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### Performing modernity: Atatürk on film (1919-1938)

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## Chapter 3

### Imagining Turkey as a Modern Nation

The Republic of Turkey was not the natural product of democratic growth within the country; “therefore we must look for the growth and development of this republic not in the psychology of the masses, as we should do in studying the French and American democracies, but in the policies of its few leaders.”<sup>1</sup>

Joseph Clark Grew quoting Arnold J. Toynbee and Kenneth P. Kirkwood

The end of the war was a new beginning for Mustafa Kemal and his followers. They had won independence against the Allies forces, forcing them to sign a peace treaty in Lausanne on 24 July 1923. However, a new struggle that would be at least as challenging as the one on the battlefield was about to begin: the struggle to rebuild Turkey on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. The nationalists began by forcing the sultan to leave the country (1922) and replacing the old monarchic regime with a new republic, appointing Mustafa Kemal its first president (1923). They declared its capital city Ankara in place of Istanbul (1923) and abolished the caliphate (1924). Finally, they undertook various modernization projects, ranging from the civil law (1926) to the alphabet reforms (1928), in order to create a new society based on the principles of science, secularization and nationalism, modeled on what they referred to as “contemporary civilization.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite their commitment to radical modernizing reforms, it proved difficult to change everything overnight. After all, when Mustafa Kemal came to power he took over a country with a population of which the vast majority was illiterate

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years 1904-1945*, vol. 2, ed. Walter Johnson (Cambridge: The Riberside Press, 1952), 707.

<sup>2</sup> In Mustafa Kemal’s day, “contemporary civilization” meant the modern civilization of the West; see Bernhard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 292. See also Andrew Mango, *A Speech on Atatürk’s Universality* (İstanbul: Aybay Yayınları, 1996), 9.

(90%),<sup>3</sup> lived in the countryside (80%) and had little access to electricity. Moreover, despite the new regime's rejection of the Ottoman heritage and the promise of a new beginning with the West, the image of the Turk in Western public opinion, inherited from the days of the Ottoman Empire, was not easy to replace. This image was buttressed by a Western Orientalist discourse that had represented Turks and Turkey in a stereotypical manner for hundreds of years. Consequently, building a modern country that could match the advancements of "contemporary civilization" not only required radical infrastructural, but also cultural reforms that would refashion the image of Turks and Turkey abroad. As I have shown in the previous chapter, the nationalists started to signal such a change towards the end of the Lausanne conference, but this was not sufficient. To take its place among the "civilized nations" of the world, it had to be made clear that what was happening was not just a one-time ideological maneuver but a real, lasting transformation.

The aim of this chapter is to examine Mustafa Kemal's attempts to represent himself and the "Turkish nation" on film as modern and civilized, and thus as belonging to the community of "civilized nations." I suggest that, between 1923 and 1938, Mustafa Kemal performed his own vision of himself and of the Turkish nation, contradicting the established visual representations of the Ottoman Empire projected in part by the empire itself and in part formed in Western Orientalist discourses. By using film, he tried to demonstrate to both domestic and international audiences that Turkey was a rapidly developing country and that the Turks were a modern, democratic and civilized people capable of change, order and progress.

Film was a convenient tool to convey this message, not only because it was the most modern visual medium of the time, which could easily speak to Western audiences, but also because it was believed to be the most realistic medium,

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion on the literacy rate in the Ottoman Empire, see Benjamin C. Fortna, *Learning to Read in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 20.

providing a “direct” view of events.<sup>4</sup> By performing his reforms on film for both domestic and foreign audiences, Mustafa Kemal sought to convey that his modernization efforts were sincere and successful. However, film also carried some potential risks. Because moving images were open to contingency, they did not allow full control over the representation as a whole. Moreover, once a film was shown outside Turkey, it escaped Turkish state control and could be reproduced and used for different purposes. What if a film depicting Atatürk Mustafa Kemal fell into the hands of people with bad intentions, who could reframe his image and that of Turkey for foreign crowds?

In what follows, I will reflect on these issues by analyzing the filming of Mustafa Kemal on his Forest Farm by the American company Fox Films Inc. By looking closely at the film’s production, content and reception, I approach the following questions: What were the potential risks and benefits for Mustafa Kemal in using film to build an image of Turkey as a modern nation state? How did he seek to represent himself and the Turkish nation in this film? And, in Lasswell’s terms, what did he want to convey with this film, to whom and with what purpose?

### **The Making of Mustafa Kemal’s Film**

Honorable Americans, I would like to say a few words about the true origin of the affection and cordiality, which exists between the Turkish and American Peoples and which, I am sure, is reciprocal. The Turkish people is [*sic*] by nature democratic. If this truth is not yet sufficiently known all over the civilized world, the reason for it has been very well explained by your esteemed Ambassador when he made an allusion to the later epochs of the former Ottoman Empire.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In its early years, cinema was commonly believed to be an objective medium that represented events directly. See James Chapman, *Film and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 73.

<sup>5</sup> In Original Turkish: Muhterem Amerikalılar, Türk milletiyle Amerika milleti ve karşılıklı olduğuna emin bulunduğum muhabbet ve samimiyetin tabii menşei hakkında birkaç söz söylemek isterim. Türk milleti tab’en demokrattır. Eğer bu hakikat, şimdiye kadar medenî beşeriyet tarafından tamamıyla anlaşılmamış bulunuyorsa, bunun sebeplerini muhterem sefirimiz Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun son devirlerini işaret ederek çok güzel ima ettiler.

These are the words the president of the Turkish Republic used to address American audiences in the film. But how did we get there? Why did Mustafa Kemal feel the need to convince Americans and the rest of “contemporary civilization” of the democratic nature of the Turkish people? And why did he connect the ignorance of this on the part of the “civilized world” to “the later epochs of the former Ottoman Empire?” To answer these questions, we need to rewind the film. Following Darnton’s method, we should relate the film, as well as the actions and expressions of Mustafa Kemal within it, to the historical context and move back and forth dialectically between them.

On 12 November 1930, the US ambassador to Turkey, Joseph C. Grew, wrote a letter from Ankara addressed to the honorable Secretary of State in Washington, joyfully stating that Fox Films, Incorporated supported his efforts and that he had achieved a victory in convincing the president of the Turkish Republic, the Gazi Mustafa Kemal, to film and “movietone” him “in the intimacy of that sanctum sanctorum, his much beloved farm.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, for four hours the Fox Film crew had photographed the “Gazi” and given him instructions about where to stand and what to do, all of which he had followed accordingly.<sup>7</sup> Ambassador Grew continued by explaining that he had divided the film into nine separate acts: 1. *Preliminary Speeches: the Ambassador presents the President to the American public and the President responds*; 2. *The Fountain*; 3. *The Garden*; 4. *The Cows*; 5. *The Poultry*; 6. *The Sheep*; 7. *The Tractors*; 8. *Machine Shop*; 9. *Woman, Lovely Woman*. He concluded the letter as follows: “in order to present a true picture of this epoch-making event I venture, most deprecatingly, to enclose a somewhat more intimate statement than customarily included in the body of dispatches to the Department.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> RG 59 General Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Turkey 1930-1944, Microfilm 1224, Roll 11, Document 864.4061/Movietone/I, in *US Diplomatic Documents on Turkey II: The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, ed. Rifat N. Bali (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2007), 13.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* In the enclosure, the ambassador dated the event of filming Mustafa Kemal on his farm in Ankara as Tuesday, November 11, 1930.

Before analyzing the film footage, it is necessary to account for its various versions. There are at least three versions of the film: the first is the one the ambassador describes in his letter to the Secretary of State; the second can be found in the Turkish Film Archives and is titled *Atatürk'ün Amerikan Büyükelçisi Joseph C. Grew'u Orman Çiftliğinde Kabulü* (The Reception of the American Ambassador Joseph C. Grew by Atatürk on the Forest Farm, 1930);<sup>9</sup> the third, called *Ataturk Entertains Grew on His Private Estate*,<sup>10</sup> I discovered in the University of South Carolina, Moving Image Research Collections (MIRC).

When comparing the three versions, I noticed that the order of the scenes was different in each. For instance, according to Grew's letter, the film originally started with a scene called *Preliminary Speeches* and continued with *The Fountain*. However, in the Turkish Film Archives version, which I had the opportunity to see for myself, the footage starts with *The Fountain*, while the *Preliminary Speeches* appear much later. Furthermore, some scenes are missing from the Turkish Film Archives' copy altogether. This version lacks the scene the ambassador calls *Woman, Lovely Woman*, in which Mustafa Kemal's adopted daughter, Afet Hanım, expressed her opinion of American women and their success in gaining the right to vote, which does exist in the newly located MIRC version.<sup>11</sup> This scene, as well as other missing scenes, might have been damaged over time or cut from the original version.

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<sup>9</sup> *Atatürk'ün Amerikan Büyükelçisi Joseph C. Grew'u Orman Çiftliğinde Kabulü*. Turkish Film & TV Institute, 35 mm. Nitrate Film, 1930, 9 min. 40 sec.

<sup>10</sup> Fox Movietone News Story 8-848: *Ataturk Entertains Grew on His Private Estate*, Crew Info: Squire 14 Young, Fox Movietone News Collections, Moving Image Research Collections, University of South Carolina, B&W Sound, November 1, 1930, Ankara, Turkey, 13.53 min.

Although this film is dated 1 November 1930 by the Moving Image Research Collections, as I noted above, the ambassador's letter gives the date of filming as Tuesday 11 November. Utkan Kocatürk, in his book *Kaynakçalı Atatürk Günlüğü* (A Documented Atatürk Diary), also gives this date. The film *Miss Afet*, filmed on the same day, is dated 11 November 1930 by the Moving Image Research Collections, so filming most probably took place on this day. See Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, 14; See also Utkan Kocatürk, *Doğumundan Ölümüne Kadar Kaynakçalı Atatürk Günlüğü*, 2. Basım (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2007), 434.

<sup>11</sup> I discovered a scene called *Miss Afet* in the University of South Carolina Moving Image Research Collections taken from the film *Ataturk Entertains Grew on His Private Estate*. See Fox Movietone News Story 8-795-8796: *Miss Afet*, Crew Info: Squire 14 Young, Fox Movietone News Collections, Moving Image Research Collections, University of South Carolina, B&W Sound, November 11, 1930, Ankara, Turkey, 3.54 min. The scene shows Afet Hanım's message to the women of America, which the ambassador mentions in his letter. This scene is not present in the version I watched at the Turkish Film & TV Institute.

In order to understand the film and its portrayal of Mustafa Kemal in relation to the cultural context of Turkey in 1930, my analysis will follow the version described in the ambassador's letter, as it most comprehensively reflects the intentions behind its making.

### **Preliminary Speeches (Scene I)**

The film starts with Mustafa Kemal walking between beds of flowers and “amicably chatting in French” to the ambassador.<sup>12</sup> Although it is hard to hear what they are saying, it is clear that they are speaking in French. Why is this? We could answer that he did so because French was still the language of international diplomacy at the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet Mustafa Kemal could also have easily used a translator. Thus, we should try to understand the cultural significance of French for Mustafa Kemal as well as for “contemporary civilization” at the time.

During the eighteenth century, France was widely recognized as leading Western civilization, setting the standard in Europe and the rest of the world.<sup>13</sup> In this century, French became the *lingua franca* among European elites. Many Europeans saw French as the language of *politesse*, Enlightenment, civilization, cosmopolitanism and modernity. From the eighteenth century onwards, French cultural influence also became obvious in the Ottoman Empire and proficiency in the French language became increasingly important among Ottoman elites.<sup>14</sup>

The Ottoman interest in French culture started after they suffered a series of military defeats against modern Western armies, whose military techniques, skills and training were superior to those of the Ottoman army.<sup>15</sup> To modernize

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<sup>12</sup> Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Marc Fumaroli, *When the World Spoke French*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2011), XV-XXXI.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 56-64; Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 81.

<sup>15</sup> The Ottoman Empire was integrated into Europe even before the eighteenth century and there had always been military, social and cultural exchanges between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. However, in the eighteenth century Ottoman elites began to make conscious efforts to adopt Western modernization. See Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 56.

the army, the Ottoman Empire carried out several reforms, taking guidance mainly from the French government.<sup>16</sup> Modernization began under the supervision of French instructors, who, of course, spoke French. In this period, several French textbooks, academic treatises and other books were either read in their original language or were translated into Ottoman. Even most of the non-French Western works that were translated into Ottoman were translated from earlier French translations. According to Lewis, “what little knowledge of European languages Turkish intellectuals possessed was of French.”<sup>17</sup> As part of the modernization reforms, French was also made the compulsory language for the newly established military and naval schools,<sup>18</sup> one of which Mustafa Kemal would attend a few decades later.

The modernization of the empire continued with educational reforms, introducing modern schools based on European, primarily French models.<sup>19</sup> This led to the establishment of a new Ottoman elite consisting of military officers, diplomats and civil servants who could usually speak French and were thus more open to Western intellectual influences. Most of them admired the social, cultural and political achievements of “Western civilization,” in particular, France.<sup>20</sup> Serving as a model in various areas in the Ottoman Empire, French culture influenced government structure, bureaucracy, diplomacy, the legal, financial system, the press, literature, fashion, the arts and cultural life.<sup>21</sup>

Since it was the *lingua franca* among European elites, proficiency in French enabled the Ottoman elite to follow contemporary philosophical and political discussions, as well as scientific, technical and cultural developments in Europe. The writings of Enlightenment *philosophes* such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Baron de Montesquieu influenced the Ottoman reception of concepts such as

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>19</sup> Emrah Safa Gürkan, “Mutual Cultural Influences,” in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 224.

<sup>20</sup> Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 59-60.

<sup>21</sup> Gürkan, “Mutual Cultural Influences,” 224.



“liberty” and “democracy.”<sup>22</sup> Mustafa Kemal also read Rousseau and Montesquieu, and was inspired by their political notions.<sup>23</sup> He had great sympathy for the principles of the French Revolution, as well as for the idea of “republicanism.”<sup>24</sup> French was also a means for the Westernized Ottoman elite to display their education and cultural sophistication. Thus, by speaking French to the ambassador in the film, Mustafa Kemal was showing the ambassador, as well as the American audience, that he was not an ordinary person, but a sophisticated gentleman sharing “universal” values and tastes with a Western elite.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Mustafa Kemal paid great attention to the value of film in documenting events and representing reality. Nevertheless, the ambassador’s letter tells us that this particular film did not represent reality directly, at least not fully. Instead, it selected, ordered and crafted reality carefully in order to give a good impression of Mustafa Kemal and the new Turkey. For instance, while the ambassador and Mustafa Kemal were chatting in French and walking in the flower garden, the Fox Film cameraman, Mike, was “reposing among the rose bushes”<sup>25</sup> in order to create an impression of naturalness. Moreover, a line had been marked on the path for Mustafa Kemal and the ambassador, a few yards away from the camera, to indicate where they should stop.<sup>26</sup> Film, then, should not be understood as a mirror reflecting reality but rather as a rhetorical device that constructs it. Its relation to reality is inevitably mediated and, as such, it lends itself to manipulation and the crafting of a particular self-representation.

As Mustafa Kemal and the ambassador halt at the marked line, the ambassador politely asks the “Gazi’s” permission to present him to his compatriots. Before analyzing the ambassador’s speech in the film, we should consider an important detail in his letter. The ambassador states that he had already given his speech in

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 134.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>25</sup> Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, 14.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

Ankara and had received positive feedback.<sup>27</sup> Again, we see that although Mustafa Kemal and the ambassador maintained an appearance of spontaneity in the film, the ambassador and, in all likelihood, Mustafa Kemal had rehearsed their speeches in order to deliver them “naturally” when the scene was shot. Paradoxically, to present a favorable image of the president and the new Turkey, the film had to present them, in an artificial way, as natural, because only in this way could they convince American audiences that the reforms happening in Turkey were real and not staged.

The ambassador introduces Mustafa Kemal to the American audience with the following words:

In times of crisis, happy is the nation, which can produce a leader worthy of the task and of the opportunity. Such a crisis, not yet a decade ago, confronted the Turkish State. Like the tree whose branches are withered from disease but in whose stalwart trunk the healthy sap still runs strong, so the former Ottoman Empire had become moribund from the disease of age-long maladministration and retarding traditions. There was one possible cure: the withered branches of those retarding traditions, methods and institutions must be ruthlessly severed from the trunk, from which by judicious pruning new and healthy shoots could be led to spring. This has been accomplished. Today, freed by the wise and courageous action of her leader from those retarding trammels, the Turkish State is steadily progressing along the road of modern political and social development and progress, independent, idealistic, efficient, proud of her achievements and certain of her future happy destiny. For this revolution and high accomplishment one man is primarily responsible. The name of Gazi Mustafa Kemal will forever be associated with the development, founding of the Turkish [*sic*], the new modern Turkish State and will forever be inscribed indelibly upon the rolls of history. I have the great honor and the great

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

privilege and pleasure, to present to you His Excellency the President of the Turkish Republic.<sup>28</sup>

The ambassador's speech, in presenting Mustafa Kemal as the leader who saved the Turkish state, follows an interesting rhetorical structure based on the decline narrative: the Ottoman Empire was declining, but then a hero arose among the Turkish people who freed them from oppression through his wise and courageous actions and who brought them back onto the path of development and progress or, in other words, the path to a golden age. The ambassador diagnoses the decline as a result of the "disease of age long maladministration and retarding traditions" in the Ottoman Empire. He also diagnoses progress to be the result of the extraordinary accomplishments of one man: "Gazi" Mustafa Kemal. Clearly, the ambassador was trying to emphasize that Mustafa Kemal was not just a political leader but a modern and progressive one who brought his people happiness and shared the values and ideals of contemporary Western civilization. The underlying message can be read as follows: Mustafa Kemal is one of us and the new modern Turkish State he is building is increasingly catching up to our modern Western nation-states.

To make sense of the way the ambassador's speech presents the Ottoman Empire as lagging behind modernity, we need to understand how Northern Europe and North America articulated themselves as central and leading in the discourse of modernity during the twentieth century. According to Mary Louise Pratt, Northern Europe and North America considered themselves as the "metropolitan center."<sup>29</sup> By placing themselves at the center of modernity, they also defined the periphery in their own terms. In turn, the periphery characterized modernity – the center – from its own perspective, as we will see in Mustafa Kemal's response to the ambassador. Pratt further states that the

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<sup>28</sup> For the ambassador's full speech, see Fox Movietone News Story 8-848: *Ataturk Entertains Grew on His Private Estate*, Crew Info: Squire 14 Young, Fox Movietone News Collections, Moving Image Research Collections, University of South Carolina, B&W Sound, November 1, 1930, Ankara, Turkey, 13. 53 min. See also Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, 19.

<sup>29</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, "Modernity and Periphery: Toward a Global and Relational Analysis," in *Beyond Dichotomies: Histories, Identities, Cultures, and the Challenge of Globalization*, ed. Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 22.

“modernity” at the center talks about itself in terms of a variety of features,<sup>30</sup> to which I can add another one: the center articulates itself as the “modern or civilized self” and the periphery as the “non-modern or less civilized other.”

Without going into too much detail, I will mention a few features of modernity listed by Pratt that are invoked in the ambassador’s speech. First of all, the discourse of modernity, as articulated at the self-identified center, sees democracy and the nation-state as its constituting and symptomatic features.<sup>31</sup> In line with this, the ambassador praises Mustafa Kemal for building a modern Turkish nation state in place of the former Ottoman Empire. In the ambassador’s view, Mustafa Kemal had taken important steps toward making Turkey, which, as part of the constructed periphery, had been seen as lagging behind the Western countries in terms of achieving modernity, a modern country. By transforming Turkey into a nation state, Mustafa Kemal was turning it from part of the periphery into part of the center of modernity. In other words, the ambassador was trying to ensure that the new Turkey would no longer be seen as a non-modern “other” – as the Ottoman Empire was once perceived in the “West” – but as one of “us,” capable of reaching full modernity and presenting an example for other non-Western countries.

Pratt also identifies the ideas of progress and progressive time as important features of modernity. In addition, she suggests that change is seen as an inherently positive value in modernity.<sup>32</sup> In order to make sense of the ambassador’s speech and of the way Mustafa Kemal is presented in the film, I will offer a brief discussion of progress, progressive time and change as positive values in the discourse of modernity. In the Middle Ages, in Europe and the Mediterranean world the main conception of time was cyclical; the British anthropologist Alan Macfarlane calls this the “wheel paradigm.”<sup>33</sup> Christian medieval scholastics and philosophers, as well as Islamic philosophers such as

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Alan Macfarlane, “Fragment: Concepts of Time and the World We Live In,” *The Fortnightly Review*, accessed April 10, 2015, <http://fortnightlyreview.co.uk/2010/04/fragment-concepts-of-time-and-the-world-we-live-in/>.

Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), thought of time as circular. According to these thinkers, there was no progress and even if there were, it would be only temporary; eventually, there would be a return to the beginning, to the exact same position.<sup>34</sup> Civilizations were considered subject to these cycles. They all went through birth, youth, maturity, degeneration and then birth again, no matter how great they were. Until the eighteenth century, this was the dominant temporal paradigm in almost all cultures, including the Islamic, the Chinese and the Indian.<sup>35</sup> Even influential thinkers such as Martin Luther and Niccolò Machiavelli thought that the future was sealed off from the present by the apocalypse. Since time was perceived as cyclical, repetition and predictability were the rule. According to German historian and philosopher Reinhart Koselleck: “*Historia magistra vitae*” (history is life’s teacher) had been a common phrase since ancient times, used to convey the idea that one could learn lessons from the past.<sup>36</sup>

According to Macfarlane and Koselleck, around the eighteenth century, in the Age of Enlightenment, this cyclical view of time started to change and, in Western thought, was ultimately replaced with a new vision called progressivism. This was the time when the French Revolution occurred and the military and production technologies of the “West” started to become more powerful than those in the rest of the world.<sup>37</sup> Time had begun to be perceived as a line or an arrow moving forwards rather than circling back on itself. Now, the previously known future was unknown, open and undetermined – free from the divine hand and subject to human control. Since the future opened itself up to the unknown, its course could be directed. In Koselleck’s words, “indeed it must be planned.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, men were no longer subject to repetitions of the past but could rationally plan, calculate and create their own future, as well as determine their own progress.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. See also Alan Macfarlane, “Anthropology, Empire and Modernity: The Huxley Lecture, Royal Anthropological Institute, 2012,” *The Fortnightly Review*, accessed April 10, 2015, <http://fortnightlyreview.co.uk/2013/07/anthropology-empire-modernity/>.

<sup>35</sup> Macfarlane, “Fragment.”; Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Columbia University Press: New York, 2004).

<sup>36</sup> Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 28.

<sup>37</sup> Macfarlane, “Anthropology, Empire and Modernity.”; Koselleck, *Futures Past*, xiv.

<sup>38</sup> Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 39.

Many Enlightenment thinkers, including Montesquieu, Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, believed that there was not just human progress but stages of progress related to different modes of economic production.<sup>39</sup> According to them, people in the “Dark Ages” valued tradition, religion and authority, which were resistant to change and progress. They, on the other hand, valued reason and logic, believing that by using these faculties, the world could be enlightened by people themselves in ways that tradition and religion could not guarantee. Instead of relying on traditional knowledge, life on earth could be actively improved and progress achieved through rationality. With the Enlightenment, change and progress thus began to be seen as “inherently” positive values in Western thought.

Paradigms of time have continued to change, but when Mustafa Kemal was born in the late nineteenth century and came to power at the beginning of the twentieth century, the modern “West,” seen as the center of the world, was almost entirely dominant in every field, whereas the “rest” – the periphery – was perceived to be trying to catch up with its technology and wealth,<sup>40</sup> or, in other words, its modernity. Strongly influenced by the Enlightenment, as well as by late nineteenth and early twentieth century scientism,<sup>41</sup> Mustafa Kemal came to believe that progress was indeed possible and that the Turkish nation had to catch up with Western modernity in order to participate in the “universal civilization” and “onward march of humanity.”<sup>42</sup>

This is clear from Mustafa Kemal’s reply to the ambassador and, by extension, the American audience, in the film. After the ambassador’s introduction, Mustafa Kemal politely greets him and states the following: “Excellence, vous me permettez que je parle quelques mots.”<sup>43</sup> After the ambassador has responded “Je vous en prie, Excellence,”<sup>44</sup> Mustafa Kemal addresses the American audience with the following speech, which is worth citing in full.

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<sup>39</sup> Macfarlane, “Fragment.”

<sup>40</sup> Macfarlane, “Fragment.”

<sup>41</sup> Hanioglu, *Atatürk*, 161.

<sup>42</sup> Andrew Mango, *Atatürk* (London: John Murray, 2004), xi.

<sup>43</sup> English translation: Atatürk: “Excellency, allow me to speak a few words.”

<sup>44</sup> English translation: The Ambassador: “You are welcome, excellency.”

Honorable Americans,

I am very happy for having found the possibility of addressing you, face to face [directly], for the first time. I thank particularly Mr. Grew, your distinguished Ambassador, for the kind and sincere words he used in speaking about the Turkish Nation and, on that occasion about myself. I am sure, these words correspond entirely to the feelings of affection which the Turkish Nation and I cherish for the great American People.

Honorable Americans,

I would like to say a few words about the true origin of the affection and cordiality which exists between the Turkish and American Peoples and which, I am sure is reciprocal. The Turkish people is [*sic*] by nature democratic. If this truth is not sufficiently known all over the civilized world, the reason for it has been very well explained by your esteemed Ambassador when he made an allusion to the later epochs of the former Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, at the moment when the American people was [*sic*] conscious of her existence, it was democracy that she upheld and it was democracy she exalted. With this gift in their hands, Americans have joined the human community as an esteemed people and they founded a great unity. It is from this point that the Turkish people, whose essential characteristic [nature] is democracy, nourishes a sentiment of profound and strong affection for the Americans who have proved themselves to be democracy itself. I hope that this observation will strengthen the affection between the two Peoples. It will not only remain there but will perhaps help the whole humanity to love each other, to wipe away the traditional obstacles to this mutual love, to place the world into [*sic*] the path of peace and tranquility. Honorable Americans, this is the humanitarian aim of the young Turkish Republic and of the Turkish Nation, which I have the honor to represent. I have no doubt that the American People who are far ahead already in pursuit of this aim are together with the Turkish

Nation in this respect. At any rate, this civilized and humane and peaceful ideal must be made a reality.<sup>45</sup>

Despite Mustafa Kemal's radical attempts to westernize Turkey at the beginning of the twentieth century, there was already an Orientalist image that was deeply engrained in Western attitudes towards the Turks and Turkey. Representations of the Ottoman Turks by Europeans had shown a great variety in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Europe was militarily lagging behind the Ottoman Empire. However, this started to change radically during the eighteenth century, when Europe became militarily and technologically superior to the

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<sup>45</sup> The English translation, as included as an attachment to the Ambassador's letter, is taken from Rıfat Bali. See Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, 20. My transcription of the original speech in Turkish from the MIRC's version:

"Muhterem Amerikalılar,  
İlk defa doğrudan doğruya size hitap etmek imkanını bulduğumdan dolayı çok bahtiyarım. Kıymetli sefiriniz Mistır Grew'nun, Türk milletinden ve bu münasebetle şahsımdan bahsederken kullandığı samimi sözlerden dolayı, kendilerine hassaten teşekkür ederim. Eminim ki bu sözleri, Türk milletinin ve benim, büyük Amerika milleti hakkında beslemekte olduğumuz muhabbet hislerine tamamen mutabıktır."

"Muhterem Amerikalılar,  
Türk milletiyle Amerika milleti arasında mevcut olan ve karşılıklı olduğuna emin bulunduğum, muhabbet ve samimiyetin tabii menşei hakkında birkaç söz söylemek isterim. Türk milleti tab'en demoktrattır. Eğer bu hakikat, şimdiye kadar medenî beşeriyet tarafından tamamıyla anlaşılmanmış bulunuyorsa, bunun sebeplerini muhterem sefiriniz Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son devirlerini işaret ederek çok güzel izah ettiler. Diğer taraftan Amerika milletin, benliğini hissettiği dakikada istinad ettiği, i'la ettiği demokrasiydi. Amerikalılar bu mevhibe ile mümtaz bir millet olarak beşeriyet dünyasında arz-ı mevcudiyet eyledi. Büyük bir millet birliği kurdu. İşte bu noktadandır ki; Türk milleti Amerika milleti hakkında derin ve kuvvetli bir muhabbet hisseder. Ümit ederim ki, bu müşahede iki millet arasında mevcut olan muhabbeti kökleştirecektir. Yalnız bu kadarla kalmayacaktır, belki bütün beşeriyeti birbirini sevmeye ve bu müşterek sevgiye mani olan mazi hurafelerini silmeye, dünyayı sulh ve huzur sahasına sokmaya medar olacaktır. Muhterem Amerikalılar, temsil etmekle mübahi olduğum Türk milletin, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin insanî gayesi işte budur. Bu yüksek gayede zaten çok yükselmiş olan Amerika milletin, Türk milleti ile beraber olduğundan şüphem yoktur. Herhalde medeni, insani, sulh perverane mefkure tecelli etmelidir."

This scene seems to have been shot more than once, because there are two versions of the final paragraph in a single version of the film. In the second shot, which is a close-up, Mustafa Kemal repeats the last paragraph using slightly different words: "Muhterem Amerikalılar, temsil etmekle mübahi olduğum Türk milletin, yeni Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin insanî gayesi işte bundan ibarettir. Bu yüksek gayede zaten çok yükselmiş bulunan Amerika milletin, Türk milleti ile beraber olduğundan şüphem yoktur. Herhalde medeni, insani, sulh perverane mefkure yükselmelidir." For Mustafa Kemal's speech in both versions, see Fox Movietone News Story 8-848: *Ataturk Entertains Grew on His Private Estate*, Crew Info: Squire 14 Young, Fox Movietone News Collections, Moving Image Research Collections, University of South Carolina, B&W Sound, November 1, 1930, Ankara, Turkey, 13 min 55 sec.



Ottomans.<sup>46</sup> The representations that emerged at this time were constant and coherent; forming a discourse in the Foucauldian sense – a system of producing knowledge through language and practices within certain restrictions, whereby certain rules can be recognized. A discourse is never value-free or objective but always bears the imprint of the power structures that produce it.<sup>47</sup>

One of the most well known representations of the Ottoman Empire in the European Orientalist discourse was as the “sick man of Europe.”<sup>48</sup> According to Aslı Çırakman, the Earl of Crawford may have been the first, in 1769, to use this metaphor to define the decline of the Ottoman Empire,<sup>49</sup> but it became so popular that it remained a common phrase in the following centuries, as we can see in the ambassador’s speech in the film.

The description of the Ottoman Empire as “sick” or “in decline” was not innocent or objective; rather, it implied a strong European self-image associated with progress. Discursively, the Ottoman Empire served as the ideal “other” for Europe, enabling Europe to define its own identity based on a supposed dichotomy between the “Occident” and “Orient.” Furthermore, this dichotomy allowed European powers to establish a hegemonic relationship to the Ottoman Empire, in which Europeans were represented as superior, progressive, liberal, civilized, rational and familiar, and the Ottomans or Turks as inferior, static, backward, oppressive, uncivilized, barbarian, irrational and exotic. Representing the Ottoman Empire and Turks in this way in literature, painting and the arts, the Orientalist discourse provided a justification for and legitimization of European imperialism and colonialism within the Ottoman territory.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Aslı Çırakman, *From the Terror of the World to the “Sick Man of Europe”: European Images of Ottoman Empire and Society from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002), 50.

<sup>47</sup> Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>48</sup> Çırakman, *From the Terror of the World to the “Sick Man of Europe,”* 1.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 19. For Orientalist discourse, see also Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

Another popular representation in the Orientalist repertoire was “Oriental despotism.” In eighteenth century political discourse, despotism became synonymous with an Oriental system of regime.<sup>51</sup> The Ottoman Empire was classified as a despotic rule and the Turks described as having a “slavish” national character.<sup>52</sup> For many European observers, the Ottomans were a “stagnant,” “backward” and “corrupt people,” ruled by a despotic government.<sup>53</sup> This, of course, was not compatible with the Enlightenment ideals of a good government that provided its citizens with the rule of law, freedom and liberty.<sup>54</sup>

These representations of Turks within the Orientalist discourse circulated despite the Westernizing reforms undertaken by the Ottoman Empire from the eighteenth century onwards. Turks were still mostly perceived as a people lagging far behind Western civilization in terms of science, technology and culture.<sup>55</sup> For many European authors, they were a lazy and ignorant people, who lived an inactive life. In fact, they were portrayed as so lazy that they did not even cultivate their own land, but left Turkey as a desolate country. Instead of working, they were shown spending their time in coffee houses or harems.<sup>56</sup> In other words, the Europeans projected onto the Turks everything they scorned.

Mustafa Kemal was aware of these well-established stereotypes and prejudices about the Ottoman Empire and Turks in the Western world. He tried to counter them by performing a modern image of the new Turkish state and the Turkish people in front of the camera. It is interesting to see, however, that in his own speech, although he separates the Ottoman Empire from the Turkish people, he agrees with the ambassador’s negative description of the later epochs of the Ottoman Empire. By emphasizing that “the Turkish people [*sic*] is by nature democratic,” Mustafa Kemal was countering the essentialist clichés of the Western Orientalist discourse that had represented the Turks as a “despotic” or

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<sup>51</sup> Aslı Çırakman, “From Tyranny to Despotism: The Enlightenment’s Unenlightened Image of the Turks,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33, no. 1 (2001): 53, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/259479>.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>53</sup> Çırakman, *From the Terror of the World to the “Sick Man of Europe,”* 105.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

“obedient” people. Nevertheless, his own formulation uses a similar essentialist logic to suggest the opposite. According to Mustafa Kemal, there is indeed a “nature” to the Turkish people, but it is a democratic one, equal to that of any other “civilized nation.”

A man of his time, Mustafa Kemal believed in the idea of progress and decline that had been developed in the Enlightenment period. In the film, he suggests that if the civilized world did not know that Turkish people were democratic by nature, the reason for this could be found in the later, declining epochs of the Ottoman Empire. But why did he not simply say “the Ottoman Empire” instead of “the later epochs of the Empire?” To answer this question, we should try to understand Mustafa Kemal’s view of history, which also affected official historiography in Turkey.

Mustafa Kemal had a positivist understanding of history that was in line with his belief in the idea of progress. He did not consider the Ottoman Empire to be a complete failure, but suggested that one should look at its “later” epochs to understand the lingering negative image of the Turkish people in the Western world. Here, I see an important parallel between Mustafa Kemal’s assessment of the later epochs of the Ottoman Empire and official Turkish historiography inflected by Kemalism. In official historiography, for as long as the Ottomans were successful in battle (until the siege of Vienna in 1529), they were considered a progressive government, but as soon as they started to “decline” in comparison to Western Europe, they began to be seen as “regressive” or “backward.”

In Mustafa Kemal’s view, there was a single civilization in the world, which was the “universal civilization.”<sup>57</sup> Every nation could demonstrate its value by its contribution to this common universal civilization of mankind,<sup>58</sup> and all nations were on the same path of progress towards a single goal: modernity. In line with this, he believed that some nations were lagging behind or were ahead of others

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<sup>57</sup> Mango, *A Speech on Atatürk’s Universality*, 5.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

in the march of human progress. Americans, for instance, “who have proved themselves to be democracy itself” in Mustafa Kemal’s words, were ahead of the Turkish nation in terms of their democratic achievements. This did not mean, however, that the Turkish nation was not a natural member of the community of civilized nations, only that it had some catching up to do after its progress had been suspended by the maladministration of the Ottoman government in its later epochs. That it was indeed catching up and taking up its rightful place at the forefront of universal civilization under his leadership was the main message he sought to communicate by appearing in the film under discussion.

But why did Mustafa Kemal associate America with democracy itself and how did he understand the link between modernity and democracy? Before the modern state was born in Europe, the main type of government was feudalism, a political system built on land tenure and relations between social orders.<sup>59</sup> The principal form of political identity in this system was the “subject,” who was under the political control of a sovereign, usually a monarch. The rise of the idea of civil society in Europe from the early modern period onwards started to change this. The French and American Revolutions in particular, which also deeply inspired Mustafa Kemal, introduced new types of governments and marked the beginning of modern democracy.<sup>60</sup>

The United States Declaration of Independence (1776), for instance, proclaimed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”<sup>61</sup> This implies that a government could not bestow upon its people their natural human rights, because these rights already belonged to them by birth.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, the American government could only rule its citizens by their consent, within the framework of a democracy.<sup>63</sup> Not the sovereign but the modern nation was seen as the main

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<sup>59</sup> Kenneth Allan, *A Primer in Social and Sociological Theory: Toward a Sociology of Citizenship* (California: Sage Publications, 2011), 4.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

guarantor of democracy. Mustafa Kemal, who was a follower of the Enlightenment, the American and French Revolutions, as well as the philosophy of positivism,<sup>64</sup> agreed with these principles, at least in theory.

Accordingly, in his filmed speech, Mustafa Kemal praises America, associating it, in its very inception, with democracy itself. What was Mustafa Kemal implying by this? Most European philosophers considered the United States as an important experiment in freedom and democracy.<sup>65</sup> This was because, unlike Europe, where civil society and democratic forces had to defeat traditional feudalism, the US was seen as having been born in democracy.<sup>66</sup> In the nineteenth century, for instance, many European intellectuals, preeminently Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) and Harriet Martineau (1802-1876), visited the United States to study American democracy as a model.<sup>67</sup> Mustafa Kemal's speech shows that he was well aware of the image of America as a natural-born democracy. Nevertheless, he does not take this feature of America for granted, but gives credit to the American people, who were not only born in democracy but also managed to uphold and exalt it. Because of this, he argues they joined the human community as an "esteemed people" and "founded a great unity."

Mustafa Kemal continues his speech by emphasizing that the Turkish people's nature is also democratic and that they have a strong affection for the American people. In this way, he sought to demonstrate that both nations shared the same values and ideals. The message of the first scene of the film, then, is that: the "West" should no longer perceive Turkey as an "other" but rather as an ally and as a natural member of contemporary civilization, pursuing the same ideals.

In the film, Mustafa Kemal establishes a connection between himself and the American audience not only through his words but also through his body language. When the ambassador is giving his speech, Mustafa Kemal's hands occasionally grab the lapels of his jacket, giving him an air of gentlemanly

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<sup>64</sup> Mango, *A Speech on Atatürk's Universality*, 11.

<sup>65</sup> Allan, *A Primer in Social and Sociological Theory*, 8.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

confidence. Although this was not a very common posture for Turkish-Ottoman gentlemen, it frequently appeared in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century American or West European movies.

In the MIRC version of the film, we see that Mustafa Kemal first observes the body language of the ambassador addressing the American audience. Later, when delivering his own speech, he copies the ambassador's gesture of holding the lapels of his jacket with both hands. As Mustafa Kemal continues his speech, it is the ambassador who starts to mirror his body language. When Mustafa Kemal holds his lapels, the ambassador also holds them, and when Mustafa Kemal drops one of his hands – leaving only the left one touching his lapel – the ambassador drops both of his hands. The visual harmony between Mustafa Kemal and the ambassador is striking, emphasizing that they are not only thinking along the same lines, but also look and act alike. Moreover, both are dressed in Western bourgeois fashion and act in accordance with modern Western gentlemanly etiquette. In this way, the scene indicates that, in addition to seeking to abolish the perceived intellectual difference between himself and the American ambassador, Mustafa Kemal also tries to erase any visual differences between them. In this way, he delivers a subtle message to the American audience: there is virtually no difference between you and me; I am not unlike you.

### **The Fountain (Scene II)**

In the second scene of the film, Mustafa Kemal, his adopted daughter Âfet Hanım and the ambassador are sitting at a table on the terrace beside a fountain. According to the ambassador's letter, Mustafa Kemal is speaking French to the ambassador, stating that "much has been done on his farm during the past two years,"<sup>68</sup> to which the ambassador answers that he can see enormous progress has been made since his first visit to the farm three years ago.<sup>69</sup> Mustafa Kemal

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<sup>68</sup> Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, 14.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

also tells the ambassador that one million trees have been planted.<sup>70</sup> The MIRC version of the film shows part of this conversation:

Mustafa Kemal: Excellence, est-ce que vous êtes content de ce que vous voyez ici dans cette année-ci?

The Ambassador: Maintenant, je remarque de grands progrès depuis que j'ai vu la ferme il y a trois années.

Mustafa Kemal: Il n'y a que cinq années que nous avons commencé à travailler ici. Avant il était un terrain tout à fait marécageux. C'est surtout Tahsin Bey qui travaille ici, qui survey, qui surveille, n'est-ce pas? Voulez-vous que je vous lui présente?

The Ambassador: Je vous en prie, Excellence.

Mustafa Kemal: Tahsin Bey!<sup>71</sup>

Mustafa Kemal then presents Tahsin Bey (Coşkan), the director of the Forest Farm, to the ambassador.<sup>72</sup> Tahsin Bey proceeds to summarize what has been done at the farm so far: "My Pasha, the first year when we started, all of these places with trees that you see now, there was no single tree, it was a desert [...] we bought Fordson American tractors and with these we began our work [...] we gave importance to agriculture with machinery, animals to a great extent [...] and within five years we planted around one million trees, created fruit gardens and vineyards, and raised around seven thousand sheep."

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>71</sup> English translation:

MK: Excellency, are you happy with what you see here this year?

A: Now, I notice great progress since I saw the farm three years ago.

MK: It was only five years ago that we started working here. Before, the land was a complete swamp. It was especially Tahsin Bey who has worked her, who supervised, surveilled, isn't it? Do you want me to introduce him to you?

A: Thank you, Excellency.

MK: Tahsin Bey!

It is interesting to observe that although Mustafa Kemal speaks in French, he slips into the English and says: "survey" instead of "surveille." However, he notices his mistake immediately and corrects himself by saying "surveille, n'est-ce pas?" He also says "Voulez-vous que je vous lui présente." But actually he had to say "le" instead of lui.

<sup>72</sup> Mustafa Kemal appointed Tahsin Bey as director of his Forest Farm because of his expertise in modern farming. Having graduated from the Halkalı School of Agriculture in Istanbul, he worked as an agriculture teacher at the Bursa Agriculture School and as director of the Ankara Agriculture Office before taking up the position at the farm.

To understand the importance of the Forest Farm for Mustafa Kemal and to answer the question of what he wanted to convey to American audiences by showing it to them, some background information is needed. On 5 May 1925, Mustafa Kemal set out to establish the Gazi's Forest Farm (*Gazi Orman Çiftliği*) in Ankara.<sup>73</sup> While the Soviet Union was seeking rapid industrialization at the expense of its peasants in the beginning of the twentieth century, the young Turkish Republic was making ceaseless reforms to improve the conditions of its peasants and to modernize agriculture. They believed that augmenting agricultural production was the most realistic way for Turkey to develop economically.

After all, when Mustafa Kemal came to power, Turkey was predominantly an agrarian society. Eighty percent of Turks lived in the countryside. The economy was largely based on agriculture, which provided more than half of the gross national product (GNP) and was the livelihood of more than seventy percent of the population.<sup>74</sup> Peasants were the driving force behind Turkey's economy. Nevertheless, their productivity was quite low due to a lack of mechanization and industrialization.<sup>75</sup> Mustafa Kemal was determined to change this by merging agricultural society with the scientific techniques of modern farming. He believed that a farm that could combine agriculture with industry, could serve as a model for other farms.

For this project, Mustafa Kemal chose Ankara, the city he envisioned as the modern capital of new Turkey. For him, this small city, which had been the headquarters of the national resistance, symbolized a new beginning, the ground upon which he could build a modern civilization. For Mustafa Kemal's opponents, however, Ankara was nothing more than a remote, unattractive provincial town in the middle of the Anatolian steppes. For them, it was hard to

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<sup>73</sup> Mango, *Atatürk*, 430.

<sup>74</sup> According to Öztoprak, 80% of the population lived in the countryside. See İzzet Öztoprak, *Atatürk Orman Çiftliği'nin Tarihi* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2006), 5.

<sup>75</sup> In 1924, the total number of tractors in Turkey was two hundred twenty. This number would increase to one thousand in 1929 after the modernization reforms of the Kemalist government. *Ibid.*, 1.



imagine a tree growing here, let alone a new civilization.<sup>76</sup> In fact, they had a point. Ankara, now the second largest city of Turkey with around five million inhabitants, harbored only thirty thousand people in the 1920s.<sup>77</sup> Situated on a rocky hill, it was an arid, bleak, and monotonous city. It had cold, snowy winters and hot, dry summers. Its main products were wool, obtained from the famous Angora goats and rabbits, grapes and grain.

When the Allies occupied the empire's capital, Istanbul, however, Ankara's geographical location had provided Mustafa Kemal and the nationalists with a strategic advantage. Situated in the middle of Anatolia, it was a secure place to establish the headquarters of the national resistance movement. In fact, the city's destiny changed rapidly after Mustafa Kemal's arrival in 1919, first serving nationalists as their headquarters and then becoming Turkey's new capital in place of Istanbul on 13 October 1923.<sup>78</sup>

Mustafa Kemal won national independence, making Ankara the capital, and then set out to secure Turkey's economic independence by building a model farm near the same city. He wanted to prove to everyone that agriculture was possible not only on fertile land but also on the barren grounds of Anatolia. Thus, he bought about twenty thousand acres<sup>79</sup> of partially poor, swampy and infertile land to show the "Turkish nation" that nothing could stop them if they were determined worked hard and employed the techniques of modern farming.<sup>80</sup> On 5 May 1925, his struggle against nature began.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Yalçın Memluk, "Cephelerden Orman Çiftliğine," in *Bir Çağdaşlaşma Öyküsü: Cumhuriyet Devriminin Büyük Eseri Atatürk Orman Çiftliği*, ed. Yalçın Memluk et al. (Ankara: Koleksiyoncular Derneği Yayını, 2007), 60.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>78</sup> Mango, *Atatürk*, 392.

<sup>79</sup> Uğurlu Tunalı, "Atatürk Orman Çiftliği," in *Bir Çağdaşlaşma Öyküsü: Cumhuriyet Devriminin Büyük Eseri Atatürk Orman Çiftliği*, ed. Yalçın Memluk et al. (Ankara: Koleksiyoncular Derneği Yayını, 2007), 58. See also Öztoprak, *Atatürk Orman Çiftliği'nin Tarihi*, 12, 32.

<sup>80</sup> Çağatay Keskinok, "Bir özgürleşme tasarısı olarak Atatürk Orman Çiftliği" in *Bir Çağdaşlaşma Öyküsü: Cumhuriyet Devriminin Büyük Eseri Atatürk Orman Çiftliği*, ed. Yalçın Memluk et al. (Ankara: Koleksiyoncular Derneği Yayını, 2007), 76.

<sup>81</sup> Tunalı, "Atatürk Orman Çiftliği," 27.

Over time, the swamps were drained, trees were planted, and farmhouses and shelters built.<sup>82</sup> In addition to plantations, a vineyard and orchards were established.<sup>83</sup> To turn the farm into a forest farm, in accordance with its name, one of the largest afforestation in Turkish history was realized by planting a million trees, as Tahsin Bey mentions in the 1930 film.<sup>84</sup> The farm grew rapidly from twenty thousand acres to approximately one hundred thousand acres in Mustafa Kemal's lifetime.<sup>85</sup> Agricultural production, which started with basic agricultural products such as eggs, milk, yogurt and wine, would grow to include manufactured goods such as beer, malt, ice, soda, carbonated beverages, leather, agricultural tools and iron.<sup>86</sup> In fact, to make beer a popular drink in Turkey, Mustafa Kemal opened a beer factory at the Forest Farm in 1934, a radical move in a Muslim majority country.<sup>87</sup>

Besides creating a space for economic production, Mustafa Kemal envisioned his farm as a space with an educational function, specifically to teach modern agricultural techniques. Thus, the Forest Farm served as a laboratory for the Turkish Agriculture Institute – opened in 1933 – where the institute's students could do internships. To increase the use of modern farming techniques across the country, lectures and workshops were organized for farmers from all over the country. A workshop organized in the iron and pillow factory of the farm, for instance, taught young farmers – between 14 and 17 years old – how to use modern farm machinery.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Mango, *Atatürk*, 430.

<sup>83</sup> Korkut Erkan "Sunuş," in *Bir Çağdaşlaşma Öyküsü: Cumhuriyet Devriminin Büyük Eseri Atatürk Orman Çiftliği*, ed. Yalçın Memluk et al. (Ankara: Koleksiyoncular Derneği Yayını, 2007), 8.

<sup>84</sup> According to Erkan, four and a half million trees were planted on the Forest Farm within a short time. See Erkan, *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>85</sup> Öztoprak mentions that official sources give different numbers for the size of the farm, ranging from eighty thousand to one hundred and two thousand, and twelve thousand acres. He states that a book published by the farm in 1939 lists its size as one hundred and two thousand acres. See Öztoprak, *Atatürk Orman Çiftliği'nin Tarihi*, 14. Keskinok also states that the size of the farm was one hundred and two thousand acres. See Keskinok, "Bir özgürleşme tasarısı olarak Atatürk Orman Çiftliği," 71.

<sup>86</sup> Erkan, "Sunuş," 8; Öztoprak, *Atatürk Orman Çiftliği'nin Tarihi*, 154.

<sup>87</sup> Öztoprak, *Atatürk Orman Çiftliği'nin Tarihi*, 91-92.

<sup>88</sup> Keskinok, "Bir özgürleşme tasarısı olarak Atatürk Orman Çiftliği," 77.

Furthermore, with the farm Mustafa Kemal planned to create a public space where the citizens of Ankara could socialize. To make the farm more attractive for citizens, two large ponds were built, one in the shape of the Sea of Marmara and the other in the shape of the Black Sea.<sup>89</sup> These ponds were a popular place for leisure and recreation.<sup>90</sup> The construction of the artificial ponds ameliorated the absence of the sea in Ankara, which had always made the city seem less attractive in comparison to Istanbul. A restaurant, café, brewery, park, zoo and music hall were added in the following years. After all, these public spaces were an indispensable part of the Western bourgeois lifestyle. Public concerts were organized in the music hall, usually by the Presidential Orchestra (Riyaseti Cumhur Orkestrası), which performed Western classical music.<sup>91</sup> All these events would make the farm a center of social and cultural life in Ankara, which had been lacking in this respect. With all these events and attractions, the farm was more than the sum of its parts; it was an extension of Mustafa Kemal's project to transform the Turkish people into "modern citizens."

The farm, whose construction Mustafa Kemal supervised from the very beginning, also served as a vehicle for his self-representation. Indeed, the president embraced his new role as a farmer. When, for instance, a delegation of farmers visited him in Kastamonu on 24 August 1925, four months after the establishment of his farm, he told them: "I too am a farmer" and "Farming requires machinery... Come together and buy machines!"<sup>92</sup> He frequently visited his farm, usually in the afternoons, to plant trees, hoe fields and drive a tractor.<sup>93</sup>

Nevertheless, Mustafa Kemal was not a typical farmer. He never went to the farm in farmers dress, but always dressed like a Western bourgeois gentleman, wearing a suit commonly combined with a tie.<sup>94</sup> He even went to the farm in a redingote, which he normally wore for special occasions. His entourage and local

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<sup>89</sup> Mango, *Atatürk*, 430.

<sup>90</sup> The Marmara pond was used for leisure activities and the Black Sea pond was used for both leisure activities and water sports. See Memluk et al. *Bir Çağdaşlaşma Öyküsü*, 52, 80.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>92</sup> Mango, *Atatürk*, 434.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 430. See also Memluk et al. *Bir Çağdaşlaşma Öyküsü*, 27.

<sup>94</sup> Memluk, "Atatürk Orman Çiftliği," 92.

people visiting the farm also used to dress in formal clothes when they visited the farm. More than representing a taste in fashion, I want to suggest that the farm's dress code conveyed the message that the Forest Farm was an urban space, so citizens should dress as they would dress in the city, in a "civilized fashion." Moreover, Mustafa Kemal wanted to emphasize that the Forest Farm was demonstrating a new, modern type of farming that no longer needed to be accompanied by traditional farmers' clothes.

Proud of his achievement, Mustafa Kemal sometimes took friends and other guests to the farm to entertain them. When, for instance, the King of Afghanistan, Amanullah Khan and his wife Queen Soraya, visited Turkey from 20 to 27 May 1928, Mustafa Kemal gave a reception in their honor at the Marmara Mansion on the Forest Farm.<sup>95</sup> The guests were taken on a tour of the farm in order to display its progress.<sup>96</sup> The Forest Farm provided Mustafa Kemal with a setting to show off his success in reforming the country. Adapting Shakespeare's famous phrase, we can perhaps say that all the farm was a stage, all the men and women guests merely players,<sup>97</sup> and Mustafa Kemal the main character, performing modernity.

All this makes clear how, for Mustafa Kemal, there could not be a better setting for a film to display the vast improvements made in the new Turkey than the Forest Farm. Unlike the dark and gloomy chambers of official buildings, the farm provided a bright, open and informal space, much more likely to make an American audience sympathize with the Turkish president. Moreover, as part of its economic modernization and development program, Turkey wanted to expand its trade with the US, which could offer particular commodities as well as important markets for Turkish products.<sup>98</sup> Agricultural products were the foremost export goods of the Turkish economy. In 1929, for instance, Turkey

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players" is the first phrase of a monologue in *As You Like It*. See William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, edited by George Rice Carpenter (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1896), 43.

<sup>98</sup> Roger R. Trask, *The United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform, 1914-1939* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 94.

exported cigarette leaf tobacco, licorice root and figs as well as mohair, sheep, lamb and goat casings, along with handmade rugs to the US, while importing machinery and vehicles, metals and manufactured goods, vegetable food products and beverages from the US.<sup>99</sup>

In opening the farm to American audiences, enabling them to see the high standards of Turkish agricultural production with their own eyes, the film constituted a valuable advertisement for Turkey's progress under Mustafa Kemal's "modern," "civilian" and "democratic" leadership. In the years of the Great Depression (1929-1930), the images of the farm conveyed an important message to the world: despite the severe economic crises in the world, the Turkish economy is strong and steadily growing. Neither American companies nor other foreign investors should hesitate to invest in Turkey.<sup>100</sup>

In the film, instead of outlining the progress himself, Mustafa Kemal prefers to have an expert, Tahsin Bey, convey it. This makes for a subtler message to the ambassador and the American audience. Tahsin Bey's explanation, which emphasizes the progress made, the advantages of American tractors and thus of Turkish-American cooperation, and the use of machinery in developing the farm must have satisfied Mustafa Kemal, who was known for paying attention to such details.

### **The Garden (Scene III)**

According to the ambassador's letter, in the third scene, Mustafa Kemal, Âfet Hanım and the ambassador, followed by the retinue, walked through the garden while the cameraman was hidden among the flowers.<sup>101</sup> All the men in Mustafa Kemal's entourage are dressed in Western bourgeoisie fashion;<sup>102</sup> the only

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 106-107.

<sup>100</sup> Trask states that in the mid-nineteen thirties, there were doubts about Turkey's economic capacity. An official of the US State Department, for instance, believed that Turkey was not a safe country for American firms to invest in. Ibid., 131.

<sup>101</sup> Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, 15.

<sup>102</sup> Except for Mustafa Kemal's military aide de camp, who is officially dressed in his military uniform.

woman who appears in the film, Âfet Hanım, is wearing Western fashion accessories such as a fox pelt and high heels. In his letter, the ambassador gives the names of some of the people in the retinue: Numan Bey, Kadri Rıza Bey, Mr. Shaw (G. Howland), Mustafa Kemal's military *aide de camp* and "the ever present secret service man."<sup>103</sup> In the background of the scene, the camera shows the Hüseyin Gazi Mountain and the city of Ankara.

### **The Cows (Scene IV)**

In scene four,<sup>104</sup> we see Mustafa Kemal, the ambassador and the retinue visiting the cowshed. The camera films Mustafa Kemal closely and we can see that he is dressed fashionably in a dark morning coat with a tie. The ambassador and the retinue are also all dressed formally; not a single person is dressed in traditional farmer's clothes. As I mentioned before, Mustafa Kemal always visited the farm in formal dress usually *tenue de ville*. He did not wear a flat cap, but preferred a fedora, a trilby, a Panama hat or even nothing to any kind of hat associated with a traditional farmer's outfit. For him, as noted, the Forest Farm was part of the city and thus a modern urban space.

While visiting the cowshed, Tahsin Bey gives some information on the cattle breed, which was four-year-old pure Simmental. Tahsin Bey reveals that from the Simmentals they obtain 18 *okka* of milk per day (the *okka* was an Ottoman measurement equal to 1,282 kg.). This information is important because it indicates that the animals on the farm were not cultivated primarily to till the land, but for their products. In other words, by mentioning the milk Tahsin Bey suggests that agriculture is no longer dependent on animal power but instead relies on modern machinery, as the film shows explicitly in scene seven, "The Tractors."

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> This scene is called "The Cows" in the ambassador's letter. In the MIRC version of the film, it appears after "The Poultry."

An interesting moment in “The Cows” occurs when Tahsin Bey explains that they have breeds of cattle from Crimea, Simmental and Holland on the farm. One can see Mustafa Kemal standing very closely to the right of a Simmental’s head before there is a quick cut in the scene, identifiable from Mustafa Kemal’s sudden distance from the cow.<sup>105</sup> It is not clear why the cut was made, but when the scene continues, the Simmental shakes its head wildly and Mustafa Kemal first moves his head back and then takes a step back.

Whether he stepped back because he wanted to keep his clothes clean or whether it was a reflex, this moment shows that, contrary to what official Turkish history suggests, Mustafa Kemal was an ordinary human. It also indicates an important feature of film, namely that it can display contingency. Unlike other visual media such as sculpture, painting or photography, which represent fixed moments in time, film displays images in movement; therefore, it can easily escape control and put the representational totality and the message it seeks to convey at risk.<sup>106</sup> Resisting representational wholeness more than any other visual medium, film is open to surprise. This is the allure of film and also its danger. Here, the Simmental upstages Mustafa Kemal and forces him into the background.

In the rest of the scene, Mustafa Kemal acts as if nothing has happened and asks Tahsin Bey about the other cows. Tahsin Bey answers that they are mostly from the Crimea, Switzerland and Holland, and indicates that the ones from Holland, because they give the most milk (up to forty liters a day), have been hybridized with local cattle to increase their size and milk production. Without regard for Mustafa Kemal Pasha, the Simmental is mooing. Showing his expertise on the topic, Mustafa Kemal asks, “Hybrid, you acclimatize them?” to which Tahsin Bey answers: “we acclimatize them.” Mustafa Kemal notes that the Simmental is bigger than the local cows and holds its horn with his right hand, but when the Simmental shakes its head he withdraws his hand.

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<sup>105</sup> This cut exists both in the version of the film kept in the Turkish Film Archives and in the newly found MIRC version.

<sup>106</sup> Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 11.

While Tahsin Bey explains that the calves of the Simmental are best in terms of meat and milk, Mustafa Kemal looks briefly at the man behind Tahsin Bey and then at the camera. The man says something to Mustafa Kemal. It is not possible to see whether the Fox Film team or the man behind Tahsin Bey gave a sign to indicate that Mustafa Kemal and Tahsin Bey should stop talking here, but Mustafa Kemal interrupts Tahsin Bey's words by making a move with his right hand, signaling that he should stop talking. He then turns briefly towards the camera, signaling that they are done. If this was Mustafa Kemal's own initiative, it could be suggested that he was co-directing the film with the Fox Film crew. If it was not, then it might be concluded that he was making an effort to perform in line with the film crew's instructions.

Next, we see Mustafa Kemal in a full shot, dressed in a morning coat with a tie and wearing patent leather shoes. He is passing by the herd, which has been driven out to drink water. He reviews the front row of cows, which are being carefully held by some workers to minimize the risk. Regardless of all measures, however, the cows are mooing loudly. Patting each of them warmly with his right hand, Mustafa Kemal walks towards the camera and looks into it very briefly; in his left hand, he holds a cigarette. This scene shows the audience that the cows are being treated well at the farm. By monitoring their cultivation on site and petting each of them warmly, Mustafa Kemal emphasizes his love and affection for the animals. The implicit message to the audience is that: he is a civilized man who personally looks after the welfare of the animals on his farm. Despite the cows' unruliness, Mustafa Kemal remains unfazed, yet at the same time he does not leave the animals completely free. To ensure the desired outcome, the cows are held carefully, so that they are not seen to defy Mustafa Kemal's authority.

### **The Poultry (Scene V)**

According to the ambassador's letter, the next scene is called "the Poultry."<sup>107</sup> In both the TFA and MIRC versions, this scene is placed before "The Cows." We see the presidential party visiting the chicken coop. Tahsin Bey approaches the

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<sup>107</sup> Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, 16.



fenced yard to feed the chicken with grain, making a strange noise and shaking the fence. The hens and geese answer his call by coming towards him squawking and gagging. The camera films them eating the grain and shows the white chicken coops, which look clean and modern.

The scene shows that the hens and geese are being kept in the best hygienic conditions and raised according to the highest quality standards. Moreover, in the background of the scene, a self-regulating windmill can be seen. As farmers moved into the barren Great Plains in the US, they used self-regulating windmills as a power source to pump water from the ground. Mustafa Kemal's modern farm seems to have adopted this agricultural technology as well. This scene, therefore, again appears to have been designed to make a statement about the modernity of the farm and its owner Mustafa Kemal.

### **The Sheep (Scene VI)**

In the next scene, called "The Sheep," we see the presidential party on a hill near the Forest Farm, which, as the ambassador's letter describes, they were taken to.<sup>108</sup> In both the TFA and MIRC versions, this scene appears after "The Tractors," which I will discuss in a moment. On the hill, there is a large flock of sheep, numbering eight hundred according to the ambassador's letter.<sup>109</sup> He also reveals that the sheep had traveled for three days on "forced marches" to reach the farm in time for the filming event.

In the scene, a shepherd plays the flute (*kaval*) while Mustafa Kemal, the ambassador and the retinue, all in formal dress, review the flock, which passes between them and the camera. The ambassador notes that when the scene was filmed for the first time, the sheep rushed and kicked up so much dust that they had to repeat the scene with the animals passing more slowly.<sup>110</sup> Thus, although Mustafa Kemal turned to film for its presumed ability to represent reality

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

directly, if reality did not confirm to the image he wanted to project, it was constructed (as in the case of the sheep being marched to the hill) or reconstructed (as in the case of the reshot scene) to fit this image.

The shepherd playing the flute is identified as an Albanian and, although this is not audible in the film, the ambassador states in his letter that, observing this scene, Mustafa Kemal smilingly and sotto voce said to him: “the Albanians make the best shepherds in the world but are good for nothing else.”<sup>111</sup> If the ambassador’s statement is true, Mustafa Kemal’s remark points to his adoption of a discourse that was prevalent at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century in Europe and America. This discourse thought about different nations through the lens of popular understandings of ethnicity and Darwinian sociocultural theories of evolution.<sup>112</sup>

According to these theories, societies progress through different stages, beginning with a primitive state and developing over time into more complex and civilized forms. This sociocultural evolutionary discourse considered Western civilization as the pinnacle of human civilization, the standard in relation to which other civilizations could be ranked as either primitive or civilized. With his statement about the Albanian shepherd Mustafa Kemal implicitly assigns Albanians to a lower stage of development and Turks to a more advanced one. Moreover, by sharing this ethnic stereotype quietly with the ambassador, he builds a social solidarity between Turks and Americans as civilized selves united in their view of Albanians as less civilized others, while also indicating his politeness by not expressing the joke in a way that is audible to the audience.

### **The Tractors (Scene VII)**

In the next scene, we see the presidential party watching six tractors plowing the fields. In his letter, the ambassador explains that the tractor drivers tried to

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Hanoğlu, *Atatürk*, 161.

preserve a military formation for the camera, but were unsuccessful. According to the ambassador, the tractors appeared to be German or Czechoslovakian, but the six or eight automobiles present (though not shown in either the TFA or MIRC version of the film) were American. The display of the farm's tractors to the American audience had several implications. As we saw at the beginning of the film, Tahsin Bey had told Mustafa Kemal and the ambassador that they began building the farm by buying American Fordson tractors. In this way, the success of Turkish-American economic cooperation was emphasized.

Furthermore, the tractor was more than just an agricultural tool at the beginning of the twentieth century; it was an instrument of modernity, revolutionizing farming in the early 1900s by increasing efficiency and productivity.<sup>113</sup> Before tractors, the principal source of power in agriculture, besides human labor, had been animal power. Draft animals such as horses, oxen and buffalo were used to cultivate fields and reap the harvest. With the invention of tractors – at the end of the nineteenth century – a new form of power entered agriculture, capable of tackling almost every major task on a farm.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, tractors reduced the cost – in particular on larger farms – as well as the dependency of farmers on human and animal labor, enabling them to farm with greater ease and productivity.<sup>115</sup> Like other industrial machines, tractors were seen as the “great emancipators” of humanity that would allow farmers to enjoy leisure time and the good things in life.<sup>116</sup> With all its features, the tractor was an important symbol and technological component of modern agriculture in the US and the “civilized world.” Thus, Mustafa Kemal's farm could not be imagined without it.

In fact, in 1926, one year after the farm was established, there were already thirteen Fordson tractors on Mustafa Kemal's farm, produced by the Ford Motor Company. Each of these American tractors had twenty-horse power and could

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<sup>113</sup> Sally H. Clarke, *Regulation and the Revolution in United States Farm Productivity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 83-135.

<sup>114</sup> Although tractors were too costly for the average farmer at the beginning of the twentieth century, they became increasingly popular over time as their prices dropped. *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

plow one twelve-acre plot of land daily.<sup>117</sup> In presenting the farm's tractors (albeit, according to the ambassador's letter, not the Fordsons) to foreign audiences, the film was not only showing US-Turkish cooperation but also pointing out that there was virtually no difference between the way agricultural tasks were performed on Mustafa Kemal's farm and on farms in nations recognized as being at the forefront of modernity.

### **The Machine Shop (Scene VIII)**

According to the ambassador, the next scene is called "The Machine Shop."<sup>118</sup> He explains that, for this scene, they visited the machine shop where plows and other farming tools were produced.<sup>119</sup> The machine workshop was established at the farm in line with Mustafa Kemal's vision of modern farming. The ambassador mentions how, when the presidential party approached the workshop, they could hear the banging of hammer and anvil. Indeed, in the MIRC version of the film, we see the presidential party visiting the machine shop, hear the banging of hammers and anvils, and see the great number of plows produced there, standing outside of the machine workshop.

This scene, like most others, was not spontaneous but prearranged. It shows that not only Mustafa Kemal and the ambassador but also the farm's workers performed active roles for the camera. The workers in the machine workshop do not stop working as Mustafa Kemal and his retinue approach, but continue with great concentration as if nothing unusual is happening. This scene stood in stark contrast to Orientalist images of the Turks that represented them as a lazy, backward and stagnant people. By using its capacity to capture motion in time, the film sought to create a new image of the "Turks" as always on the move, in action, working or busy. Moreover, the workshop scene shows that Turks are not only capable of farming but also of producing complex tools. The machine shop thus signifies Turkish people as industrious and technologically *au courant*.

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<sup>117</sup> Öztoprak, *Atatürk Orman Çiftliği'nin Tarihi*, 69.

<sup>118</sup> This scene does not exist in the TFA version I watched, but is in the MIRC version.

<sup>119</sup> Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, 17. See also Öztoprak, *Atatürk Orman Çiftliği'nin Tarihi*, 87.

The ambassador further notes that Mustafa Kemal personally took the handles of a plow, showing the easy manageability of this tool, followed by a conversation about the uses of the tools on the farm.<sup>120</sup> In the MIRC version of the film Mustafa Kemal indeed takes the handles of a plow and the ambassador follows his example. By demonstrating the user-friendly plow, which was most probably the workshop's own product, Mustafa Kemal was displaying his knowledge about the techniques of modern farming as well as his investment in the production of modern machinery in Turkey. The tractors, machine shop and plow all pointed to the farm as a symbol of Turkish modernity and, by extension, to the modernizing leadership of its owner, Mustafa Kemal.

### **Woman, Lovely Woman (Scene IX)**

According to the ambassador's letter, Harry E. Squire, the Fox movie operator, insisted that Âfet Hanım, Mustafa Kemal's favorite adopted daughter, deliver a message to the women of America.<sup>121</sup> The ambassador mentions that Mustafa Kemal first hesitated but then gave his permission. The stage in the film is set as follows: Mustafa Kemal, Âfet Hanım and the ambassador sit in three wicker chairs in the garden with flowers in the background.

For the benefit of the American public, the ambassador asks Âfet Hanım in English: "Âfet Hanım, would you tell us your opinion of the American woman?"<sup>122</sup> The film shows that, before Âfet Hanım can answer, Mustafa Kemal smilingly asks the ambassador in French: "Excellence, voulez-vous permettre que ma fille réponde [*sic*] en turc?"<sup>123</sup> After the ambassador's confirmation in French, "Je vous en prie, Excellence,"<sup>124</sup> Âfet Hanım turns to the ambassador and says, in Turkish:

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<sup>120</sup> Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, 17.

<sup>121</sup> "Woman, Lovely Woman" is another scene that does not exist in the TFA version, but is preserved in the MIRC version. The scene showing Âfet Hanım can be found in two films held in the MIRC: in Fox Movietone News Story 8-848: *Ataturk Entertains Grew on His Private Estate* and in the film Fox Movietone News Story 8-795-8796: *Miss Afet*. Crew Info: Squire 14 Young, Fox Movietone News Collections. Moving Image Research Collections, University of South Carolina. B&W Sound, November 11, 1930, Ankara, Turkey, 3 min 54 sec.

<sup>122</sup> Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, 18.

<sup>123</sup> Mustafa Kemal should have used the French subjunctif and say "réponde" instead of "répond" here. English translation: "Excellency, will you permit my daughter to respond in Turkish?"

<sup>124</sup> English translation: "Please, Excellency."

I appreciate and congratulate the American women because they have fully won their political rights. The Turkish women are not satisfied with the rights at present but I am sure the full right to elect and be elected deputies to the Grand National Assembly will be secured.<sup>125</sup>

According to the ambassador's letter, this scene had to be shot twice because Âfet Hanım at first spoke directly to the ambassador instead of to the camera. The ambassador notes that this was a lovely scene, his favorite.<sup>126</sup>

Mustafa Kemal's slight hesitation before permitting Âfet Hanım to speak on film makes us question the reasons behind it. Today, Mustafa Kemal is known as the great emancipator of Turkish women, so why did he hesitate to allow his daughter to deliver a message to the women of America? To understand this, we first need to understand the position of women in 1920s Turkey and how the Kemalist revolution changed it.

Although Mustafa Kemal and his followers were only a small elite in Ankara, their revolution touched everything, influenced everyone and permeated every aspect of the social life of the country. For instance, on 17 February 1926, the Ankara government voted for a new civil code, an adaptation of the Swiss civil code.<sup>127</sup> With this law, designed to Westernize family life in Turkey, the revolution inserted itself into the most intimate relationships of its citizens. According to the Kemalists, *Sharia* law was pre-modern and therefore not civilized for the Turkish nation, so it had to be abolished. *Sharia* law allowed divorce only at the husband's discretion, polygamy for men and unequal inheritance rights in favor of men. The new law not only gave equal rights to both parties in divorce and inheritance, but also banned polygamy. Moreover, it

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<sup>125</sup> Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, 18. Original Turkish (my transcription): "Amerika kadınılığını takdir ederim, çünkü siyasi haklarını tamamen kazanmışlardır. Türk kadınları da şimdiye kadar aldıkları haklarıyla iktifa etmeyeceklerdir. Pek yakında mebus intihap etmek ve intihap olunmak hakkını kazanacaklarına ümidim vardır, eminim."

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> The law entered into force on 4 October 1926. Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 272.

allowed the marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim man.<sup>128</sup> In addition, it allowed all adults the freedom to change their religion.<sup>129</sup>

The new civil code was a revolutionary step for the emancipation of women in Turkey, but there were still loopholes and inconsistencies. Like most European countries of the time, a man would remain the head of the family and women could not work outside the home or travel abroad without his approval.<sup>130</sup> The code also did not turn Turkey into a European country overnight. While it was enforced in cities, in rural areas the old traditions continued side by side with the revolutionary legislation. Nevertheless, once the taboo was broken, the social status of women started to gradually improve across the country. The state increasingly opened up all the trades and professions to women, including higher education, medicine, law and public services, which had formerly been largely restricted to men. Mustafa Kemal, the man behind this radical step, became the hero of women's emancipation in Turkey.<sup>131</sup> This reform had the further implication of bringing global attention to Turkey as the first Muslim country to provide women's rights to such an extent, as well as to Mustafa Kemal's leadership as a politician who shared a vision with modern Western democracies.

For Turkish feminists who wanted to receive full political rights, however, the code was not enough. As in the US, where women won the right to vote in 1919,<sup>132</sup> they also wanted the right to elect and be elected as members of parliament.<sup>133</sup> In fact, five months before this film was shot, on 3 April 1930, the Turkish Grand National Assembly passed a law allowing women to vote and to be elected locally,<sup>134</sup> followed by a law, passed on 5 December 1934, giving

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Mango, *Atatürk*, 437.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 438.

<sup>132</sup> "19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Women's Right to Vote," *National Archives*, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/document.html?doc=13>.

<sup>133</sup> Nuray Özdemir, "Türk Kadınına Milletvekili Seçme ve Seçilme Hakkı Tanınması Üzerine Yapılan Kutlamalar," *History Studies* 6, no. 5 (2014): 178, accessed April 21, 2015,

[http://www.historystudies.net/Makaleler/2054201183\\_9-Nuray%20Özdemir.pdf](http://www.historystudies.net/Makaleler/2054201183_9-Nuray%20Özdemir.pdf).

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 179.

women the right to vote nationwide.<sup>135</sup> Thus, when the film was shot in November 1930, women's enfranchisement was still being discussed, but Mustafa Kemal was already of the opinion that the time to give women their full political rights had come.<sup>136</sup>

Thus, when Âfet Hanım suggested in the film that Turkish women were not satisfied, her father likely shared her opinion. What may have made him hesitate, however, was Âfet Hanım's possible comparison of the rights of Turkish women with those of American women, which would create an image of Turkey as lagging behind the US. This would contradict Mustafa Kemal's goal of representing Turkey as a natural member of modern Western civilization. On the other hand, if Mustafa Kemal would not allow his daughter to deliver a message to the women of America, this would create the impression that freedom of expression was not permitted for women in the new Turkey. This, too, would create a negative image abroad, making Mustafa Kemal look like an uncivilized and authoritarian political leader.

Introducing an independent modern Turkish woman to the American audience, however – especially if this woman was his daughter – would fit his aim of representing the new Turkey as a modern country eager to become a member of the Western club perfectly. Furthermore, if she was not allowed to speak, the audience may have wondered who the sole woman present in the film was and what her relationship was to Mustafa Kemal. Either way, the decision was risky, also because this scene had clearly not been planned and rehearsed, so he could not be sure what Âfet Hanım would say and whether she would affirm or undermine the message he wanted to convey with the film. Nevertheless, as the MIRC version of the film shows, Mustafa Kemal took the risk and let his daughter deliver a message to the women of America.

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 179.



## The Fortunes of the Film

The ambassador tells us about the fortunes of the film in his letter. He states in his notes that filming took them four hours, from eleven o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon.<sup>137</sup> He calls the filming event a "great triumph" for Fox Films, writing: "nothing of the kind has ever done here before."<sup>138</sup> According to the ambassador's letter, Mustafa Kemal was so keen to see the result that he said he would delay his journey through Anatolia. The film was supposed to be developed in Berlin at the Fox studio and then returned to be screened in Turkey within nine days.<sup>139</sup> For the film's screening in the US, Mustafa Kemal's speech needed to be translated into English, whereas for its screening in Turkey the ambassador's speech needed to be translated in Turkish.<sup>140</sup>

Apparently, it was also necessary to shoot some extra scenes for the film that did not involve Mustafa Kemal. However, when the film crew wanted to shoot some of these scenes and take photographs, including of the old bazar, they ran into difficulties.<sup>141</sup> Because of a complaint, the governor (*Vali*) arrested the movie operator (Squire) and confiscated the film, since he felt it would give a "false impression of the new Turkey."<sup>142</sup> According to the ambassador, the reason behind this trouble was a certain Fuad Bey, the head of the Himaye-i Etfal (Children's Protection Society).<sup>143</sup> The ambassador tells us that Fuad Bey was a "self seeker" who was supposedly jealous of American enterprises setting up in Turkey and who thought the filming would damage his interests.

Thus, Fuad Bey prevented Squire from filming either the Jennings playground or the orphanage for which definitive arrangements had been made.<sup>144</sup> He went to the governor and accused Squire of photographing "indecent and obscene"

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<sup>137</sup> Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, 18.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

scenes in the streets and the old bazar.<sup>145</sup> The crisis was only resolved through Mustafa Kemal's intervention and the finished film was rushed to Berlin by a special Turkish courier.<sup>146</sup> The ambassador notes that what the vali and Turkish authorities failed to understand – as both he and Squire pointed out – was that “pictures of the streets and buildings of a modern city are not themselves interesting, but the antithesis between the old and the new Turkey was the very thing that would appeal to the American public and will enhance Turkish prestige by showing what has been accomplished in these few recent years.”<sup>147</sup>

The ambassador's comment is important because it explains the motivation behind the film, which was designed to demonstrate Turkey's progress under Mustafa Kemal and to thus contribute to new Turkey's prestige in the U.S. However, what is even more interesting is the story of the film's confiscation and the governor's fear that the footage of the old bazar could give “a false impression of the new Turkey.” This detail tells us much about the mentality of the Kemalist elite, which was often more Kemalist than Mustafa Kemal. Being aware of the sensitivity of the Kemalist ruling elite to the need to affirm Turkey's new image, Fuad Bey knew his accusations of indecency and obscenity would mobilize the governor to take action against the film. The ambassador does not give any details about Fuad Bey's motivation, except to state that there was an American enterprise that had definitive plans regarding the Jennings playground and the orphanage.

The Jennings playground and orphanage were related to the American philanthropist Asa K. Jennings, who at the time was the secretary of the International Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) of the United States and Canada.<sup>148</sup> Since the secular Turkish nationalists were not very keen on any form of missionary activity by foreign religious organizations in their country, Jennings established a new society called “American Friends of Turkey” in 1930 in order to continue his activities in Turkey. The society was particularly

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>148</sup> Robert L. Daniel, *American Philanthropy in the Near East, 1820-1960* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1970), 185.

interested in child welfare work and supported the establishment of kindergartens, playgrounds, sports clubs, libraries and dental and baby clinics in Turkey.<sup>149</sup> Although the ambassador's letter does not give us any details, Fuad Bey's supposed envy may have been related to a conflict of interest between him and the American Friends of Turkey. In fact, in the MIRC there is footage registered as *Turks Still Smoke the Old Way*,<sup>150</sup> which was shot in 1930 by Squire and which includes some sequences of children at play in an orphanage, probably in Ankara. These sequences show that the children are well taken care of and look like they were designed to be part of a story related to the American Friends of Turkey.

But, leaving local intrigue aside, we should turn our attention to the bigger picture and ask what might have been wrong from the governor's and the Turkish authorities' perspective with Americans photographing "indecent and obscene" scenes in the streets and in an old bazar in Turkey?

The bazar was an Orientalist symbol. Mustafa Kemal and the Kemalist elite did not like to be seen as Oriental, so they tried to erase Oriental symbols from public space as much as they could in order to make Turkey look like a modern Western country. Unlike the department stores in Europe and America that signified capitalist modernity, the old bazar stood for an outdated Oriental tradition. Moreover, the bazar was a public space that provided a kind of archeology of society, where people from different social classes and professions met. In the bazar, people came together to shop, eat and drink, for cultural activities and social interaction.

Despite Mustafa Kemal's radical modernizing reforms in the 1930s, one could still witness scenes in the bazar that could be easily associated with Orientalism, such as women in chador or men dressed in an "uncivilized fashion" drinking

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<sup>149</sup> John A. DeNovo, *American Interest and Policies in the Middle East, 1900-1939* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1963), 271.

<sup>150</sup> Fox Movietone News Story 8-854: *Turks Still Smoke the Old Way*, Crew Info: Squire 14 Young, Fox Movietone News Collections, Moving Image Research Collections, University of South Carolina, B&W Sound, December 13, 1930, Constantinople, Turkey, 9. 64 min.

coffee in coffee houses, smoking shisha or bargaining in the “Oriental manner.” Contrary to the Kemalist attempt to craft a Westernized image of a new Turkey that was homogenous, orderly and progressive, the bazar projected an Oriental image that was heterogeneous, chaotic and anachronistic. Thus, from their perspective, filming “indecent and obscene” scenes in the streets and in the old bazar could easily be seen as potentially damaging to the new Turkey’s image and therefore as something that had to be prevented.

In fact, the abovementioned film *Turks Still Smoke the Old Way* confirms the governor’s concerns. It shows the traditional manufacturing process of waterpipes and wooden spoons by some workers in an old-style assembly line. The camera pays particular attention to an elderly gentleman who smokes a traditional waterpipe while doing his job. The close-up shot reveals that he is dressed in traditional fashion and sitting on the ground. A small coffee table stands next to him on his left side and two coffee cups are in front of him. While smoking his waterpipe, he coughs occasionally. At some point, he complains that the coffee maker has not brought the coffee yet. Traditional Turkish carpets hang behind the workers. Together, these shots offer the perfect scenery for the Fox Films crew, invoking the images of Orientals produced in the Western Orientalist discourse.

The film also includes long-shot street scenes and scenes filmed in an old bazar. The men filmed in the streets are mostly dressed traditionally, with some of them donning turbans and others fezzes. The few women that can be seen in the film are wearing either the chador or the hijab. Only a small number of people are dressed in the way endorsed by Mustafa Kemal and the Kemalist elite. Consequently, it is very difficult to place the images within a Turkish context; they could have been shot anywhere in the Middle East. In one scene, a number of men are sitting in front of a place resembling a coffee house, observing passersby. The scene gives the impression that Mustafa Kemal’s modernizing reforms have not reached them yet.

Other footage entitled *Turkish Market Day*,<sup>151</sup> also shot by the Fox Film Crew, shows an ordinary market day in Ankara. Again, unlike the image of Turkey projected by Mustafa Kemal and his followers on the Forest Farm as homogenous, orderly and “modern,” the market day delivers a counter-image that is heterogeneous, chaotic and “anachronistic.” In the film, we see men and women from all classes of society, dressed mostly in a traditional manner. In contrast to Mustafa Kemal’s well-ordered farm, the market place delivers a picture of a crowd ruled by disarray. Whereas the official voices of Mustafa Kemal and the ambassador largely dominate the film produced on the Forest Farm, here one can hear a great variety of different voices of ordinary people, male and female, high and low, none of which can be individually identified. Nevertheless, together they deliver a powerful message to the audience: as Mustafa Kemal and his followers attempt to refashion Turkey into a modern country; a large part of the country still remains non-modern.

To fill the visual (and social) divide between the new Turkey and “contemporary civilization,” Mustafa Kemal and his followers had to perform modernity for different audiences. They were keenly aware of how the staging of a scene could enhance – or disrupt – particular performances of “civilized” identity. Seen as the most realistic medium of the time, film had a particular allure for the Kemalists because it could help them project their new identity as well as convince Western audiences that Turkey had changed and should now be seen as a natural member of civilized nations. Yet at the same time, the reality effect of the film worried them. By displaying undesirable scenes from Turkey – such as the scenes in the streets and in the old bazar – the film could also convince Western audiences of the opposite, that Turkey remained an Oriental country and thus should not be seen as a member of civilized nations.

To overcome this dilemma, Mustafa Kemal and his followers developed a particular relationship towards cinema. As defenders of modernity they were

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<sup>151</sup> Fox Movietone News Story 8-849: *Turkish Market Day*, Crew Info: Squire 14 Young, Fox Movietone News Collections, Moving Image Research Collections, University of South Carolina, B&W Sound, November 3, 1930, Ankara, Turkey, 9. 09 min.

open to cinema as a medium of modernity, but they were anxious about their ability to control its effects. One could produce or display films in and about Kemalist Turkey – this was even encouraged by the regime – but only as long as the cinema was under state control and the films did not contradict Kemalist state ideology. Turkey’s friends, such as the American ambassador, were also welcome to produce films about Turkey and the Kemalist regime, but only if the films did not give a false impression of the new Turkey and meshed well with the regimes’ vision of progress.

The ambassador provides another interesting detail about the film in his letter, suggesting that the governor did not understand what would interest the American audience. He notes that the “pictures of the streets and buildings of a modern city are not themselves interesting,” but that the comparison between the old and new Turkey would attract the American audience’s interest and increase Turkish prestige by emphasizing the progress made under the new regime. In fact, the American audience might very well have been interested in watching “exotic” images that they could not see in their own country. The other problem was that at a time when the Fox Film crew and the American ambassador wanted to draw a contrast between the “old” and the “new” Turkey such images revealed that they actually existed simultaneously, side-by-side, contradicting the image the Kemalists wanted to project.

By presenting the old and the new Turkey as successive and mutually exclusive, Squire and the ambassador were planning to manipulate the American public, which would likely not be aware that the “old Turkey” footage was in fact contemporary with that of “new Turkey.” They were well aware that a negative image of Turkey and the Turks already existed in US public opinion. To change this, they planned to follow a simple strategy. Firstly, they wanted to acknowledge the common prejudices against Turkey by showing images of “old Turkey,” suggesting that this was a picture of the past, of something superseded. Secondly, by drawing a picture of the new Turkey, a Turkey that was becoming increasingly modern under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, they wanted to send the following message: unlike the Ottoman Empire, the new Turkey is not

the “other” anymore, but one of us – a “civilized self” and a member of the “center.”

Conveying this message through film, however, was a kind of Faustian bargain<sup>152</sup> for Mustafa Kemal and his followers. They had to trade Turkey’s cinematic image and its potential manipulation for a more positive public opinion abroad. They wanted to control films about Turkey as much as possible, but were not able to fully do this if they wanted foreign audiences to see them. Therefore, they followed the strategy of better the devil you know. If a film had to be produced concerning Kemalist Turkey, it should be produced either by the state or at least by someone they knew and could control to a certain extent.

Otherwise, even a short scene representing the new Turkey in a negative way could cause a loss of prestige and endanger their efforts to become (seen as) modern. Since film was believed to be the most realistic medium of the time, it could damage their public image more than any other visual medium. Moreover, once a film damaged their image, this could have a lasting impact on the audience, almost impossible to erase. The fact that the Turkish Republic was a young country that was just introducing itself on the world stage made the use of cinema – also a relatively new medium – even riskier.

In fact, by creating a split between the filmed subject and its cinematic image, film made the former lose control of the latter. The Kemalist regime was very successful in its attempt to control the cinematic image within the country’s borders, but once a film left Turkey, they had no such control. Furthermore, the mechanical reproducibility of film enabled an unprecedented spread and endless unauthorized dissemination of filmic and photographic images.<sup>153</sup> Thus, films concerning Turkey and the Kemalist regime could easily fall into the hands of

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<sup>152</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: Der Tragödie erster und zweiter Teil, Urfaust*, ed. Erich Trunz (München: C.H. Beck, 1986).

<sup>153</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version” in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, edited by Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 19-55. See also Stefan Andriopoulos, “The Terror of Reproduction: Early Cinema’s Ghostly Doubles and the Right to One’s Own Image,” *New German Critique*, no. 99, (2006), 154, accessed April 12, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27669180>.

people with bad intentions, who could reproduce and display these films to an anonymous, foreign crowd of millions. Worse still, a voice-over could be added to these cinematic images in order to spread falsehoods about Turkey and Mustafa Kemal's regime over the whole world.

As the German philosopher Walter Benjamin suggests, film creates a kind of mirror image, but unlike the ordinary image in the mirror, the filmic mirror image is "detachable" and "transportable."<sup>154</sup> Consequently, entrusting his cinematic image to someone else, especially a foreigner, was by no means easy for Mustafa Kemal. It should rather be understood as a gift that created a special social bond between him and the American ambassador, with a responsibility to reciprocate on the part of the ambassador.<sup>155</sup> The ambassador's excitement in his letter, when he calls the filming of Mustafa Kemal "for the first time" a "victory" and "epoch-making,"<sup>156</sup> points to his awareness of the privilege given to him and to the American nation:

Fox Films, Incorporated, supported by my own modest efforts, have achieved a signal **victory** in persuading the President of the Turkish Republic **for the first time to be filmed and movietoned** in the intimacy of that sanctum sanctorum, his much beloved farm. [...] In order to present a true picture of this **epoch making event** I venture, most depreciatingly, to enclose a somewhat more intimate statement than is customarily included in the body of dispatches to the Department.<sup>157</sup>

By allowing the Americans to film him, on the one hand Mustafa Kemal risked losing control over his cinematic image, but on the other hand it could bring him and Turkey the priceless gift of influencing public opinion abroad. Film could give him what other media could not: directness, sincerity and prestige, but also a chance to wipe out the Orientalist image of the Turks in the Western world. To

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<sup>154</sup> Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," 33; Andriopoulos, "The Terror of Reproduction," 167.

<sup>155</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archeic Societies*, trans. W.D. Halls (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000).

<sup>156</sup> Bali, *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, 13.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.



achieve the higher goal, he accepted the “Faustian” bargain with the ambassador, accepting that, from now on, he would no longer be able to control the cinematic image created in the film. Or would he?

The Turkish scholar Utkan Kocatürk, in his book *A Documented Atatürk Diary*, writes that Mustafa Kemal watched the film made by Fox Films, including his speech to the American nation, at the Elhamra Sineması (Elhamra Movie Theater) in Istanbul on 3 December 1930.<sup>158</sup> This cinema visit is verified in a photo album recently published by the Turkish General Staff in Ankara.<sup>159</sup> One photograph in the album shows Mustafa Kemal and his entourage sitting in the cinema hall. Şükrü Kaya, the Minister of Interior, sits on his left side, while Âfet Hanım and Makbule (Atadan), his sister, sit on his right.<sup>160</sup>

Niyazi Ahmet Banoğlu’s book *Atatürk’ün İstanbul’daki Günleri* (The Days of Mustafa Kemal in İstanbul) gives us more details about this cinema visit.<sup>161</sup> According to Banoğlu, Mustafa Kemal was at the Elhamra Movie Theater from 14:30 to 17:10. It was a private film screening organized by Kemal Film.<sup>162</sup> The cinema program was as follows: a sound film, shot by Fox Film, was screened, including scenes showing Mustafa Kemal’s Forest Farm. Then, a sound film was shown related to Mustafa Kemal’s speech to the Americans, in which the American ambassador explained and praised “The Great Turkish Revolution” and its leader for an American audience. A screening of Atatürk’s address to the Americans in Turkish followed, in which he pointed to the mutual appreciation between the two democratic nations.<sup>163</sup> Then, a silent film charting Mustafa

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<sup>158</sup> Kocatürk, *Doğumundan Ölümüne Kadar Kaynakçalı Atatürk Günlüğü*, 436.

<sup>159</sup> Genelkurmay Personel Başkanlığı Askerî Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt (ATASE) Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, *Fotoğraflarla Atatürk* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 2015), accessed October 23, 2015, [http://www.ata.tsk.tr/content/media/07/ataurk\\_albumu\\_1.pdf](http://www.ata.tsk.tr/content/media/07/ataurk_albumu_1.pdf).

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 223. According to Özuyar, Cevat Abbas (Gürer), aid-de-camp Naşit and main aid-de-camp Rüşühi Bey were also at the screening with Atatürk on that day. See Özuyar, *Babîâli’de Sinema*, 70.

<sup>161</sup> Niyazi Ahmet Banoğlu, *Atatürk’ün İstanbul’daki Günleri (1899-1919 / 1927-1938)* (İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2012), 245. It should be mentioned that during his visits to Istanbul and İzmir, Atatürk frequently visited cinemas. In Istanbul, he watched films in high-class cinemas such as the Elhamra, the Opera and the Glorya. See Özuyar, *Babîâli’de Sinema*, 69.

<sup>162</sup> Özuyar, *Babîâli’de Sinema*, 69.

<sup>163</sup> Banoğlu, *Atatürk’ün İstanbul’daki Günleri*, 245.

Kemal's last journey from Ankara to Istanbul was screened.<sup>164</sup> In this film, Atatürk was shown among students in Kayseri, among the people in Sivas, at Turhal station reading the petition of a citizen, speaking to a peasant on a train and in Amasya and Samsun conversing with citizens. Later on, the film displays a panoramic view of Trabzon, Mustafa Kemal's visit to the local branch of the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), his departure from Trabzon on the Ege steamship, a scene of a foggy Bosphorus and Mustafa Kemal's departure from the Dolmabahçe Palace. After this, one film showed the pageantry on Republic Day in Ankara, while another featured the signing of a Turkish-Greek Friendship Treaty by the Prime Minister of Greece, Eleftherios K. Venizelos, the Greek Foreign Minister Andreas Michalakopoulos, the Prime Minister of Turkey, İsmet Pasha (İnönü), and the Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü (Aras).<sup>165</sup> Finally, some war scenes from the silent film *All Quiet on the Western Front* (directed by Lewis Milestone, 1930) were shown,<sup>166</sup> as well as the sound film *The Vagabond King* (directed by Ludwig Berger, 1930).

The Turkish communications scholar Serdar Öztürk tells us about an interesting letter that was sent by the Minister of Economics, Mustafa Eşref Bey, to the Prime Minister's Office in 1931, one year after the Forest Farm film was produced. The letter, dated 15 February 1931, points out the importance of using cinema films abroad in order to introduce the reforms initiated by the new regime to transform Turkey from an empire to a new state.<sup>167</sup> It suggests that some foreign countries, most importantly the United States, had requested films for display via the Turkish embassies.

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<sup>164</sup> Banoğlu writes that this silent film was screened with a "plak," which means a vinyl record. Screening a silent film synchronously with sound from a gramophone record was a common practice in the early years of cinema.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Özuyar suggests that Atatürk told Şükrü Kaya, the Minister of Interior, that he appreciated Milestone's film *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which saddened him because it demonstrated the disasters caused by war so perfectly. Nevertheless, he added that it might be too early to show this film to the Turkish people as they were just recovering from the war. According to Özuyar, despite his reservations, Atatürk did not want to give an order to ban the film, so it continued to be shown in the cinemas of Istanbul. Özuyar, *Babîâli'de Sinema*, 72.

<sup>167</sup> Serdar Öztürk, *Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Sinema, Seyir, Siyaset* (Ankara: Elips Kitap, 2005), 48-49.

Öztürk notes that the National Geographic Society, which called itself a “scientific” society, requested a film from the Turkish embassy in Washington, DC for display at a conference concerning the new Turkey on 9 January 1931.<sup>168</sup> The film had to be “three or four hundred meters” long and demonstrate the developments in Turkey in various areas. The Turkish embassy in Washington conveyed the request to the Ministry of Education in Turkey. In 1931, only one film promoting Turkey’s reforms existed: the film made by Fox Film about the “Gazi Forest Farm” and Mustafa Kemal’s meeting with the American ambassador. Nevertheless, Öztürk explains that the film could not be screened in the US because its reproduction had to be approved by Mustafa Kemal, which he refused to do.<sup>169</sup> Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet’s article “Making Turkey and The Turkish Revolution Known to Foreign Nations without any Expense”<sup>170</sup> contests Öztürk’s claim that Mustafa Kemal was against the film’s reproduction. They claim that he did approve the film’s screening, but that, since insufficient copies were available, it could not be sent to the US.<sup>171</sup>

The fact that there exists footage shot by Fox Films in the Fox Movietone News Collections at the MIRC, which I found during my research, shows that it did reach the US. Curator Greg Wilsbacher wrote to me explaining that, according to the MIRC’s records, the Fox Movietone News story *Ataturk Entertains Grew on His Private Estate* was not incorporated into a nationally released newsreel. This, however, does not preclude its use or screening in other forms, including at private screenings or in other newsreels later on.<sup>172</sup>

There is not much information about how often the film was screened or where it was shown in the US. The only trace I have been able to find of it is in a film called *Incredible Turk*, produced in 1958, which I came upon in the National Archives. It is a film about Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the modernization of

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>170</sup> Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet, “Making Turkey and The Turkish Revolution Known to Foreign Nations without any Expense: Propaganda Films in the Early Turkish Republic,” *Oriente Moderno* 24 (85), no. 1 (2005): 117-132, accessed April 24, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25817998>.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>172</sup> Greg Wilsbacher, email message to author, July 21, 2015.

Turkish Republic, originating from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which shows, very briefly, parts of three scenes (“The Cows,” “The Garden” and “Preliminary Speeches”) from the Forest Farm film. These scenes are juxtaposed with others showing Mustafa Kemal engaging in farming activities.

When I discussed the uses of these kinds of films in the US with the officials of the archives, they told me that they might have been used by the state for propaganda as well as educational purposes. For instance, the CIA may have used them to train their agents. In fact, *Incredible Turk* is an implicit propaganda film that begins by describing Turkey’s strategic importance in guarding against Soviet expansion in the Middle East, which continues with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s modernizing reforms and his pro-Western attitude, and ends with Turkey’s alliance with the West to defend its way of life. This film was screened nationwide in the US on a documentary television program called *The Twentieth Century* that ran on the CBS network between 1957 and 1966, and which was hosted by the famous American broadcast journalist and anchorman Walter Cronkite.<sup>173</sup>

We do not know much about how the producers of *Incredible Turk* acquired the three scenes from the Forest Farm film, nor do we know how the film itself ended up with the CIA. What we do know is that once Mustafa Kemal had made a pact with the American ambassador to exchange his cinematic image for international prestige, he relinquished control over it and accepted that it could wander around the world, from archive to archive and from screen to screen, without him knowing who would use it and for what purpose.

## **Conclusion**

With the end of the War of Independence, Mustafa Kemal and his followers set out to build a modern nation state out of the remains of the Ottoman Empire. They initiated several reforms to modernize Turkey and to raise it to the level of

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<sup>173</sup> The film announces itself as “The Twentieth Century: A Filmed Presentation of CBS News.”

the “civilized nations of the world.” Despite all their efforts, however, the shadow of Turkey’s Orientalist image haunted the new government. This image had developed over centuries as a result of the Western Orientalist discourse as well as the Ottoman self-representation. To overcome this and to become a respected member of the Western club of “civilized nations,” Mustafa Kemal and his followers had to refashion Turkey’s image and convince the Western world that they were being sincere and successful in their efforts. Cinema, considered the most modern and realistic medium of the time, offered the Kemalists a particularly powerful means of achieving this. Yet, the same features of cinema that made it attractive also made it difficult to control and therefore a risky medium for self-representation. By analyzing one specific film made for an American audience in this chapter, I have demonstrated why film might have been both the most beneficial and the most dangerous medium for Mustafa Kemal’s self-representation to foreign audiences.

To raise Turkey’s prestige in the US, Mustafa Kemal accepted Ambassador Joseph C. Grew’s offer of being filmed for the first time on his Forest Farm. Faced with film, the ultimate medium of contingency, he tried to leave nothing to chance. To convince American audiences of the veracity of the new Turkey’s modernity, Mustafa Kemal, together with the ambassador and the Fox Film crew, carefully crafted the film to present himself and the Turkish people as countering Orientalist stereotypes. He performed a modern, civilized and democratic image of himself and the Turkish nation as capable of change, order and progress. Mustafa Kemal’s choice of the farm as film’s setting was deliberate, because in combining agriculture with industry the farm was the epitome of the republic’s economic development.

Dressed like a Western bourgeois gentleman, even at the farm, Mustafa Kemal presented himself as a civilian president, as someone working tirelessly to industrialize his country and increase the people’s standard of living. He emphasized the importance of mutual friendship and common interest between Turkey and the US, while demonstrating in practice the importance of American industry for his economic development program and the success of Turkish-

American cooperation. In this way, he not only intended to show his pro-Western attitude but also to establish an affinity between himself and the civilian political leaders of contemporary Western democracies. The “directness” of cinema served to convey this message to the American public more effectively than any other medium.

Both the ambassador’s and Mustafa Kemal’s speeches in the film stressed that the Turkish people were in essence a people of great accomplishments that had unfortunately been led astray due to the maladministration of the Ottoman Empire, causing them to lag behind the modern nations of the West. Mustafa Kemal was introduced by the ambassador and portrayed himself as the heroic leader who had restored the Turkish nation to the path of progress, giving it back its rightful place in the community of civilized nations. In their speeches, both statesmen sought to convey the following message: Americans should no longer perceive Turkey as an uncivilized Oriental “other” or as part of the periphery, but rather as part of the civilized Western “self” and as a center of modernity.

Nevertheless, Mustafa Kemal and his followers’ attempts at controlling every aspect of the film indicate that they worried about losing control of the new Turkey’s self-image. Mustafa Kemal tried to control the representational totality of the film by choosing the people who made the film and the settings, and by carefully performing in front of the camera. Furthermore, to shape the film’s outcome, he and his followers meticulously prepared the farm and reconstructed some scenes while preventing others from being filmed. Despite these attempts, however, a scene such as “The Cows,” as well as the scenes shot in the streets and at the old bazar show that they could not fully overcome the contingency of film or guarantee that it would fully and exclusively convey their vision.

The film’s confiscation by the governor shows that the Kemalist bureaucrats were alert to every single detail in the film that could create a false impression of the new Turkey. This incident not only tells us about the Kemalist regime’s sensitivity toward Turkey’s new image, but also about its belief in the power of cinema to shape public opinion. The lack of a material base for modernization

and the subsequent visual divide between the envisioned new Turkey and “civilized nations of the world” in the early years of republic made the regime pay close attention to public spectacles of modernity.

Yet, film’s reality effect also caused a dilemma, because the display of any undesirable scenes, especially abroad, could easily reaffirm Turkey’s Oriental image. As purveyors of Western modernity Mustafa Kemal and his followers embraced cinema, but only as long as they could control its outcome and ensure that it did not contradict Kemalist state ideology. Within Turkey, the regime was successful in keeping the medium under control, but it could not do the same abroad. Nevertheless, Mustafa Kemal chose to accept the bargain and handed his and Turkey’s cinematic image over to the ambassador and Fox Films Inc. in order to win over US public opinion.

Although I tried to trace the fortunes of the film in this chapter, much about its reproduction and display in Turkey and the US remains unknown. What we can say is that the film shows us that Mustafa Kemal realized cinema’s great potential for convincing Western audiences of his message that “the Turkish nation belongs to the community of civilized nations.” His continuing attempts to convey this message to the people of the “civilized nations” through cinema, as well as his ongoing ambivalence towards the medium, will be the subject of the next chapter.