university students would be sympathizers of the new Islamic movement. But, as more and more women began to take increasingly active roles in the movement, they began to organize protest movements on the campuses to defend their right to attend classes in their Islamic attire, supported and helped by male students belonging to different sects. Their protests made the Islamic movement visible and, as expected, divided public opinion. The conservatives, and staunch believers in democracy, found it difficult not to sympathize with the wishes of these women but for different reasons. Social scientists began to take the movement more seriously than ever, and proceeded to look into who these women were, and why they wanted to embrace an Islamic way of life after years of secular state education.

The results of three studies on woman students who defined themselves as having chosen the Islamist way of life in Ankara and İstanbul during late 1980s gave similar results.\textsuperscript{21} First of all it was apparent that the Islamic movement had especially affected young females born between 1964 and 1970. Most of them originated from small Anatolian towns, and from traditional backgrounds. The mothers were housewives either with elementary school


\textsuperscript{20} Erendiz Atasu, \textit{Onunla güzeldim} (İstanbul: Afa Yayınları, 1991), 50–1 (Translation by Ayşe Kirtunc).

education or no education, fathers mostly workers or low-ranking civil servants. The students described their parents' attitudes towards Islam as 'inclined and respectful towards Islam but rather ignorant of its true depth'. To them, Islam as understood by their families was 'folklore' and even sinful. They also criticized the way some Turkish women covered themselves with a başörtüsü (scarf) leaving the neck and some of the hair out.

By calling the Islam of their parents 'folklore', the students were trying to point out the distinction between their parents who adhered to Islam because it was a part of their tradition, who represented 'a continuation of traditional ways and modes of behaviour', and who were pro-secularism, and their own missionary, militant outlook which aimed to change the social order. The point they made about women's scarves was also about the same distinction. The issue of different types and lengths of scarves and how they are used to cover which parts of a woman's anatomy is crucial in Islam. Different sects have different conventions about scarves, but in the Turkish context, there is also the difference between wearing a small başörtüsü (scarf), and a big scarf (sometimes called türban) which falls over the shoulders accompanied by an obligatory long coat (regardless of the season). While the former represents a traditional woman, the latter is the attire of an activist Islamist.

The surveys showed that not even the girls from most traditional backgrounds began to cover themselves until they started higher education. They all shared the view that upon coming to the university, they found the relations between the sexes very different from what they had experienced in their previous lives. The new environment made them feel uneasy, and most of them found the modes of social interaction between the sexes at the university immoral and sinful. They admitted that in the first instance of covering their hair they had felt uneasy but later developed a sense of generally being approved of and admired. They made new friends, and their families and previous friends started not to be so negative towards them. Being a university student has a relatively high status in Turkey, and these students were conscious that they had brought prestige and credibility to the Islamic movement.

From the answers, they appeared to have found refuge in Islam. They believed that Islam had not only solved their social problems of adjustment, but also offered them an easier life in general. Apparently Islam did not demand as much from women as being a 'secular daughter of the Republic' did. Islam told them very clearly where they belonged and outlined their duties; there were no conflicts and no pressures to work both inside the house and

22 A. Kadioğlu, 'Women's subordination', 648.
out in the public. Islamic women students firmly believed that a woman’s first and foremost duty was being a wife and a mother. What was approved of and recommended in Islam for women was what would make them happy, because obviously God knew better. They all agreed that the responsibilities of women in Islam were very few, and that what Islam offered was far superior to the present society as far as women’s position was concerned. They were all convinced that they would be happier in an Islamic social order. A student summarized the ideal position of women in an Islamic society as

According to our religion, the woman is the lady of the house. It is the husband’s duty to take care of her needs. ... The husband wears her as a crown. Yet, let us look at the situation in the West. ... The women try to prove themselves, and are worn out in every way possible. They work both at home and outside. They say that there are men who wash dishes [in the West] but I can’t imagine this. ... I personally do not intend to work. What I am saying is that the true place of a woman is her home. Working outside causes unrest and infirmity in the family.  

The utopian world of Islam is so perfect that ‘To cook, to do house work and so on are not religious duties in Islam. That is, Islam does not say that you will do the following and the husband will earn money. The women do these [housework] as alms. If a woman is doing all these, she is doing a favour’.  

In the works of Islamic authors, when talking about the equality of genders, the psychological weaknesses of women are described time and again. A particularly good example comes from a book by a university professor of religion. ‘Women receive ideas not with their minds but with their hearts. ... Subjectivity, a tendency to enjoy unhappiness, to act with feelings rather than with logic, steer the actions of women. ... Their tendency to be obstinate and not to be able to hear what is said to them stem from this weakness ...’. And indeed, the majority of women who took part in the surveys were convinced that women were weaker and more sentimental than men, and that therefore Islam promised protection rather than equality to women which was in line with women’s nature. 

The Islamic women also agreed on the image of woman as the sexual provocateur. That is, men and women attract each other naturally and men are weak and open to sexual provocation. On the same theme, all women were against coeducation, but they claimed to go to university with male students in order not to be

23 Modern mahrem, 101.  
24 Bekir Topalolu, Islama kadın (Istanbul: Yagmur Yayinlar, 1990), 272. For similar comments on women, see for example; Muhammed Kutup, Kadinin ozgurlik savasi (Istanbul: Ravza, 1993); Abdurrahman Kasapoglu, Tarihi, dini, psikologjik, sosiolojik, ekonomik ve tibbi açıdan kadın, modernizm ve örgütüne (Istanbul: Esra Yayinlar, 1994); Mehmet Dikmen, Islama kadının hakları (Istanbul: Cihan Yayinlar, 1992).
labelled as reactionary and backward. (Not to mention that fact that in Turkey they do not have other options ...).

Especially for educated women, the issue of polygamy in Islam should not have been easily acceptable. The women who took part in the surveys argued that in practice polygamy was not possible because Islam put too much responsibility on the shoulders of men who had several wives. Although they were not too happy about the possibility of polygamy, they accepted it because it was recommended in Islam, and naturally God knew best.

From the results of the surveys, it is possible to deduce that the women who have benefited from the Republican reforms fully are not among those who give in to Islam, and in the first instance they are not the ones targeted by the Islamic groups. Women who come from small towns and provincial cities, women of lower class and from families who recently migrated to metropolitan centres are targeted. Although (especially between 1950 and 1980) these women benefited from educational opportunities in unprecedented numbers, their experiences are different from those of women of educated, higher socioeconomic backgrounds. They may not be forced to wear the veil by their parents, but in the traditional environment in which they grow up, their lives outside the home are limited. They need good reasons to be outside the home, to socialize on their own and take part in the world outside. Their actions are controlled and watched by family and neighbours. When they come to the university, women who have grown up under the suppression of their sexuality are left in an environment where they have to make their own choices. By identifying with Islamic values, and the patriarchal way of life, they conform to values which have been everyday realities in their experiences. Obeying Islam gives them the sense of security they need, and the clothing offered by Islam helps them to protect their sense of self. Moreover, under the immunity that the veil brings, they can socialize freely, attend religious meetings, social activities and work for a cause. In that sense, the veil and Islam offer them freedom, and a form of existence outside the home which does not cause a confrontation with their traditional home lives.

The enlisting of a cadre of educated women into the Islamic movement has helped to make the movement more credible and prestigious; however it has presented the Islamic discourse with a problem: a good portion of educated Islamic women want to work outside the home, yet how can this be accommodated within Islam? According to Göle (1992), the dichotomy follows the difference in Islamic politics in Turkey. Those who adhere to 'political Islam' aim to change the society from top to bottom with a revolution, and those who adhere to 'cultural Islam' stress the

25 Acar, 'Women and Islam in Turkey'.

importance of change within the individual. In ‘cultural Islam’, it is believed that if the individuals change, the social and political system will change of its own accord towards an ideal Islamic state. The images attributed to women in these two different outlooks also differ. ‘Political Islam’ stresses the ‘revolutionary fighter’ role for women, where their duty is to spread Islam and work as ‘soldiers of Islam’. In this image they are traditional Muslim women at home and militants on the streets fighting for Islam, using force if necessary. ‘Cultural Islam’ does not see the role of women as ‘fighters’. Women have to be good Muslims and good mothers primarily, and be educated because it would help them to raise better children. Education is also useful because educated women can spread the word of Islam more effectively. ‘Cultural Islam’ looks benevolently even on those women who want to work outside as long as they cover their bodies properly, and preferably can work in the company of other women. But in all cases it is best if they work for Islamic and charitable purposes. However, Muslim intellectuals like Hatemi are even more flexible on this issue: ‘As long as Islamic principles are obeyed, there is not a major difference between men and women when it comes to work outside the home. The women have the right to work and earn money like men’. However, she should not be employed in jobs which require physical strain. In one of the surveys, women reflected these differing views. While some women talked of the importance of education for being good mothers, and another group saw itself as responsible for spreading Islam, a third group stressed their desire to carry out their professions. In fact, within the Islamic movement, women who strongly believe in their right to work argue forcefully through the Islamic media.

It was the Welfare Party (W.P.) which realized that the energy, knowledge and potential in Islamic women could be put to real use. Women could enter the homes of other women, circulate in women’s networks and could convince them to vote for the W.P.

Although it is not a forgone conclusion that every woman who wears Islamic attire is a member of the W.P., a lot of women began to work for the Women’s Commissions of the Party. The organizational structure of the Commissions is modelled after the Party itself, enabling the Party workers to visit every quarter, every street and housing estate, gathering information about each family, individual and voter. The Commissions boast that their data bases about individuals are so complete that sometimes the local police asks for their help. Depending on the information gathered, the ill are looked after, the jobless are found jobs, debts are paid, and

26 Hüseyin Hatemi, Kadının çıkmış yolu (İstanbul: Fecr Yayınevi, 1988), 46.
27 Modern mahrem, 113.
when necessary moral support is given.\textsuperscript{28} Thus they create a personal atmosphere of 'closeness, affection, congeniality, and companionship. This combination of ideological appeal, material benefits and sympathy works'.\textsuperscript{29} This approach has been especially successful in the economically deprived outskirts of urban centres.

The W.P. women believe in their political cause as a mission ordained by God. They are engaged in a holy war which will bring about an Islamic order to society. Women who are in high positions within the organizations of the Commissions are educated professionals but because they can not work in public places with their Islamic veils (e.g. as lawyers or teachers), they have turned to working for the Party. Although most of them are quite capable of taking part in the decision making ranks of the W.P., as members of the women's Commissions, they execute the decisions which are sent from the central organization of the Party. So far, there has been only one woman elected to the local administrative board of the Party.

During the 1995 general elections, the W.P. turned down women who wanted to be nominated to be M.P.s, on the grounds that even if they were elected, they would not be allowed to take their seats at the Parliament without opening their hair. Therefore their nomination would be a useless exercise. However true this may be, there is a bigger obstacle, in that most Islamic factions promote the view that since men and women are spiritually equal, women can vote but they can not take part in active politics because of their psychological make-up, and hence although there are and have been women M.P.s and ministers in the world of Islam, it is always men who carry out their duties behind the scenes.

This is not to say that women do not complain about the behaviour of Islamic men, as expressed by a woman author in a more militant Islamic journal. 'Active women are labelled as "feminists" and they are seen as unnecessary beings by some men who are scared of them ... they think that women are there to serve men, like slaves. They want the kind of women who have no social lives; women who are shut in the private domain; and they fool the women by saying "you are the Sultan of the home"'.\textsuperscript{30}

There are other Islamic women activists who are not registered members of the Welfare Party but who work in the same dedicated and energetic way for their religious sects or orders in various professional capacities. All these women explain the aim of their activities as working for the love of God to bring about the social

\textsuperscript{28} Rusen Çakır, \textit{Ne şeriat ne demokrasi: Refah Partisi'ni anlamak} (İstanbul: Siyahbeyaz, 1994).

\textsuperscript{29} Ayata, 'Patronage', 52.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Mektup}, 151 (1997), 9.
order that Islam requires. This, they say, is when the true liberation of women will happen.

Secularists
The first-generation Republican women of Turkey had defined their lives within the framework of national responsibilities and ideals, and tried to fit an image which was designed for them by the state. In the same manner, the socialist movement of the 1970s had assigned women the role of socialist revolutionary 'sister'. During the 1980s, when a collective conscience was no longer viable after the decentralization of the national agenda, secular Turkish women revolted against all the roles and definitions attributed to them by the males whether it was for the sake of tradition, or for nation-building or for a socialist revolution. They demanded to define their own individuality as women. The works of women authors who had started their careers in the seventies reflect this individualism and revolt. Authors like Adalet Ağauğlu, Füruzan, Latife Tekin, Ayla Kutlu and many others questioned and assessed their experience as women in the characters they created. Selda, one of the main characters in the book Cover girl (Kapak kizi), expresses the difference between herself and her aunt, a daughter of the Republic, as: ‘They were the guards of the Republic. They did not make fun of the Republic like these young people do. They used to take national commemorations very seriously ... They had faith in the Republic ... As all the values of the Republican generation slowly wore off and disintegrated, aunt Lamia made great effort to protect her faith’.

Then a women’s movement began which was to cause all major political parties to mention women in their party political broadcasts and in their party programmes before the 1991 general election. Secular feminist women of different persuasions, although small in numbers, joined to uphold ‘a woman’s right to exercise her will and choose her destiny. Defying tradition and male authority, they encouraged women to claim their sexuality’. They did not want to be mothers and sisters; they wanted to be respected as individuals. With colourful and imaginative activities, they protested against abuse and battering of women, discriminatory articles of the Civil Code, Inheritance and Criminal Laws, and the fact that the state did not implement the 1985 U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (although it was signed by Turkey). While individual activists contested state policies in their writings, they organized conferences and seminars where they presented their

31 A. Kirtunc ‘Women in the arts and literature in Turkey’.
32 Kapak kizi, 272.
views against laws and state actions; they publicly criticized torture and censorship. As a result of their activities, shelter homes for battered women were opened, a Women’s Library and Information Centre was founded, and at the governmental level, a Minister of State for Women’s Affairs and Social Services, and a Directorate General of the Status and Problems of Women, were installed. Moreover, two political parties (the Social Democratic People’s Party and the True Path Party on the centre right) decided to have quotas for women in their party organs. Y. Arat (1994), describing the women’s movement, writes: ‘Above and beyond the democratic ideology or practice it promoted, the women’s movement helped to open up the authoritarian regime of the time to usher in democracy. It encouraged liberalism and strengthened civil society’. 34

The members of the movement believed that women’s liberation did not necessitate suppression of Islamic opposition. They were ready to tolerate Islamist women because their priority was the political liberalization of the state and the flourishing of civil society. However, the Islamists accused them of being elitist and of trying to dictate to the others where the liberation of women lay.

Representations of Women in the Media
To appreciate the impact of the media on Turkish society as a whole, one only has to look at the numbers. When the Özal government abolished the monopoly of the state over television and radio broadcasting in 1989, there were five television channels, all run by the state-run broadcasting monopoly (T.R.T. — Turkish Radio and Television). In 1997 more than more than five hundred television and two thousand radio stations sponsored by different political and interest groups were reachable. There has also been a marked increase in the number of monthly publications and daily newspapers. The advertising industry has flourished in a market economy where both the secular and the Islam-oriented businesses have contributed. Next to the secular media, there has been a vast proliferation of Islamic books, periodicals, journals and newspapers, radio and television stations, films, audio and video cassettes; and the industry is fed by a body of writers and journalists (both male and female) who approach Islam from different angles and convictions writing on topics ranging from the natural sciences to poetry.

The image promoted by the majority of the media for the ideal Turkish woman stresses the stereotypical role of women as homemakers. Although there are distinct exceptions, such as the images in the magazines oriented towards the secular female or the

magazines with a more feminist approach, most of the media present Turkish women either as devoted mothers and good wives, or as easily conquered, dominated objects of sexual pleasure. While the tabloids try to increase their sales by publishing nudes, the majority of the best selling broadsheet papers and weeklies have become more colourful and not without the introduction of a semi-nude where remotely possible. Advertising tries to make its impact on the fantasies by using known cultural codes relating to women and sexuality, and many women working in the media and advertising industry help to construct this image. Turkish women are aware of the sexual double standards of their society. They know that the same males who enjoy looking at nude photographs of females, are actually scared to death that their own women would be 'out of control'. In Cover girl (Kapak kızı), the author expresses this fear of the Turkish male. 'She scatters her being like scattering a handful of gold and the men who are mortally afraid of their wives', daughters', sisters' exposing themselves like this loot her being. Who do you think is belittled here? That woman or the ones looting her body?

A study of the main newspapers of Turkey shows that women are not only under-represented in economics and sports sections, but also in front page stories. The exception is the art and culture pages where news about women artists outweighs news about women in traditional roles. The researchers conclude that 'whether supposedly representing leftist, rightist, or liberal viewpoints in the political spectrum, Turkish papers implicitly share the common ideology perpetuating gender stereotypes in subtle but consistent ways'. Tansu Çiller, the first female prime minister of Turkey in a post-Özal era, is well known for acting out these stereotypes for the benefit of the masses. Educated, urban, wealthy, a mother and a wife as well as a politician, she promoted motherhood, sisterhood, love, caring, physical beauty, laughter and tears as well as courage and self-sacrifice. She used a scarf where she saw fit, and did not abstain from seasoning her speeches with 'God' here.
and there. In 1993, in a country torn between the values of secularism and Islam, and essentially male-dominated at heart, she was celebrated by the Turkish media as the very image of the ideal Turkish woman. That is, except for the activist Islamic cadres and the radical secularists.

The Islamic media which boomed after the 1980s have taken the image drawn by the secular media further. While they nurture the worst fears of the traditional males by reminding them of the disasters that loose women in their families would cause, they tell the females ways of becoming better women. Directed towards women especially with rural and semirural origins, they offer a representation of life which fits the personal experiences of these women, and show them ways of achieving personal happiness without angering the males in their lives. The 'political Islamist' media resorts to threats of hell and torture for the disobedient, while the 'cultural Islamists' use 'good women of asr-i saadet' (the age of Prophet Mohammed and the four orthodox caliphs, 622–61 A.D.) stories. The ideal woman is a good Muslim, a good mother and wife. She knows that her sexuality endangers the salvation of males, and covers herself properly. She takes pride in the knowledge that she is responsible for the virtue of her community. Moreover, whenever she can, she works to spread the word of Islam, and engages in charitable deeds.

Although Islamic groups which promote 'political Islam' are known to use more aggressive photographs in their publications, such as veiled women holding machine guns, the mainstream Islamic movement promotes a refined image of women. This image is best described by two advertisements placed in an Islamic women's journal. One of the advertisements is by a scarf designer. The photograph shows a young woman wearing a colourful scarf and a stylish long coat with high heeled shoes. She is talking on her mobile telephone while walking down the street. In the other advertisement by a boutique, a beautiful woman wearing a scarf and matching long silk coat is taking photographs using a professional camera. The advert says 'the vision of the developing and transforming veil'.

And the Future

Until now Turkish women have been used in promoting different social orders as the visual symbols of the legitimacy and success of those orders. One exception to this has been the women involved in the women's movement of the 1980s who refused to act out the roles assigned to them, claimed their sexuality and demanded respect as individuals.

The women of Turkey were given suffrage in 1934, but in 1997 there are only thirteen women M.P.s (out of five hundred and fifty). However, the next general elections may witness the real
политизации турецких женщин. Успех женщин партии W.P. в получении голосов за свою партию, побудил некоторые из крупнейших партий обратиться за помощью к своим женским организациям; однако последние, несмотря на то, что их женские организации не поделились, а хотели бы иметь влияние в управлении их партиями. Дальнейшие, в марте 1997 года, группа женщин основала Ассоциацию поддержки и обучения женщин-кандидатам (KA-DER). Её единственной целью было способствовать и поддерживать женщин всех политических убеждений, которые хотели бы быть кандидатами, при условии, что кандидаты, поддерживаемые этой ассоциацией, будут согласны на общий политический курс для женщин и будут верны этому курсу, когда они будут избраны. Они имеют членов со всех этнических и религиозных групп, кроме исламистов, которые утверждают, что KA-DER "бесценно для женщин, поскольку заставляет их голосовать за женщин. Женщины должны быть выше всего этого. Мы не заинтересованы в политике, мы заинтересованы в идеологии. Допустим, в нашем понимании вы не просите места, место вам дается"

Во время 1980-х, исламское движение осознало, что привлечение образованных и молодых женщин к своей идее может увеличить его влияние, и исламские женщины стали мощными инструментами для политических и социальных групп, которые знают, как использовать их таланты и образование. Хотя их кимоносты напоминают традиционные исламские ценности честности и скромности, посвящённости семье и инертности, сегодня исламские женщины активны и выступают в публичных мероприятиях в ярких шарфах и длинных пальто из стильных тканей.

В то время как более традиционные исламисты призывают к скромности и простоте, есть модные показы для более смелых мусульманских женщин, и исламская текстильная промышленность производит роскошную одежду для верующих. Они посещают "исламские красотчицы" и鼓励 to be careful not to hide over-weight bodies under long coats. It remains to be seen what will be the role given to Islamic women under the increasing pressure of a vibrant market economy. Adverts for women in Islamic journals imitate the usual format of adverts anywhere in the world, of course with appropriate wording. 'Sufi. Sufi. Sufi. You can not do without our new formula. Sufi is for your eternal youth. With its beautiful and elegant bottle it is the perfume for those who are sure of themselves'.

But it is a scarf advert which captures the essence of the attitude of the Islamic movement towards women, as well as selling a product. It encourages women to wear a scarf, and tells them why they should wear it: to announce their assumed virtues to the

38 Personal interview with members of the women's commission of W.P., Ankara (August 1997).
world. 'Her scarf is the privilege of a woman. On the head of woman who gives importance to her personality, it means her pride. [A scarf] is the symbol of a virtue respectful of centuries of tradition, and of a long-lived history. [It] reflects the dignified maturity of women'.

Some researchers cautiously suggest that the 'Islamist activist' women may decide to get out of the role designed for them and look for individuality like the secular women of Turkey because, after all, they have already broken the wall which separates the spaces allocated to males and females in traditional Islam. For other researchers, the Islamic women. whose

... bodies and sexuality are kept under control and symbolized under the name of social order, whose contributions to social life are only validated within the necessities of an ideology, accept this world of oppression voluntarily .... They will continue to exist in the society, with their clothing, [using] their special language forms, living their everyday lives, and [continuing] their [Holy] war, in a world constructed for them.

For the moment different representations for women exist and transform side by side. And they will continue to do so, that is for so long as democracy (however imperfect it may be) and secularism exist.

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40 Kadın ve aile, 143 (1997), 3.
41 Modern mahrem.
42 Serpil Üsür, 'İslamci kadınların yaşam alanı', Türkiye' de kadın olgusu, ed. Necla Arat (İstanbul: Say Yayınları, 1992), 131–50, 147.