Posing for the Republic

*Making the modern Turkish citizen in vernacular photographs from the 1920s and 1930s*

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PART I
PHOTOGRAPHY, GENDER AND MODERNITY
Figure 1.1 A studio portrait, Photo Iris, Istanbul, circa 1920s. 13.4 x 8.7 cm. Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.

Figure 1.2 A studio portrait, Sébah & Joaillier, Istanbul, circa 1920s. 13.8 x 8.5 cm. Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.
**Figure 1.3** A studio portrait, Jules Kanzler, Istanbul, circa 1920s. 13.9 x 9 cm. Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.

**Figure 1.4** A studio portrait, Jules Kanzler, Istanbul, circa 1920s. 13.7 x 8.7 cm. Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.
In 2014, I purchased a series of six images (Figures 1.1–1.6) in a second-hand bookshop that sells old photographs in the Taksim Cihangir area of Istanbul. Taken in five different studios, the portraits feature a young person with fine features posing in various outfits: a light linen shirt in Figure 1.1, a V-neck sweater in Figure 1.2, a patterned jacket in Figure 1.3, fur in Figure 1.4, a laced collar blazer in Figure 1.5 and a striped sweater in Figure 1.6. The hairstyles also differ in each portrait. In a few instances, the photographs have been retouched to give the hair relief or texture. In Figure 1.3, for example, the model has a wavy hairdo, reflecting a fashionable hairstyle for women in the 1920s and 1930s. In the same image, the mouth and chin appear to have been retouched. Despite these differences and alterations, however, the six portraits appear to be of the same person: in Figures 1.2 and 1.3, the pointy nose bears the same features, yet the decisive feature is the beauty mark on the right cheek, which is clearly visible in Figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.5.

The dates of the images are unknown. One can therefore only deduce a broad timeline based on the studio names, the type of photographic paper used and the overall visual style of each studio portrait. Figure 1.6 seems to be the last of the series and was possibly taken a few years later than the rest, which I can trace back to the late 1920s or early 1930s. In this period, all five studios in the series were still active.
Four of the five Istanbul studios in which these portraits were made, namely Photo Iris (Figure 1.1), Studio Jules Kanzler (Figures 1.3 and 1.4), Photo Français (Figure 1.5) and Sébah & Joaillier (Figure 1.2), were run by non-Muslim photographers. The fifth studio is Foto S. Süreyya (Figure 1.6), which was established by the Muslim photographer Süleyman Süreyya Bükey in 1928. These studios may have been chosen because of their prominence or their familiarity, or simply because of a personal affinity, for instance with the craft of Jules Kanzler, who enhanced the feminine aspects of the face with retouches.

In Raw Histories, Elizabeth Edwards (2001a: 20) argues that “[p]hotography is like ritual or theater because it is between reality, a physical world, and imagination, dealing not only with a world of facts, but the world of possibilities.” With regard to making sense of photographs and what they show, she (2001: 6) notes: “There is seldom a ‘correct interpretation’: one can say what a photograph is not, but not absolutely what it is.” As I was cataloguing these six images, I struggled to provide a description of the person portrayed. My interpretation is that in Figures 1.1 and 1.2, but particularly in Figure 1.2, the pose and clothing give the appearance of masculinity, while Figures 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6 bring forward a sense of femininity.

How should I refer to the person portrayed in these photographs? Is this a man who enjoys dressing up as a woman? Is this a self-defined tomboy with indistinct features? Is the model an actor who relishes taking on an array of gender roles? Or do the photographs capture a fleeting moment of cross-dressing? The absence of dates makes it difficult to place the portraits along a chronological timeline, which keeps us from making assumptions regarding the potential evolution of this person’s appearance over time. Why does the attempt to say something about the gender identity of this person even matter?

As Joanne Hollows writes (2000: 27), “[g]endered identities and cultural forms are produced, and negotiated in specific historical contexts within specific and shifting forms

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27 All of these studios were based in Pera (modern day Beyoğlu). Photo Français was owned by the renowned Romanian Jewish photographer Jean Weinberg. Jules Kanzler (also Jul Kanzler) was a Russian photographer who was part of a community (Beyaz Ruslar, or White Russians) that fled to Istanbul in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution (1917) and the Russian Civil War (1917–1922). Russian immigration radically changed the social, cultural and nightlife of Istanbul as a great wave of musicians, dancers and artists arrived in the city (Koçu 1971: 2624–25; Mahir 2005). There is little information about the Pera studio Iris. As for the famous Sébah & Joaillier studio, during the 1884–1885 period, Sébah and Policarpe Joaillier became partners, and the name of Sébah’s studio on Grande Rue de Pera 439 was changed to Sébah & Joaillier in 1888. Policarpe Joaillier dissolved the partnership at the beginning of the twentieth century and Sébah sold his studio to Agop İskender and Perpanyani in 1908. Despite changing hands, the name of the studio remained the same until Agop İskender turned the studio over to his son and his new partner Ismail Insel in 1934 (Çizgen 1987: 86).

28 One of the most prominent photographers of the early Republican era, Süreyya Bükey finished the Francophone Galatasaray high school in Beyoğlu. He studied Political Science and Law in Istanbul and Economics in Milan in 1919–1920, and spoke French, Italian and German. He established his studio in 1928 on İstiklal Street 509. In the 1930s, he published a number of photography books as well as photography, cinema and sports magazines. He also organized amateur photography competitions, which he advertised in his magazines, which included Foto Süreyya (Akçura 2020b). Between 1936 and 1938 he served as photographer to Atatürk (Ak 2001: 104). Foto Süreyya also photographed various foreign artists visiting Istanbul and the applicants for Cumhuriyet’s national beauty contests in the early 1930s.

29 Retouching, to get rid of unwanted wrinkles or stains, as well as to extend eyelashes, reduce waistlines or lighten skin, was very popular among studio photographers and their customers. Most of the early photographers were also trained in painting, making them experts in retouching and hand coloring. Some studios employed artists specifically for retouching (Bölük 2014: 181).
of power relations.” In this process, the state has played an important role as “a powerful cultural agency helping to shape gender practices and expectations” (Hamilton 1998: 79). The way in which these six portraits indicate differently gendered selves is relevant in terms of what it has to say about how the Turkish modernization project, which was directly concerned with redefining gendered identities, particularly for women, was negotiated in photography.  

In this first part of my study, comprised of two chapters, I will analyze how the evolving gender roles assigned to men and women are performed in photographic portraits from the first two decades of the Turkish Republic. As Holmes and Marra (2010: 1) write, since the 1980s, “language and gender research has shifted from essentialist approaches, which treat male and female as discrete social categories to social constructionist and performative approaches (Butler 1990), which emphasize the diverse, flexible, and context-responsive ways in which people do gender (among other identities) in different situations, and even from moment to moment within a situation.” Gender, then, is increasingly conceptualized as a dynamic performance through which it is continually produced, reproduced and changed (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003: 4 in Holmes and Marra 2010: 1). To study gendered performances in vernacular photography of the 1920s and 1930s, I draw on Butler’s theory of gender performativity as well as on scholarship that explores what it means to discursively do femininity and masculinity in a range of different social settings.  

Chapter One and Chapter Two investigate the gender roles that, respectively, urban middle-class women and men adopted and represented through “performances of desire,” which Ryzova (2015a: 161) defines as “the production of particular selves that respond to socially situated expectations (masculine or feminine selves, modern selves, confessional selves, pious selves, respectable selves, playful selves, debauched selves); of social identities and communities (class, gender, family, confessional groups, networks of affiliation and association, networks of commerce); or forms of cultural memory.” Specifically, I will ask to what degree such performances accorded with the modernizing reforms of the Turkish Republic.  

As Judith Butler (2007 [1990]: 31) argues, “[t]he institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire.” Accordingly, I will explore how gender as a binary relation was constructed, reproduced and challenged in the Turkish Republic through photographic representations. The six images discussed above, I contend, provide a vital vantage point from which to elaborate on the broader, sometimes contradictory relationship between photography and gender roles in the early Republican era, since these images urge us to probe the visibility of gender and rethink the normative forms of masculinity and femininity that the Turkish modernization project worked so

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30 Here I use Surrey’s definition (1991: 53) of self “as a construct useful in describing the organization of a person’s experience and (the) construction of reality that illuminates the purpose and directionality of her or his behavior.”

31 On works exploring the relationship between gender and language see, for instance, Cameron and Kulick 2003; Coates 1993; and Livia and Hall 1997.
hard to establish, impose and propagate.
CHAPTER ONE

The Construction of the New Turkish Woman

As Göle (1996: 14) has persuasively argued in The Forbidden Modern, “the grammar of Turkish modernization can best be grasped by the implied equation established between national progress and women’s emancipation. More than the construction of citizenship and human rights, the construction of women as public citizens and women’s rights were the backbone of Kemalist reforms.” Unlike most national revolutions, the Kemalist revolution was primarily concerned with the reconstruction of the “ideal woman” instead of the “ideal man” (Göle 1996).

The reconstruction of an “ideal woman” started with the promotion of a Western, non-veiled appearance, associated with being civilized and progressive. The Kemalists perceived women as the “bearers of Westernization and carriers of secularism” (Göle 1996: 14). The Turkish nation-state relied heavily on a gender-based hierarchy and a hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987, 1999) in assigning gender roles to the modern Turkish citizen. It did so while negotiating feminist movements in Western industrialized countries and a conservative Muslim pushback that wanted to exclude women from the public sphere. In addition, like many other modern political regimes of the time, the Turkish republic was built on the endorsement of heterosexuality, with love, sexuality and desire tightly regulated through marriage and inheritance laws (Sancar 2017).

Recognizing the central role of visual representations of women in constructing the modern citizen for the Kemalist elites, this chapter will study how women performed their desired selves in photographs in the formative years of the Republic and how these self-representations corresponded to the regime’s efforts to construct the modern Turkish woman (also referred to as the Republican Woman). Specifically, I will look at the ways in which representations of Turkish middle-class women were formed, reproduced and circulated in the 1920s and 1930s through vernacular photography. I will probe how self-representations of modern secular Turkish women differed in the public and private spheres, and how such representations might have contributed to the making of modern public life in the new Republic. First, I will focus on the ways in which women performed their modern selves in the semi-private setting of the studio before and after the foundation of the Republic to demonstrate the continuities and disruptions with regard to the modernization of urban women. Second, I will discuss representations of modern femininities in group portraits taken in a public setting in order to understand how the gender performativities evident in them differed from those in studio portraits. Third, I will look at photographs of beauty queens to show how women negotiated the secularization reforms, state feminism and a conservative society that disapproved of the public display of female bodies. Finally, I will discuss the portraits of a Republican teacher to demonstrate the complexities involved in the contextualization of gender normativities in the 1920s and 1930s.
A growing number of publications have examined the negotiations of gender roles in politics, in the media and in literature, as well as in daily life under the early Kemalist regime with a focus on women. There are also a number of works recounting the transformations in large cities (Duben and Behar 2014) and the countryside (Yılmaz 2013) in the early years of the Republic. I will draw upon these sources to contextualize the visual representations that I analyze in this chapter.

**From Subjects to Citizens: Creating the Modern Turkish Woman**

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33 See also Toplum ve Bilim’s issue #118 “Eşraftan Burjuvaziye” on the early Republican countryside, edited by Tanıl Bora and Levent Cantek, 2010.
In Figure 1.7 from 17 August 1920 (17 August 1336 according to the Rumi calendar), two women wearing the black çarşaf pose with a little girl for a studio portrait. The woman on the left wears pearl earrings, a sizable, matching pearl ring, a gemstone necklace and a fancy handbag with an elegant, beaded chain strap. The Turkish note in blue pen on the reverse of Figure 1.7 reads: “me, with Aunt Hamdiye and Aunt Zahide,” which suggests that the writer is the little girl in the middle, the daughter of a third sister not shown. The two women in black çarşaf must be the two aunts mentioned in the note. The note in pencil in Ottoman Turkish, however, was written by Zahide, who signs as “Zahiş,” a diminutive

34 The solar-based Rumi calendar (Roman calendar) was officially used for civic matters by the Ottoman Empire after Tanzimat (1839) and by the Turkish Republic until 1926. It is based on the Julian calendar, but starts with the year of Prophet Muhammad’s emigration (Hijra) in 622 AD.
of Zahide. She writes: “A souvenir for our precious sisters and respectable brother-in-law.”

Zahide and Hamdiye wear their çarşaf in a similar fashion: it reveals their neck and chest, serving as a coat. Under their çarşaf, they show off their beautiful jewelry, complemented by fashionable accessories including handbags and gloves. Their hair is only partially covered and the face veil has already been removed, showing that the sisters are wearing makeup. Unlike the little girl in the middle, the two women look straight into the camera. They appear serious but show hints of smiles and seem fairly at ease posing in the studio. In this way, these two women reflect the desire to present a well-off, refined and respectable feminine self that combines modesty and elegance, in line with what was expected from modern Ottoman elite women at the time (Köksal and Falierou 2013).

As Yılmaz (2013: 106) writes, “while the wife or the mother was usually excluded from the late nineteenth-century family photographs of Ottoman Muslim families, by the early 1920s it had become acceptable for the entire family to pose together for a family photograph.” Revealing a remarkable social transformation of the family portrait, here the two sisters, Hamdiye and Zahide, pose without male family members in a studio setting. While male photographers dominated the profession at the time, one cannot be certain about the gender of the photographer. There is also no data to indicate whether or not the photographer was an acquaintance or if a man accompanied the women to the studio. In any case, the fact that two women could pose in this way for a studio portrait in 1920 indicates the degree of modernization elite Ottoman women experienced in the final years of the Ottoman Empire.

In Photography in The Ottoman Empire 1839–1923, Özendes (2013) writes that only three decades earlier the Empire’s male photographers, unable to find Muslim models, had to convince non-Muslim women and sometimes even men to pose as Turkish women for the Orientalist photographs they produced for touristic consumption. The fact that the women in Figure 1.7 do not wear a niqab but show off their wealth and fashionable clothes that flatter their bodies thus indicates a major shift in social conventions since the second half of the nineteenth century. The existence of this family portrait, accomplished through the act of going to the studio to pose in front of the camera, demonstrates how these women embrace modernity.

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35 In Turkish: “Kıymetli ablalarım muhterem eniştemize yadigarımızdır 17 ağustos 336 Zahiş (Zahide).”

36 Orhan Koloğlu (1992) writes that an issue (#317) of Ceride-i Havadis from 1847 talks about a photographer named Loran Estras based in Cite de Pera in Beyoğlu. Estras is said to be working with his wife, who takes pictures of Muslim women. Together, they go to family mansions upon request (in Bölük 2014: 18). Karakuşla (2000) also mentions a “mobile photographer” named Muzaffer Hanım, who would visit houses upon request in the 1920s. The first Muslim woman photographer of Turkey is often considered to be Naciye Hanım (Suman), who opened a studio in the attic of her kiosk called Türk Hanımlar Fotoğrafinesi (Turkish Women’s Photography Studio) in 1919. She continued working from her kiosk until she opened a professional photo studio in Beyazıt in 1921 (Ak 1985; Bölük 2014; Çakır 2016 [1994]; Toros 1990). Only six images from her archive have survived. These images, all of which bear the stamp of her studio (as “Türk Hanımlar Fotoğrafinesi Naciye”), are in the archive of photo historian Gülderen Bölük (2013). It seems that Naciye Hanım stamped every photograph her studio produced, whereas Figure 1.7 does not bear any stamps. Toros (1990) mentions another woman photographer, Adviye Hanım, who was supposedly working at the same time as Naciye Hanım; however, there is no additional information available about her.
Aunt Hamdiye and Zahide perform modern selves not only through their confident embracing of the photographic act, but also through the way they appear in front of the camera: the two-piece çarşaf they are wearing are, in fact, transformed versions of a traditionally one-piece black cloth that loosely covered the body, adapted from European fashions and banned by Sultan Abdülhamid in 1890 for not complying with Islam. The çarşaf itself only became popular toward the end of the nineteenth century, replacing the traditional ferace (a heavy, baggy overcoat) and yaşmak (a transparent white scarf) combination (Şeni 1995; Toprak 1998). In Figure 1.7, the women’s self-presentation is complemented by a painted backdrop and European-style furniture, further emphasizing the subjects’ engagement with modernity.

By the early 1900s, elite Ottoman women in Istanbul and other major cities were adopting European-style clothing and manners, encouraged by the Young Turks’ modernization project. The increased cultural and commercial contact with Europe, the availability of imported European clothes and fabrics, the opening of European-style department stores, the circulation of European fashion magazines, and advertisements of European products in the press facilitated the process of adopting the çarşaf to Western trends (Koçu 1969: 65–67). Subsequently, the newly invented two-piece çarşaf we see in Figure 1.7 served as a basis for the favorable reception of the two-piece European suit (Yılmaz 2013). By the start of the Turkish War of Independence (1918–1923) most women, who played an active role in the struggle for independence alongside men, had already abandoned the face veil and were transitioning to European attire (Göle 1996). As Westernism became the dominant ideology after the War of Independence, images of Turkey as a modern Europeanized society began to circulate more widely among the middle classes.

Founded in 1923, the Turkish Republic aimed to build a new nation-state that would break away from the institutions of the Ottoman Empire through a series of reforms implemented in the 1920s and 1930s. In this nation-building process, the ruling elites sought to transform Ottoman subjects into modern secular citizens by enforcing drastic political and social changes, including the abolition of the Sultanate and the Caliphate, as well as the adoption of the Latin alphabet and the Gregorian calendar. Women’s issues, including women’s education, political participation and public visibility, were central to the Kemalist project of cultural transformation (Göle 1996). In 1926, polygamy was officially banned with the abolition of Sharia law and the introduction of the new Turkish Civil Code, which ensured equal rights to divorce and inheritance for women. Compulsory co-education for girls and boys was established in 1924. Women gained the right to vote and to be elected locally in 1930, and nationwide in 1934. From 1935 onwards, female deputies became part of the Grand National Assembly (TBMM) and joined debates on women’s issues, including women’s attire (Yılmaz 2013).  

There is little doubt that the policies of the Republican People’s Party under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk mobilized society for a shift to modernity, but this change did not happen

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37 After the general elections of 8 February 1935, 17 women deputies entered the Turkish Parliament (TBMM), constituting 4.6% of the parliament. After the 1950 elections, the percentage of women in the parliament went down to 0.6% and it remained under 5% until the 2005 elections.
overnight or without precedent. Improving conditions for women was also a key element of the modernization efforts of the Tanzimat reformers (1839–1876), who introduced laws allowing marriage in civil court and inheritance for daughters, as well as policies supporting formal education for women. The Young Turks movement continued these efforts to advance the status of women. Undergraduate education for women started with the establishment of İnâs Darülfünunu (Women’s University) in 1914 (Mahir Metinsoy 2017).

The portrait of Hamdiye and Zahide thus gives a sense of the degree of liberalization and Europeanization achieved during the Young Turk era, which, later on, made it easier for the urban middle classes to adopt the drastic reforms of the new Turkish Republic. It also supports the argument that the transition of urban Ottoman women into modern Turkish citizens was not only easy but also welcomed (Yılmaz 2013).

Figure 1.9 from 18 October 1929 features a confident young woman named Bedriye, who crosses her arms and stands, in a way that suggests equality, power and freedom, next to a man. Her bob haircut with soft curls reflects one of the internationally fashionable hairstyles of the 1920s, as worn by the likes of Marlene Dietrich and Coco Chanel. She shows a hint of a smile and does not wear any makeup or jewelry.

Looking at the pose and posture of both figures in this studio portrait, it seems unlikely that they are husband and wife. The similarities in the facial features instead suggest they
might be related; they could be siblings. However, it is hard to guess the age of both sitters, particularly that of the man, due to heavy retouching. The note on the back of the portrait reads “to my dear uncle and Ms. Fahrünissa,” possibly referring to the uncle’s wife. Bedriye could be a college student or a fresh graduate who recently started working, perhaps as a teacher, which was one of the most prestigious and highly promoted professions for women at the time.

After the foundation of the Republic, the term Cumhuriyet Kadını (The Republican Woman) became increasingly popular. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the image of the “new Turkish woman” as the Republican Woman was promoted through newspapers, magazines, novels and films, particularly catering to middle-class women (Sirman 2005: 254–55). The Republican Woman is most closely identified with a new, secular appearance that replaced religious and ethnic clothing with Western dress. Yeşim Arat (1997: 100) suggests that the reforms that helped secularize and Westernize the Republic encouraged women to play new public roles in Turkish society. They could now become professionals and expect to be considered equal to men in the public realm. As Göle (1996: 31) explains, women’s visibility in the public sphere and the social mixing of men and women were promoted, also through photography:

Photographs of women unveiled, of women in athletic competitions, of female pilots and professionals, and photographs of men and women “miming” European lifestyles depicted the new modernist interpretations of a “prestigious” life in the Turkish nation-state. Novels of the Turkish Republic, focused on this new “civilized” way of life-on its decor, goods, and clothing-celebrated the ideal attributes and rituals of a “progressivist and civilized” republican individual: tea saloons, dinners, balls, and streets were defined as the public spaces for the socializing sexes; husbands and wives walking hand in hand, men and women shaking hands, dancing at balls, or dining together, reproduced the European mode of encounter between male and female.

Unlike in the Ottoman era, when modernization remained limited to small circles of elites, the Kemalists aimed to spread the reforms rapidly among the new Turkish middle class. In this context, the Westernized upper and upper-middle classes served as a “support base” for the RPP, particularly given that “their dress and life styles furnished a model for the lower and middle classes to emulate” (Yılmaz 2013: 105). With her boyish appearance and poised posture, Bedriye represents a classed desire to construct an image for herself that resonates with what the new Turkish woman represented for the Kemalist regime: a secular, Westernized, educated woman who is no longer covered and no longer wears either çarşaf or peçe (face veil), or any ethnic or traditional clothing.

The idea of the Republican Woman also included that of being a loyalist who believes in and supports the modernization project of the new regime. A young woman like

38 In Turkish: “18.10.1929 Sevgili amucam ve fahrünisa Hanına bir hatıram. Bedriye.” The note “3 ₺” was added by the seller and refers to the price of the photograph, 3 TRY (Turkish lira).
Bedriye, who would be encouraged to participate in the workforce, exemplifies the dynamic femininity required in a rapidly changing society. She would be expected to enjoy Western (alafaranga, from Italian alla franca) music, adopt European eating habits, adhere to Western fashion and lifestyle trends, and attend public ballroom dances. As a fervent believer in modern education, she would be encouraged to have a Western education. After finishing her education, she would be expected to contribute to the national economy alongside men, in sharp contrast to the image of the traditional Ottoman woman as a “passive subject,” who was confined to the private sphere and kept away from the public eye.

The differences between Figures 1.7 and 1.9 suggest the radical changes that occurred in the visual register considered appropriate for urban Muslim women within the span of a decade under the influence of Kemalism. Yılmaz (2013: 2) argues that “it was the image of the new, Western-looking Turkish woman that symbolized Republican modernity more forcefully than any other image,” and that replaced the normative ideal of the “Muslim Family Woman” (Ersoy 2016). Regulating the dress code for women, significantly, was not only considered a way to ensure national unity, but also a way to construct a modern image of Turkey in the international political arena.

In these two portraits, women negotiate their shifting identities as Ottoman subjects and, later on, as modern Turkish citizens. The portraits reflect the social changes that upper- and middle-class urban women experienced in the last days of the Ottoman Empire and during the first decade of the Republic. Their representational value is what makes them iconic today: they exemplify the image of a nineteenth-century Ottoman Muslim elite woman versus the image of a modern Republican Turkish woman, regardless of the sitters’ individual identity.

In this section, I have highlighted some of the key components that constructed the image of the “new Turkish woman” as an equal citizen in the early years of the Turkish Republic through a comparison between two studio portraits from 1920 and 1929. The image of the modern Republican woman, which primarily appealed to the emerging middle classes, was built upon earlier images produced in the already rapidly modernizing society of the final decades of the Empire. The images I have discussed thus reflect both state discourses and debates in the media regarding modern Muslim womanhood at the turn of the twentieth century, which hint at the emergence of a thriving feminist movement.

Indeed, the creation and adoption of the new Turkish woman image by women like Bedriye were only possible thanks to the legacy of the burgeoning feminist movement that spread among the Ottoman elites from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Ottoman modernization made it acceptable, by 1920, for the two sisters in Figure 1.1 to pose, without a face veil, for a family portrait. Thus, both portraits, taken in the semi-public/semi-private setting of the studio, can be seen as embodiments of a proud modern self that is representative of the period in which they were taken. In the next section, I will explore how such modern selves were represented in settings more explicitly defined as public, and how they evolved throughout the 1930s in the context of state feminism and a tense political and economic climate following the Great Depression.
Figure 1.11 & 1.12 (recto & verso) Darülfünun Geography Class, first alumni and teachers, Istanbul, August/September 1919 (Rumi 1335). 29.7 x 23.7 cm. Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.

Figure 1.11 is one of the first photographs I purchased in Istanbul for Akkasah in 2014. The detailed handwritten note in Ottoman Turkish on the reverse (Figure 1.12) reveals a momentous gathering: it is a group portrait of the first graduating class of the Darülfünun (today’s Istanbul University) Geography Faculty and their teachers, taken in August/September 1919 (or 1335 according the Rumi calendar). The students, standing at the back, are Hamdi Efendi, Şükufe Nihal Hanım and Huzni (?) Efendi. The note indicates
that alumnus Ali Efendi was not present at the time of the shoot. The teachers, seated, are Faik Sabri Bey (Faik Sabri Duran, 1882–1943), Ali Macid Bey (Ali Macit Arda 1885–1967), and, in the middle, Director Mehmed Emin Bey (Mehmet Emin Erişirgil, 1891–1965).

I found this image compelling because it shows an Ottoman woman posing next to men in what appears to be a classroom setting, a public space. It is very rare to find a large late-Ottoman era group portrait like Figure 1.11 on the market, even less so now than in 2014, given the rising value of photographs from the Ottoman period. The woman in the middle is Şüküfe Nihal Başar (1896–1973), a prominent feminist writer, poet, activist and the first female Darülfünun graduate of the Ottoman Empire (and consequently Turkey). Şüküfe Nihal Hanım came from an elite family; her grandfather was chief physician to Sultan Murad V. She was educated in various cities, including Damascus and Thessaloniki, and was sent to private schools where she learned French, Arabic and Farsi. She started writing poetry at a young age. She was married off at the age of sixteen and had a child soon after. Yet, she was adamant about continuing her education and enrolled at the Women’s University in 1916 (Argunşah 2011). She eventually divorced her first husband and married an ex-classmate from the university, Ahmet Hamdi Başar, who must be the man listed as Hamdi Bey in Figure 1.11, standing next to her (possibly to her left). Şüküfe Nihal reportedly was a muse for many men, including the renowned poet Nazım Hikmet (Argunşah 2011).

In 1919, the alumni and teachers of the Darülfünun Geography Department represented a small Westernized intellectual elite. Having fought for women’s access to education, Şüküfe Nihal became one of the most prominent feminist writers and activists of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, alongside Fatma Aliye (Topuz), Nezihe Muhiddin (Tepedelengil) and Halide Edib (Adivar). After the Turkish War of Independence, Hamdi Bey went on to become a prominent Kemalist politician. His Sorbonne-educated teacher Faik Sabri Bey (Faik Sabri Duran, 1882–1943) was one of the first and foremost Turkish geographers, publishing a number of textbooks and atlases between the 1910s and 1930s. The other teacher in the picture, Ali Macid Bey, also educated in France, was one of the founding scholars of modern geography in Turkey and taught geography at Darülfünun until 1952. Director Mehmed Emin Bey took up various government posts following his position as Dean at Darülfünun, including that of Interior Minister in 1949.

39 In Turkish: “Ağustos/Eylül 1335/1919. Darülfünun coğrafya darülmesaisi ilk mezunları ile muallimleri: Hamdi Efendi Şüküfe Nihal Hanım Huzni (?) Efendi (mezunlardan Ali Efendi resim çekilkelenen Müdüris Faik Sabri Bey Müdür Mehmed Emin Bey Muallim Ali Macid Bey.” The “200 ¥” was added by the vendor and refers to the price of the photograph, 200 TRY (Turkish lira).
40 Founded in 1912, Darülfünun was only open to male students until 1919, when female students petitioned to study there alongside men. Until then, the only option for women was the female-only İnas Darülfünunu. Şüküfe Nihal herself campaigned for women to be allowed to study at Darülfünun.
41 Sancar (2017) and Zihnioglu (2003) note that the early period (1868–1908) of the Ottoman feminist movement was marked by writers like Şair Nigar (1862–1918), Fatma Aliye (1862–1936), Halide Edib (1882–1964), Nezihe Muhiddin (1889–1958) and Emine Semiye (1868–1944), who advocated for women’s freedom and civil rights, women’s and girls’ education and active participation in society and workforce as equal individuals, and demanded a ban on polygamy and talak (divorce initiated by men). In addition, various associations formed by women during this period contributed to the struggle for equality, increasing women’s visibility and power in economic production and politics (Çakır 2016 [1994]; Yaraman 2001).
Negotiating space and gender, the men in this image perform their modernity and progress by posing next to Şükufe Nihal, which emphasizes her status as a modern, educated and independent woman. In many group portraits of the era, women are placed in front of men, oftentimes seated rather than standing, as a gesture of politeness that also conveys the man’s duty to “protect” and “take care of” women. Here, however, the hierarchy between the teachers and the students takes precedence, with the front row occupied by the three male teachers, the director in the middle. The single woman student is positioned in the middle of the second row, giving a sense of symmetry.

Figure 1.13 A group portrait, circa 1930s. 9.0 x 13.9 cm. Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.

Figure 1.13, a group portrait of 16 men and one woman, bears similarities to Figure 1.11 in the way it was composed. The woman is placed in the center of the composition, with the men evenly distributed to her left and right. Both images are formal group portraits. Like Figure 1.11, Figure 1.13 seems to have been taken by a professional studio photographer. The outfits and mustache styles, particularly the toothbrush mustache that became increasingly popular in the 1930s, help us place the picture in the early to mid-1930s.

Figure 1.13 could be a group portrait of government employees or teachers, although the garden and the type of building in the background give the impression of a school. The profession of teacher was one of the most socially acceptable and prestigious professions for women at the time, making the setting more likely to be a school. While Figures 1.11 and 1.13 are a decade apart, they have the similar setup of a group portrait in which a hierarchy of social and professional positions is highlighted through a carefully designed seating order in rows. Taking Figure 1.11 as an example, the four men sitting in front in Figure 1.13 seem to be of a higher rank, possibly the headmaster and head teachers. Men
still dominated the professional sphere in the 1930s, as indicated by the fact that the male colleagues surrounding her vastly outnumber the only woman in the picture.

Like Şükûfe Nihal, the woman is emphatically put at the center of the picture. She is not placed according to the institutional hierarchy but according to her gender. Because of her position in the center of the image, our eyes are drawn to her. Her centrality could be read as a gesture of respect or a form of positive discrimination, setting her apart from the male teachers, while simultaneously sending a message of equality and thus progressiveness. As in Figure 1.11, placing the woman in the center with the same number of men to her left and to her right provides a sense of symmetry. In Figure 1.13, some of the subjects, including the woman, pose with a slight smile, and they seem more comfortable and relaxed in front of the camera than the men and woman in Figure 1.11, whose poses are rather stiff.

In Figure 1.11, there is only a small space between Şükûfe Nihal and the men next to and in front of her. For a Muslim woman, posing with men for a formal photograph that was probably meant for public use would have been an exceptional act in a conservative society in which, until the early 1900s, women were barred from being seen in public with men (Yaraman 2001: 25). Accordingly, in Figure 1.11, some distance is maintained. A decade later, in Figure 1.13, the woman is fully integrated into the group with no extra space around her.

Given the public nature of these images, it is highly likely that Figures 1.11 and 1.13 were taken by male photographers, who dominated the profession both in studio and itinerant photography. This brings up the question of the agency of the male photographer, who had to negotiate his masculine and modern self in representing modern femininities. It is hard to speculate as to the degree to which the photographer manipulated the poses and postures, and, through cropping and retouching, the final print. The level of interference would also have been determined by the professional style and reputation of the photographer.

In both images, the appearance of the women and men reflects the fashion trends of their era. In Figure 1.11, Şükûfe Nihal, just like Hamdiye and Zahide, wears the fashionable two-piece çarşaf with short sleeves, and sections of her hair are visible behind the head cover. In Figure 1.13, the woman wears a dark-colored 1930s maxi dress, and, similar to Bedriye in Figure 1.9, is unveiled and has a short, wavy hairdo. As for the men, apart from minor differences such as the absence of a pocket square or wearing a bow tie instead of a tie, their outfits, poses and postures are almost identical in Figures 1.11 and 1.13. Their suits, carefully knotted ties, collared shirts, long jackets (redingot), pocket squares, pocket watches, round glasses and double-breasted vests bear a high degree of similarity. However, while the men in Figure 1.11 affirm and reinforce their identity as progressive Ottoman men, the men in Figure 1.13 embrace their loyalty to the Kemalist regime and its modernization project through the same appearance.

Figure 1.13 seems to have been composed in such a way as to emphasize professional and class differences. In the upper row, the only three men (two on the far left and one on the far right) who do not wear a suit or a tie seem to belong to a different profession and class. Their outfit suggests that they could be workers. Notably, all three have a trimmed mustache in the Ottoman fashion, similar to the men in Figure 1.11. This might indicate
that the mustache as a sign of Ottoman masculinity remained prevalent among the lower classes, which tended to be more conservative.

The class differences are also discernible in the poses and postures. In Figure 1.13, the three workers in the top row all adopt the same stiff posture with their arms by their sides, while the others are comfortable striking distinct poses; putting their hands in their pocket (three men sitting in front), clasping their hands behind their back (the men standing in the second row), resting their hand on a chair (the woman, and the man sitting at the far right in front) or on their coat (the man in the middle of the top row), similar to the upper-class men and woman in Figure 1.11.

In Figures 1.11 and 1.13, the composition of the front row is strikingly similar. The men on the far right are looking off camera, the men in the middle are crossing their legs, a pose that represents civility and refinement, and the men on the far left strike a similar, slightly awkward pose with one or both hands on their legs. These similarities and the overall resemblance between the appearances of the men in both pictures suggest that the shift in the desired image of masculinity for urban middle-class men was less radical between the late Ottoman and early Republican periods than that in the normative image of femininity.

Feminist thought had already started to spread among the elite women of Istanbul and other cosmopolitan cities in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. Debates on issues related to women’s rights and gender roles, including access to education and paid work, and the abolition of the Islamic veil and polygamy, were circulating in novels, as well as in progressive newspapers and magazines. The first women’s magazine, Terakki-i Muhadderat, was launched in 1869, soon followed by several others. In a 1919 article in Büyük Macmua, for instance, the prominent journalist Sabiha Zekeriya (Sabiha Sertel) illustrated the prevalent nationalist-modernist mentality of the time by defining the ideal woman as the modern woman who participates in social life and labor force as equal to men, and who strengthens her position in her family, as opposed to the parasite bourgeois woman who lives off her rich husband, or the abused housewife type (Özman and Bulut, 2003: 202–04 in Sancar 2017: 108).

Ironically, the burgeoning feminist movement of the late Ottoman period, in which Şükife Nihal was a major figure, was cut short by the introduction of state feminism under the RPP regime (Çaha 2016; White 2003; Yılmaz 2010). The RPP used state feminism as

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42 Notable works discussing the feminist movement and the work of leading feminist authors in the late Ottoman era include Argunşah 2011; Baykan and Ötuş-Baskett 1988; Çakır 2016 [1994]; Demirdirek 1993; Denman 2009; Durakbaşa 2000; Kızıltan 1993; Kurnaz 2013; Toprak 1988b and Zihnioglu 2003.

43 From the 1870s on, male writers such as Namık Kemal, Şemsettin Sami, Ahmet Mithat Efendi and Celal Nuri also wrote about women’s issues and suggested a modern family model that would be suitable for Muslim-Ottoman subjects. The question of the backwardness of women and how they should be modernized became a major concern for “modern reformist men” of the Ottoman era (Sancar 2017). Despite their ideological differences, male and female Islamist, Ottomanist, Occidentalist and Turkist writers agreed on the importance of women’s education and the need to increase women’s participation in the public sphere (Kurtoğlu 2000). However, these reformist writers still assumed that the main value of women lay in their role as “good mothers, good spouses and good Muslims,” to be enhanced by a better education (Çakmak 2011).

44 Other prominent women’s publications from the late Ottoman era include Şükifezar (1886), Hamımlara Mahsus Gazete (1895), Demet (1908), Kadınlar Dünyası (1913) and Kadınlar Alemi (1914) (Yaraman 2001).
a government policy, establishing official bodies that were “formally given the task of working on behalf of women’s status and rights” (Stetson and Mazur 1995: 1–2). The Kemalist regime soon alienated some of the most prominent women activists who had supported the Independence War and the revolution, including Nezihe Muhiddin and Halide Edib Adıvar, particularly following the installation of the Turkish Constitution of 1924, which denied women the right to vote and stand for election despite numerous demands and campaigns (Sancar 2017). Zihnioğlu (2003) aptly describes the Turkish case as a “women’s revolution without women” that was essentially concerned with giving women civil rather than political rights. Instead of joining the political elite to build and rule the country together with men, women functioned as symbols of a modern, national Turkish cultural identity, as mothers of the nation and carers for tradition and national culture (Sancar 2017: 112).

The way the Turkish state conceived of the role of women was not isolated from the global political and social context of the time. Turkey acted within a global context of burgeoning feminist movements following World War I, although the regime was less keen on following international trends that would actually give women real political power than on following international trends that gave women a modern appearance, adopting fashion trends from countries like France, Britain and the United States in the 1920s. In the 1930s, the Kemalists increasingly came under the political and cultural influence of the rising Fascist regimes of Italy and Germany, which were more interested in using women as national symbols than in giving them political power. Not coincidentally, the image the Kemalists attributed to the modern Turkish woman in the formative years shares certain characteristics with that propagated under the Hitler (1933–1945) and Mussolini regimes (1922–1943), which confined women to the roles of submissive spouses and strong mothers, although both regimes claimed that they promoted women’s modernity (Koonz 2013).

Sancar writes that the vision of the Turkish modernization process evolved from “joining the European civilization” in the 1920s to “creating its own national civilization” by the 1930s. In this process, while feminized images defined the iconography of the nation, the practice of nationalism remained reserved for the masculine (Silva 2003: 37). Despite the Republic’s discourses on women’s rights and emancipation, its policies served to exclude women from politics and state administration by creating social roles and public positions specific to women rather than opening the door to truly equal citizenship. In cases where such policies did not exclude women, they silenced them or made them secondary (Sancar 2017: 125).

45 Nezihe Muhiddin tried to establish Kadınlar Halk Fırkası (Women's People Party) in July 1923 (before the foundation of the RPP), but her efforts were met with opposition by the state and the party was shut down. Muhiddin then founded the Turkish Women’s Union, which pressed for political equality. Faced with corruption allegations, her attempts to enter the parliament were rejected and she was eventually expelled from the union in 1927. Having joined the Turkish War of Independence alongside Mustafa Kemal as “Corporal Halide,” iconic writer and political leader Halide Edib, too, was accused of treason in 1926, after which she lived in exile until 1939. She was excluded from the 1935 elections, when women entered the Turkish parliament for the first time (Durakbaş 2000; Toprak 1988a). Sancar (2017) notes that after the Turkish Women’s Union was shut down in 1935 the women’s movement remained largely silent until the 1980s.
By the mid-1930s, the ideal of the new Turkish woman, as imposed by state feminism, became primarily concerned with creating secular women citizens responsible for raising future generations and making them equally loyal to the principles of the new regime. Motherhood was designated as the primary duty for the new Turkish woman, and the morality of women was measured by their “dignified” and “pure” behavior as mothers (Bacak 2009; Sancar 2017; Zihnioğlu 2003). While in the public sphere women remained the symbols and advocates of modernity, they were incorporated into the nation-building process as protectors of tradition at home (Sancar 2017). Baydar (2002) shows that in magazines of the time the man owned “the modern Turkish house,” but it was the woman who provided comfort, care and beauty for the home.

In line with this, chastity (iffet) remained a core trait for the ideal woman (Kadioğlu 1993, 1996, 1998), who had to perform the role of a proper wife (mazbut aile kadını), defined as restrained, prudent, dutiful and competent (Sancar 2017). With the abolition of polygamy and the setting of an age limit for marriage, women became freer to choose whom they wanted to marry and had equal rights to inheritance, but, as Yeşim Arat (1998) notes, the breadwinner (aile reisi) was still determined as being the man. Women’s morality, moreover, was regulated by the ruling men, who were concerned that women’s excessive Westernization could lead to debauchery and moral degeneration. As Sancar argues (2017), the image of the modern Turkish woman as chaste and dutiful was designed to show Turkey’s difference from and moral superiority to the West.

To be able to compete with men in the workforce and to “rise” to a certain status in society, women needed to strip themselves of their sexuality and become “masculinized” (Yaraman 2011: 43). As Göle argues:

> Among the cast of characters of the new republic, the serious, hardworking, professional women devoted to national progress, appeared as a touchstone set apart from a “superficial” and mannered claim for Europeanness. Against Ottoman cosmopolitanism, Kemalist female characters endorsed seriousness, modesty, and devotion and accommodated the presumed (pre-Islamic) Anatolian traditional traits – thus, they represented the nationalist project. (1996: 15)

The regime attributed the “sacred mother” role to peasant or Anatolian women (Anadolu Kadını), who bore the biggest burden of the Turkish War of Independence, fighting alongside men. In a famous speech in Izmir in 1923, Atatürk said that no woman in the world could claim to have worked harder than the Anatolian woman in leading her nation to liberation and victory, and that a woman’s most important task was to become a mother. Yet, the new Turkish woman was primarily devised as an urban woman. As a result, the disparity between the normative images available for women grew: urban women shown

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46 Many prominent Republican writers of the time, including Halide Edib (Ateşten Gömlek, 1923), Peyami Safa (Söze Kızlar, 1923; Faith-Harbiye, 1931), Reşat Nuri Güntekin (Çalıkuşu, 1922), Ahmet Ağaoğlu, Hilmi Ziya Ülken, Mustafa Şekip Tunç, İsmail Hakki Baltacıoğlu and Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (Ankara, 1934; Yaban 1932) expressed similar views on the role of the new Turkish women, who should educate society while making their husbands happy at home as modern wives.
in shorts doing sports at national celebrations or dancing at balls in fancy gowns contrasted starkly with peasant women portrayed in traditional clothes, leaving the latter largely unaware of the rights they now had (Yılmaz 2013).

The drastic political and social shift from the progressive Roaring Twenties to the rise of Fascist governments across the world might explain some of the ideological confusion experienced by the Kemalists when carving out a new identity for the Turkish nation-state and its citizens. The visual reflections of such ideological confusion can be observed in the portraits of Bedriye in Figure 1.9 and the woman in Figure 1.13. Despite their modern appearance, both women perform a feminine self that highlights their chastity and modesty with their demure pose and posture, and with their clothes, which do not emphasize their sexuality. At the same time, their boyish appearance arguably reflects global fashion trends, from flapper girl bob haircuts and finger waves in the 1920s to maxi dresses in the 1930s. The boyish look itself was a revolution in the West, emblematic of the Roaring Twenties, which, unlike the 1930s, represented “the consolidation of a new emancipatory vision, in revolt against the old order, which included suffragists, but in decided harmony with modern feminist concepts: egalitarianism, vocational commitment outside the home, personal autonomy and empowerment, freedom of sexual expression” (Honey 1990: 26). By adopting the fashion trends of the Roaring Twenties without fully benefiting from what this era represents for women’s rights, the two women in Figures 1.9 and 1.13 illustrate the ambiguities of how women were portrayed in the Kemalist era, negotiating the performance of conflicting gender roles between modernity and tradition.

In this section, I have shown how the image of the new Turkish woman evolved in the transition between the late Ottoman and the early Republican eras in formal portraits, which arguably catered to the public gaze. The portraits I have discussed symbolize the desire to document the rapidly modernizing public spaces of the Ottoman Empire and the modern Turkish Republic, including educational institutions, in which women became increasingly visible as modern citizens. However, this growing visibility, which was not immediately accompanied by growing political rights, only intensified the burden on women, who found themselves in a position of constantly having to prove their morality. Throughout the 1930s, the imposition of state feminism led to what Tekeli (1986) calls “a schizophrenic identity” for women where they defined the boundaries of their lives according to the national ideals and duties assigned by the state, at the expense of their own personal wishes. Women were expected to perform, in Butler’s sense, a modern feminine self that emphasized chastity and modesty even as they were encouraged by the regime to take on an array of professions or social roles previously deemed shameful, such as singing in public, acting or entering beauty contests. In the next section, I will further explore some of these ideological confusions that burdened modernized middle-class women in the 1930s through the case study of a Turkish beauty queen.
Unresolved Femininity: The Case of a Beauty Queen

Figures 1.14 & 1.15 (recto & verso) A studio portrait of “Naşide Saffet Hanım Turkish beauty queen of the year 1931.” 13.9 x 9.0 cm. Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.

Figure 1.14, a studio portrait of a stylish woman, embodies much of the ideological confusion with regard to the position of women the Turkish Republic had to negotiate in its early years. It is an original postcard-sized gelatin silver print dedicated “To my dear sister Ulviye” per the Ottoman Turkish on the reverse, which continues: “Naşide Saffet Hanım, Turkish beauty queen of the year 1931.” This image stands out as a fascinating example of how a studio portrait of a Turkish beauty queen came to be circulated among family and friends in the early 1930s. It suggests that sharing images of Turkish beauty icons to propagate an ideal image of femininity was already a known practice in the 1920s and 1930s (Akçura 2001: 228–61).

It was likely someone of her own generation who gave the portrait to Ulviye as a present, admiring Naşide Saffet’s looks, clothes or her

47 In Turkish: “Ulviye Ablacığima: 1931 senesi Türkiye güzellik kraliçesi Naşide Saffet Hanım.”

48 The sharing of celebrity images as a popular form of entertainment was particularly prevalent among Turkish youth during the golden years of the Yeşilçam-era, which refers to the heyday of the Turkish film industry from the 1950s to the 1970s. Between the 1950s and 1970s, Yeşilçam produced 200 to 300 films annually, making it one of the biggest film producers in the world. Dubbed Turkey’s “little Hollywood,” with its own genres and star system, Yeşilçam and its stars soon became hugely popular across the country. The majority of Yeşilçam films were “melodramas revolving around heterosexual romance between characters from different social and economic classes” (Kaya Mutlu 2010: 417).
fame following her “success” as a beauty queen, which the giver must have thought Ulviye would appreciate.

In Turkey’s transition to modernity, beauty contests played an important role in promoting and reproducing the image of the modern Republican woman nationally and internationally. The Kemalists supported the idea without questioning the objectification of women involved. In a conservative society where any exposure of the female body had been considered indecent, beauty contests functioned as a way to certify how modern Turkey had become. Sancar (2017: 242) notes that, for Republican modernists, beauty contests were seen as a way to keep up with the West rather than as related to sexual morality. At the same time, beauty queens, who could wear elegant clothes, live in expensive places and marry rich and important men taught the hegemonic male gaze to construct a desirable woman to dream about, while offering young women who dreamed of marrying rich elite men an ideal to emulate (Sancar 2017: 242). Predictably, beautiful women were associated with the institution of marriage and the contestants were often mentioned in relation to the men they married (Sancar 2017: 242).

For Turkey’s first “officially recognized” beauty contest in 1929, the organizer, the Cumhuriyet newspaper, launched a major publicity campaign. News items and announcements urged Turkish “unmarried girls of high moral character” to enter the contest, insisting that it would be patriotic to do so. As part of its campaign, Cumhuriyet encouraged contestants to go and have their pictures taken for free. These pictures would then be published in the newspaper over a course of four months. Readers were invited to send in their votes based on the published photographs to make a preselection for the grand jury. All parties, particularly the participants, took the publication of the photographs very seriously. Indeed, unsatisfied with the way her picture appeared in the newspaper, Feriha Tevfik, the beauty queen of 1929, asked for her photograph to be replaced, a request that was accommodated by the newspaper (Akçura 2001: 234–37).

Figure 1.16 shows a clipping from 1930, which announces a beauty queen contest launched by Cumhuriyet. The headline reads: “In which photography studios should the beauties have their photographs taken?” The text lists the Beyoğlu studios to which the participants could go to have their pictures taken for free: S. Süreyya, Femina, Foto Franse, Kanzler, Sebah – Juvalye (Sébah & Joaillier), Febüs, Pera, A. Belikoff, Egl, Hayrettin, Okos, Roman, Melek and Foto Alman. Despite the increasing number of Muslim photographers, it is striking that a great number of the photography studios listed here belonged to non-Muslim photographers.

49 Ayşe Hür writes that Turkey’s first beauty contest was in fact held by the Silk Film Company in the Melek movie theater in 1926. The winner was Armenian-born Araksi Çetinyan, yet the press soon declared the competition invalid, saying that the event had been “badly organized.” Per the contest rules, Araksi Çetinyan was supposed to be sent to the US to become an actress, but this never happened (Hür 2015).

50 Ak (2001: 97) offers a similar studio list for the 1932 contest in which Keriman Halis was announced as Miss Turkey, including Foto Hamza Rüstem, Foto Weinberg, Sébah & Joaillier, Febüs, Pera, A. Belikoff, Egl, Foto Hayrettin, Okos, Roman, Melek and Foto Alman. Despite the increasing number of Muslim photographers, it is striking that a great number of the photography studios listed here belonged to non-Muslim photographers.
Figure 1.16 *Cumhuriyet* announces the dedicated photo studios for its beauty contest. The announcement lists the studios where the beauty contest participants could have their photographs taken, 21 November 1930, *Cumhuriyet*. Istanbul University Libraries.

A Bosnian immigrant born in Istanbul, Naşide Saffet Hanım (Naşide Saffet Esen) was only 19 when Figure 1.14 was taken. She was studying to become a teacher when she was encouraged by her friends and teachers to enter the beauty contest in 1931, organized by the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper. At the time, participating in beauty contests was still considered a form of indecency for women, as they had to expose their bodies in public, thereby tainting their dignity. While both the pro-regime newspaper and Atatürk himself heavily promoted the *Cumhuriyet* contest, the Ministry of Education nonetheless found it inappropriate for a teacher to participate. On 22 January 1931, *Son Posta* reported that Naşide Saffet had been “invited” to leave school after entering the contest. According to *Cumhuriyet*, however, she left her position of her own accord since she had been absent for ten days due to the preparations for the World Beauty Contest in Paris (Akçura 2001: 251). That same year, Naşide Saffet became engaged to Selahattin Alan, one of the first aircraft engineers of Turkey, whom she married two years later (Hekimoğlu 2005: 31).

Similar to that of Bedriye, portrayed in Figure 1.9, Naşide Saffet’s appearance reflects the influence of Western fashion on Turkish women in the 1920s and 1930s. The simple

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51 While the flapper look still appeared to be in vogue, the year 1931 corresponds to a time when, under the influence of the Great Depression, Western fashion again became more conservative. Skirts became longer and the waistline was heightened in an attempt to bring back a more traditionally feminine look. However, both cloche hats and short hair remained popular throughout the 1930s (Mears and Boyer 2014).
dark dress she is wearing in Figure 1.14 is less glamorous than the outfits that appear in some of the other studio portraits from the same period, which are skimpier and more expensive, and paired with flashy jewelry, bags and shoes. Her finger waves, black cloche dress and pose, with her left knee slightly bent to appear leaner, evoke the widely circulated portraits of 1920s and 1930s Hollywood stars such as Mary Pickford, Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Norma Shearer and Clara Bow. The black tulle delicately covering her shoulders and arms accentuates her elegance. Dressed elegantly yet modestly, just like Bedriye in Figure 1.9, Naşide Saffet represents not only the Western look that the Turkish state aspired to, but also the poise and sophistication that were supposed to accompany it.

**Figure 1.17** An article promoting Cumhuriyet’s beauty contest. The article urges the beauty contest participants to “hurry up” and have their photographs taken “immediately,” 7 December 1932, Cumhuriyet. Istanbul University Libraries.

Figure 1.14 does not bear a studio stamp; however, similar photographs of Naşide Saffet published in the press at the time suggest that it was taken by Süleyman Süreyya Bükey (Foto S. Süreyya), who stood out among his contemporaries with his distinct style. Figure 1.17 from 7 December 1932, showing an article related to Cumhuriyet’s beauty contest photo campaign, features two photographs of a contestant, Fahrünissa Hamm, taken in the Foto S. Süreyya studio, exemplifying the photographer’s use of lights to make
his sitters cast dramatic shadows (see also Figure 1.14). In the other photographs of her that I have come across, Naşide Saffet appears in different poses wearing the same outfit as in Figure 1.14: in one of the images she turns her back and looks over her shoulder into the camera; in another profile image, she is leaning against the wall with her hands behind her back, looking down to the floor in a pensive fashion. These successive poses suggest that the images, including Figure 1.14, resulted from the official free photo shoot before the beauty contest offered by Cumhuriyet.

From his iconic Beyoğlu studio, the Western-educated photographer Süreyya Bükey appears to have projected his interpretation of modern femininity onto these official portraits, which were endorsed by the organizers of the beauty contest. With their carefully choreographed and directed poses and postures, Figure 1.14 and the other images in the series serve as evident manifestations of the agency of the photographer, along with that of the newspaper that published the images, in reproducing and spreading the early Turkish Republic’s normative image of feminine beauty. Akçura (2001: 250) writes that, in 1931, due to a decrease in applications, pictures of contestants were no longer published in the newspaper before the contest. Therefore, it is likely that the circulation of Figure 1.14 only occurred after Naşide Saffet won the contest.

The article in Figure 1.17 includes a quote from an anonymous reader, who, impressed with the “statue-like” bodies of the German men and women they saw on a trip to Berlin, emphasizes the importance of physical education in achieving national health and beauty. In the political climate of the 1930s, during which the German and Italian fascist regimes were on the rise, references to the importance of physical education in relation to the “beauty of the Turkish race” mirror the Kemalists’ efforts to consolidate the Turkish national identity through an emphasis on ethnicity and race. As Öztamur notes (2002), beauty contests were presented as an opportunity for innocent, well-mannered daughters from good families (aile kızı), with their intelligence, well-trained bodies and foreign language skills, to show the character of the “Turkish race” to the world. Indeed, when Keriman Halis was selected as Turkey’s first (and only) Miss Universe in 1932 at the International Pageant of Pulchritude in Spa, Belgium, it was celebrated as a major victory that put Turkey on the map alongside the other “advanced” countries of the West. Atatürk congratulated Halis with the following words: “Knowing that the Turkish race is the world’s most beautiful race historically, I find it only natural that a Turkish girl was elected as Miss Universe.” At the same time, he still advised women to focus on excelling in terms of high culture and high virtue. After the Surname Law was passed in 1934, Atatürk gave Keriman Halis the surname Ece, or Queen (Akçura 2001: 256).

In this context, the regime struggled to reconcile the contradiction between ethnocentric claims regarding the beauty of the Turkish race and its eagerness to imitate the Western lifestyle in order to achieve a universal modernity. To accomplish this, the

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52 The following year, Beauty of Queen of 1932 Keriman Halis appeared in similar poses in another Foto S. Süreyya photo shoot. Today, images of beauty queens from this era, including those of Naşide Saffet, circulate widely on the internet.

53 One extreme example of this is the Sun Language Theory (Güneş Dil Teorisi), a Turkish nationalist pseudoscientific linguistic hypothesis developed in the 1930s with the backing of Atatürk. The theory proposed that all human languages descended from one proto-Turkic primal language (Lewis 1999).
Kemalists emphasized the “moral superiority” of Turkish women over the frivolous women of the West (Sancar 2017). Even Peyami Safa, a prominent novelist and one of the judges of the beauty contest, who had been an adamant critic of Western civilization and its “moral weaknesses,” wrote: “What Keriman Halis has proved to the whole world is not just a personal beauty. She revealed the difference between a Turkish woman, who, until now, was seen as a strange poultry that only served to ‘lay eggs,’ and a smart and wise-looking Turkish girl who is involved in today’s international affairs” (in Akçura 2001: 258).

As this section has shown, while beauty contests, just like photography, Western clothes, European furniture or ballroom dancing, were framed and encouraged as markers of modernity and social progress, they were equally seen as vital opportunities to prove the strength of the new Turkish nation to the world. The beauty contests of the 1930s reveal a key moment in modern Turkish history where the kinds of ideological negotiations that took place between the desires and ambitions of women, and the limitations of state feminism come to the surface. Actively endorsed and widely covered by the press of the time, the annual beauty contests served to “congeal,” “reify” and “naturalize” modern gender norms for Turkish women (Butler 2007 [1990]: 45), particularly through the repeated photographic representations of the contestants, published in papers throughout the year, and also, as in Figure 1.17, circulated in the form of postcards. In this context, Cumhuriyet’s photo campaigns were proven to be particularly strategic, encouraging women to repeatedly perform the ideal images of beauty, modernity and chastity as proposed by the regime.

It is not improbable that Ulviye, the recipient of Figure 1.17, wanted to follow in the footsteps of Naşide Saffet, and perhaps dreamed of entering a beauty contest herself. Yet, she probably would also have felt pressured to marry and become a mother, and to behave in a modest, chaste way. In any case, the production, reproduction and circulation of this image of a beauty queen imply that both Naşide Saffet and Ulviye consumed photography to create and emulate the normative image of Turkish womanhood as modern, secular, feminine and fashionable, yet also serious, dignified and of high morals. Naşide Saffet’s case thus embodies the ambivalence of, on the one hand, encouraging modern Turkish women to aspire to being beauty queens whose photographs are widely shared, while, on the other hand, emphasizing the need to be a modest, chaste woman whose most important task is to have children and thus to reproduce the nation.

In the next section, I will further explore the confusing gender norms imposed on women in the early Republican era through a case study that allows for queer readings while remaining constrained by Kemalist ideas of modernity and secularity.

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54 This early phase of beauty contests took place between 1929 and 1933. After a long pause, the beauty contests started to be organized again in 1950 (Akçura 2001: 261).
As Edwards (2001a: 236) argues, photographs “have the potential to perform history in ways in which we perhaps least expect when they are used not simply as evidential tools but as tools with which to think through the nature of historical experience.” Figure 1.18 turned out to offer a starting point for a discovery journey in which photographs act as “sites of multiple, contested and contesting histories” (Edwards 2001a: 22). In the context of the questions raised in this chapter with regard to the visibility of normative early Republican femininities in vernacular photography, Figure 1.18 provides a new understanding of the series of six images I discussed at the beginning of Part I (Figures 1.1–1.6) since it features the same person, whom I was able to identity thanks to the geographical clues offered by the image and the inscription.

This oversized photograph was taken in May 1934 in the Çapa district of Istanbul, outdoors, in a park or a garden. Taken outside a studio setting, the slightly blurry image captures a more candid instance in the person’s everyday life than the first six images (Figures 1.1–1.6). The inscription reads “To our dearest teacher, a souvenir from the last days,” and ends with two names: Fahamet and Macide.55 The building in the background

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55 In Turkish: “Biricik hocamza son günlerin hatırası. Çapa 1934. Kızlarınız Fahamet Macide.”
is the historical Çapa Öğretmen Okulu (Teachers’ School), the oldest teachers’ training school in Turkey.\footnote{Founded in 1848 as Darülmulûmilîm (Teachers’ Training School for Men), the school was converted into Çapa Öğretmen Okulu (Çapa Teachers’ School) after the foundation of the Republic and has been renamed a number of times since 1946. Founded in 1870, the Teachers’ Training School for Women (İstanbul Dârülmuallimâtı) moved to the building during the 1917–1918 academic year (İnce and Sağdıç 2020).}

Unlike the ambivalence generated by the first six images with regard to the gender of the sitter, Figure 1.18 features a figure dressed in a recognizably and normatively feminine manner. Embracing the image of the new Republican woman, her hair is not covered, except by a fashionable hat, reflective of the Western fashion trends of the 1920s and 1930s. Her short hair too was quite fashionable at the time, as noted earlier. She is modest in her appearance and does not wear any makeup or ostentatious jewelry, except for an elegant flower-shaped brooch adorning a stylish double-breasted 1930s trench coat. Smiling at the camera or at whoever is holding it, the woman in Figure 1.18 seems to be the teacher that the two students dedicate their note to.

Born in 1905, this woman was Nebahat Hamit Karaorman,\footnote{She was referred to as Nebahat Hamit before the Surname Law of 1934, after which she published under the name Nebahat Karaorman. In some resources she is also referred to as Nebahat Hamit Karaorman. Here, I primarily use Nebahat Hamit as she was most widely known by this name in the 1930s.} a prominent educator who taught pedagogy and mental health at the Çapa Teachers’ Training School for Women, and philosophy at the Kabataş High School. Her name appears in various articles praising her as one of the exemplary women of modern Turkey, as well as in the programs of feminist conferences from the mid-1930s. She wrote a book entitled Cinsi Terbiye (Sex Education) that was published in 1933 as part of a conference proceeding. Her name is mentioned among the first feminists of the Republic, as a “sex education specialist,” who advocated for raising awareness of sexuality and adding sex education classes to the curriculum in all schools (Davaz 2014).

Taking part in a pivotal moment for Turkish feminism, Nebahat Hamit was one of the 12 delegates chosen to participate in the 12. International Women’s Congress in 1935, hosted by the Turkish Women’s Union, of which she was a member. She was married to a prominent lawyer, Hamit Karaorman, who held shares in one of Istanbul’s first apartments, the Barnathan Apartment in Galata, once a multi-ethnic and multi-religious neighborhood that, over the decades, witnessed the disappearance of Turkey’s non-Muslim communities. In a National Geographic article from 1939 on the transformation of Turkey, in which she is described as a “charming lady,” Nebahat Hamit explains that she and her husband took the surname Karaorman (Black Forest) because they met in the Black Forest region in Germany (Chandler 1939).\footnote{Nebahat Hamit Karaorman died in 1986. According to a Sabah newspaper article from 6 January 2011, she donated her 11 properties in Istanbul to the Turkish Education Association (TEV), a staunchly Kemalist organization, for the purpose of providing scholarships to children.}

In the photographs that exist of her, Nebahat Hamit projects, or, in Butler’s notion, performs the image of the new secular Republican Woman. She was well educated, and, as promoted by the regime, became an educator herself. As such, she offers a glimpse into the life of a sophisticated urban middle-class Turkish woman from Istanbul who belonged to the relatively small intellectual elite of the very early years of the Republic. From the
Surname Law to the changing demographics of Istanbul, Nebahat Hamit’s life offers a microcosm through which to explore some of the rapid political and social changes that the country underwent in the early Republican era.

In interviews from the 1930s, Nebahat Hamit demonstrates a pro-Kemalist and modernist outlook. She promotes modern marriage, arguing that young men and women should meet and get to know each other outside the constraints of an arranged marriage, and expresses her disapproval of child brides (26 March 1930, Milliyet). On the other hand, in an Akşam interview conducted a few years later, she boasts about her happy, long-lasting marriage, claiming that “a good wife is like wine; she excels with age.” In this interview, she presents the view that the woman is tasked with taking care of her husband and her household, a quite traditional perspective on the role of the woman in the family that remained popular in the 1930s (15 June 1935, Akşam).

Why did Nebahat Hamit have those six studio photographs (Figures 1.1–1.6) taken? Was she experimenting with her own image? Was she looking for a more feminine look in her studio portraits, as the retouching may imply, or was she simply following the trends of her era? Were these photographs meant to establish her image as a teacher? Undoubtedly, photography was an integral part of her Westernized, urban middle-class lifestyle; yet, even though her interviews offer some clues about her views on gender roles in Turkish society, the questions regarding the portraits remain unanswered.

Figure 1.19 A portrait of Halide Edib, published in Under Five Sultans (1929).
When I first chose to study Nebahat Hamit’s studio portraits, I imagined them as representations of a subversion of the norm in the form of gender-play, which undoubtedly co-existed with conforming representations in studio photography across the Middle East. The revelation of the sitter’s identity, however, urges us to be careful about reading gender in photography, especially retrospectively, as it suggests that she was most likely trying to embody the new Turkish woman rather than challenging Kemalist gender norms. It is still possible that Nebahat Hamit was engaging in some kind of gender-play or, as Browne and Nash (2010: 3) put it, an “assemblage of practices of the self,” in the way she experimented with different looks in the studio photographs. Yet, as Butler (2007 [1990]: xiv) points out, “gender can be rendered ambiguous without disturbing or reorienting normative sexuality at all. Sometimes gender ambiguity can operate precisely to contain or deflect non-normative sexual practice and thereby work to keep normative sexuality intact.” In this case, what the ambivalence of the performance of gender in Nebahat Hamit’s portraits appears most expressive of is not an act of subversion on her part (or that of the photographer), but rather the ambivalence that, as I have shown, inhabited the ideal Republican woman at the heart of Kemalist ideology. The portraits evoke the same confusion as Naşide Saffet’s photographs, on the one hand adopting a professional, serious image of the career woman who does not emphasize her sexuality and whose gender performance tends towards the masculine, and on the other hand taking on looks in tune with the idea that the Turkish Republican woman should be beautiful and feminine. In her portraits, Nebahat Hamit negotiates the gap between these two sides of the new Turkish Woman, pointing to the almost impossible task of performing both at the same time. In the end, therefore, her case reminds us of the perils of assessing gendered performances in historical visual material and urges us to question what our “informed” contemporary gaze may read into such material.

Conclusion

Published on 22 March 1934, the first edition of the women’s magazine Cumhuriyet Kadını defined the Republican Woman as the “Perfect Woman” (in Himam and Tekcan 2014: 249):

A woman living in the Republican era is not monolithic. She is as much present in the workforce as she is in social life. She is a thinking woman as well as one who delights in finery. The Republican Woman is the perfect woman, who is as devoted to intellectual debates, literary trends and sports, as she is to being a good housewife, mother and spouse.

This definition, which exemplifies the Kemalist regime’s perspective on women in the 1920s and 1930s, imagines a double identity for the new Turkish woman that is almost unattainable. In this chapter, I have looked at how urban middle-class Turkish women
negotiated the Republican ideal of the “perfect woman” in formal portraits taken in and outside studio settings. These portraits suggest that in the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic urban women increasingly adopted photography as a way to perform their classed and gendered identity, putting forward their “best selves” as modern secular citizens and reflecting the drastic social and political transformations that the Turkish society went through under the Kemalist regime.

In the Kemalist psyche of the time, the shift from çarşaf to Western dress was seen as the primary criterion for women’s emancipation. In this regard, photographs from the 1920s and 1930s are often evoked as illustrating the Revolution’s success. In this chapter, through comparisons between portraits taken in the late Ottoman and early Republican eras, I have shown that, in both contexts, urban women largely performed their modernity and femininity in accordance with the reigning norms. However, while urban middle-class women of the new Turkish Republic generally conveyed a sense of conformity with Kemalist ideas about femininity in their photographic representations, I have emphasized that they still had much to contend with and potentially to feel dissatisfied about in the early years of the Republic, including the male-dominated political apparatus, the masculinizing project of state feminism, the constraints of what remained a conservative Muslim society, the limits to their aspirations imposed by their class position, as well as global social and cultural trends. As Kandiyoti (1997a: 128) argues with regard to the latter, the shaping of female subjectivities cannot be thought independently from “mediations through multiple codes articulated through fashion and modes of consumption.” My analysis of photographic representations of urban middle-class Turkish women has underlined how the forms of femininity performed in such representations are closely connected to a large, not necessarily coherent network of political and cultural influences that includes particular modes of consuming photography.

The visual uniformity of the “best selves” portrayed in the studio portraits I have discussed in this chapter reveals the classed and gendered nature of the new Republican identity, which became increasingly monolithic and ethnicity-focused in the 1930s under the influence of rising nationalist and fascist movements globally. In this context, images that challenged accepted social norms and official discourses are likely to have been discouraged and perceived as risky. Even if such images were produced, they are likely to have been destroyed in order to keep them from sullying the sitters’ reputations, thus preventing them from showing up in the public sphere many decades later.

In the next chapter, I will focus on photographic representations of modern Turkish masculinities. I will discuss the construction of male heteronormativities in the early Republican era and elaborate on forms of conformity and subversion.
CHAPTER TWO

Modern Turkish Masculinities

As shown in the previous chapter, the Kemalists privileged the construction of an “ideal woman” for the Republic over that of an “ideal man.” Although Kemalist reforms such as the 1926 Civil Code regulated the lives of both men and women, discussions concerning issues such as equal rights to inheritance, testimony, legal marriage, and the ban on polygamy primarily revolved around their effect on women. Yet the role and appearance of men also had to be redefined in the context of a Turkish society that sought to portray itself as modern (Sancar 2017, Yılmaz 2013). Thus, while the veil for women was never officially banned, the state did intervene in men’s attire through the Hat Law in 1925 (Kandiyoti 1997a). In addition, Atatürk closely associated his public image as a charismatic leader and modern statesman, carefully constructed and communicated domestically as well as internationally, with the image of the modern Turkish nation. As Enis Dinç (2016: 222) has shown, by using the medium of film, the “father” of the nation “tried to leave nothing to chance so that he could present himself as an industrious leader who was developing his country and improving the standard of living of his people, as well as presenting the Turkish nation as modern, civilized and democratic.” For Faik Gür (2001 in Özyürek 2006: 96), “Atatürk came to represent and embody the new nation and the ‘new man’ that the republic aimed to create.”

Nevertheless, unlike the widespread conceptualization of the modern Turkish woman, the public debates and social reforms of the 1920s and 1930s did not as explicitly deal with the making of the modern Turkish man. As the Kemalists worked hard to define and disseminate their idea of what the new Turkish woman should look and live like, how was the image of the new Turkish man conceived and circulated? What were the components of the new Republican masculinity, as compared with Ottoman masculinity? This chapter will investigate visual representations of men in vernacular photography in an attempt to dissect the characteristics of the ideal “Republican Man.” As in Chapter One, I will examine the roots of the image of the ideal Turkish man in the making of the modern Ottoman man as represented in literature and the press from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

Compared to the large number of scholarly works in Women’s Studies, scholarship in Men’s Studies in Turkey, particularly scholarship focusing on the molding of the modern Turkish man in the early Republican era, is relatively scarce. Among the leading scholars to examine gendered representations in the early Republic, Serpil Sancar (2017), Nükhet Sirman (1998, 2000), Deniz Kandiyotı (1997b), Ayşe Durakbaş (1998), Ayşe Gül Altmay (2004) and Duygu Köksal (1998) have studied representations of the modern

59 Recent works in the field of Masculinity Studies include Arslan 2005; Bolak Borata, Okman Fişek and Eslen Ziya 2018; Gökarıksel and Secor 2017; Sancar 2008; Saraçgil 2005; Selek 2010; and Zeybekoğlu 2013. See also Toplum ve Bilim’s issue #101 on “Masculinity” (Erkeklik), edited by Semih Sökmen, 2004.
Turkish man in politics, literature, the military and the press, taking a critical stance towards both hegemonic masculinities and state feminism.

Through the analysis of several selected photographs, this chapter aims to contribute to the scholarship on representations of Turkish masculinities in general, and in the early Republican era more specifically. Identifying a set of genres that played a pivotal role in the construction of these modern Turkish masculinities, such as military and family portraits, I will begin by looking at how urban middle-class men used photography to perform their desired selves as modern citizens, modern fathers and modern husbands in the early years of the Republic. Next, I will study what the making of this new modern masculinity meant for the establishment of the Republic and its nation-building process.

This chapter explores some of the common types of representations of men that were established and consolidated in vernacular photographs in the 1920s and 1930s, which contributed to the formation of the modern Turkish identity. The four types of representations that I discuss, namely that of the joyful soldier, the gentleman, the modern husband and the modern father, collectively shaped the ideal image of the Turkish man as a loyal supporter of the Kemalist regime. This chapter primarily looks at when and how men performed their desired selves in one or more of these categories to negotiate their classed masculinities in portrait photography. In the latter part of the chapter, I also examine the potential forms of gender play that might have challenged the hegemonic masculinities formed in the early Republican era. Paralleling the last part of Chapter One, I conclude Chapter Two with a discussion of queer readings of vernacular photographs in order to highlight the kind of challenges such readings pose and the opportunities they offer for a deeper understanding of gender performativities of the era.
Figures 2.1 & 2.2 (recto & verso) A young man in a military uniform, 3 April 1934. 23.7 x 17.5 cm. Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.

Taken on 3 April 1934, Figure 2.1 features a young soldier. It is likely that this young man was a graduate of a military high school, about to start his professional career as a soldier at the time of this photograph. Rather than the young man himself, however, it was the Turkish inscription on the back that attracted my attention when I encountered the

60 Military service has been compulsory in Turkey since 1909. The Military Law of 21 June 1927 stipulated the duration of military service for Infantrymen as 18 months.
The inscription reads: “Şişmanlayacaksın,” which translates as “You will put on weight,” or “You will get fat.” This note instantly captured my imagination. Perhaps it was the soldier’s retrospective prophecy, written later in life to his younger self, who ended up gaining weight. Or perhaps “Şişmanlayacaksın” was a contemporary inscription by a family member or the soldier himself. Leaving these speculations aside, I was intrigued by the way the reference to the soldier’s weight evokes concerns about the shape of his body.

In Bir Maniniz Yoksa Annemler Size Gelecek, a volume of essays on daily life in the 1970s in Turkey, Ayfer Tunç (2003: 323) explains the tradition of “military photographs” (askerlik fotoğrafları), which seems to have remained unchanged since the 1920s:

There were two types of military photographs. The first kind included soldiers, who had their pictures taken by professional photographers that came to their garrison. In such images, everyone looked cheerful yet a little rough; you would notice that people did not put much effort into posing. If a photograph was to be sent to the family, names of all family members would be written on the reverse. Once the son was back from the military, pictures showing him doing various tasks such as peeling potatoes, watering plants, cleaning his rifle would make everyone laugh and offer him a good excuse to talk about his memories from the military days. The second type of pictures included official studio photographs of soldiers posing in their uniforms. These would be signed and sent to the family. In the early 1970s, these official studio portraits in uniforms held a central place in the photo albums of many small-town men who served in the military as reserve officers.

Figure 2.1 fits into the latter type that Tunç discusses. Judging by the white tapes without any rank insignia, this seems to be a military high school graduation portrait. The young man in the photograph presents his best self as a soldier-in-the-making. He smiles, looking off camera, indicating his delight at and readiness to join the military. His uniform looks brand new, clean and carefully ironed. His hair is greased back.

Given its large size (23.7 x 17.5 cm) and cardboard mounting, it is likely that the photograph was enlarged by his family to hang it on a wall as a symbol of family pride. As much as being a documentation of his identity as a soldier, the photograph might equally have served as a souvenir for those he left behind, to remind them of the young man. Thus, the smile on his face was directed to those who would be looking at this image during his absence. The smile, conveying this soldier’s joy in joining the army, could also have served as an encouragement to other male family members or friends who were about to go on the same journey.

As the large volume of soldier portraits among vernacular photographs reveals, the military has been an indispensable component of Turkish national identity and daily life. Altınay (2004: 161) argues that the Turkish nation was in fact “invented” as a “military-

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61 The note that reads “5 TL,” meaning 5 Turkish Liras (TRY), refers to the price of the photograph and was added by the seller at a later date.
nation” and points out that the myth that “Turkish nation is a military-nation” became state ideology in the 1920s and 1930s (Altınay 2004: 6). Until today, military service has largely been considered a sacred duty, embodied in the oft-repeated motto “Every Turk is born a soldier.”

Nagel (1998: 252) writes that “masculinity and nationalism seem stamped from the same mould – a mould which has shaped important aspects of the structure and culture of the nations and states in the modern state system.” As Altınay (2004: 6) argues, in Turkey, “by defining national pride through masculine pride in the practice of military service, nation-state builders of Turkey have culturalized, masculinized, and militarized an emerging political process.” Regarding the myth of the military-nation, Altınay (2004: 32) adds:

It is a highly gendered discourse that has important implications for gendered citizenship and gendered self-identification. Just as “Turkish culture” is defined through the military, Turkish masculinity is defined through military-service. In state discourse, as well as in the perception of many Turkish citizens, men become “men” only after serving in the military.

The implications of this culturalization are embodied in the many surviving soldier portraits and the inscriptions that accompany them. The “joyfulness” of the soldiers in Figures 2.3 and 2.5 is enhanced by enthusiastic inscriptions about the military, often in clichéd phrases such as “May this be a souvenir of the greatest duty,” in Figure 2.3, addressed to Haydar, perhaps a fellow soldier or a male friend, and “A souvenir from the first days in my beloved profession,” in Figure 2.5, addressed to the soldier’s sister.
Figures 2.3 & 2.4 (recto & verso) A portrait of a soldier, 13 February 1939. 13.9 x 8.9 cm. Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.⁶²

⁶² In Turkish: “13-II-1938 Cuma haturası Haydar En büyük ödevim olsun. M. Temuçin.” The note “5” written with a pencil was added by the vendor and refers to the price of the photograph, 5 TRY (Turkish lira).
The three men in Figures 2.1, 2.3 and 2.5 are smiling, which makes them appear delighted and eager to be part of the military, to finally become “men.” At the same time, their smiles are antipodal to the serious, at times angry, warrior image of the Ottoman Janissaries (Figure 2.6) and the stern images of Mustafa Kemal and other members of the Republican military elite posing in military uniforms during World War I (Figure 2.7) or the Turkish War of Independence (Figure 2.8). The masculinity of the three soldiers in Figures 2.1, 2.3 and 2.5 is constructed without the performance of a menacing frown, supposed to intimidate the enemy.

63 In Turkish: “Ablam F. olcay’a (?) sevdiğim mesleğe girdiğim ilk günler hatırası. F. Eltutar (?) 3-5-1935.”
Figure 2.6 A depiction of Janissaries during the Classical Age of the Ottoman Empire (1453–1566).  


Figure 2.7 An iconic image of Mustafa Kemal during the Gallipoli Campaign (1915–1916).  

Similar to most of the men in the portraits discussed in the previous chapter, the soldiers or soldiers-in-training in Figures 2.1, 2.3 and 2.5 are clean-shaven, which coincides with a decline in the popularity of beards in Europe in the early twentieth century. The mustache, an important part of Ottoman masculinity, is abandoned for the most part but does not disappear entirely, still serving as a symbol of masculinity.

Notably, the mustache had already been at the center of tensions between traditional and modern masculinities that emerged in the late Ottoman period under the increasing influence of Western modernity. In her analysis of Ömer Seyfettin’s 1918 novel *Kesik Bıyık (Trimmed Mustache)*, in which a young man is accused by his father of becoming a “dandy” after getting his mustache trimmed, Özoğlu (2016) shows how the association of the excessively Westernized dandy figure with a deplorable loss of masculinity became a central issue in discussions of modernization in Ottoman Turkish literature at the turn of the century (see Gürbilek 2004; Sirman 2000; Saraçgil 2005).

In the early Republican era, a clean-shaven image did not contradict the definition of modern Turkish masculinity. With the foundation of the Republic, the handlebar mustache came to symbolize the Ottoman past, and thus was discouraged by the regime. Atatürk himself first trimmed then shaved his iconic Ottoman handlebar mustache after the Turkish War of Independence (Sobecki 2011). As we see often in portraits from the 1920s and 1930s, the toothbrush mustache became popular as a neat, low-maintenance modern

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style, following trends in America and Europe, until it became unfashionable after World War II due to its association with Hitler.67

The Turkish nation-building process relied heavily on portrayals of the heroic male warriors who had saved and founded the country (Mayer 2000). This included the image of the brave and faithful Anatolian (peasant) man, ready to defend his country against the enemy (Saltık 2010).68 The image of “the male protector” engendered the myth of “the female protected,” contributing to a clear gendered divide in modern Turkish society (Mosse 1997). As Saraçgil (2005) argues, “high values” such as loving one’s homeland and nation, which were attributed to men, became “main pillars of male domination.” Consequently, the man who was assumed to be responsible for protecting the entire nation also became responsible for protecting the women and children who were part of that nation. Early Republican authors such as Halide Edib Adıvar (Ateşten Gömlek, 1923) and Reşat Nuri Güntekin (Yeşil Gece, 1928) reinforced these arguments through the patriotic and idealistic portrayal of the male characters in their novels (Atik 2015).

The army was one of the key institutions supporting the modernization mission of the Kemalist state. Beyond its mission to protect the country, the army was promoted as “a people’s school” where young men would learn to read and write, and strengthen their patriotism. In posters produced by the RPP, the new army was portrayed as an institution that turns “young and inexperienced” men to “mature, healthy, and modernized gentlemen” (Yılmaz 2013: 156–57).

In the highly masculinized discourse of the military, in which only men served, what was the role of women? As Altunay (2004: 50–51) writes, through the example of Sabiha Gökçen, Atatürk’s adopted daughter and Turkey’s first woman military pilot, “women became a part of this discourse not only as mothers and wives of military-men, but also as ‘daughters’ of the military-nation who themselves were warriors. As mothers and wives, they were responsible for ‘reproducing’ and ‘supporting’ the nation’s military force; as ‘daughters’ they were invited to participate in it directly.”69 The term “daughter” implies an unmarried woman and hence a temporary position for women in the military. Indeed, Sabiha Gökçen’s presence in the army was short-lived, with only three years between her entry and resignation, during which she remained the only woman in the military (Altunay 2004: 46).70 Still, this was enough time to make her not only a female icon of the Turkish military-nation but also a role model for the modern, independent, strong Republican woman as envisioned by Atatürk, up until today.

67 By the late 1970s, the mustache had become a “leftist” symbol, which led the military junta to ban it in 1980. Until then, Turkish soldiers could grow a mustache during their military service. Indeed, we come across soldiers from various ranks sporting a mustache in the military portraits from the 1920s and 1930s. Thus, the absence of a mustache in Figures 2.1, 2.3 and 2.5 may refer to a personal choice on the part of the soldiers.
68 A Turkish soldier is often called Mehmetçik (Little Mehmet) in an affectionate way. Given that the most common Turkish male name is Mehmet (derived from the Prophet Muhammad’s name), the term Mehmetçik suggests that every ordinary Turkish man is raised to become a fighter. Saltık (2010: 441) notes that in most early Republican era poems the Anatolian man is called Mehmet.
69 When Gökçen became Turkey’s first woman military pilot at the age of 24 in 1937, she was also the world’s first woman combat pilot (for Gökçen’s controversial biography, see Altunay 2004).
70 Sabiha Gökçen resigned from her military post after Atatürk’s death in 1938. Women would not be admitted to military schools and academies until 1955 (Altunay 2004: 46).
With the exception of a few cases like Sabiha Gökçen, however, the military remained the realm of Turkish men, who not only saw military service as part of a national duty to protect their country, but also as an opportunity to get the education, training and discipline they needed in life. In addition, military service was one of the prerequisites for getting a job, with the majority of companies wanting men to have completed their military service before their application. Marriages would also be postponed until after military service, since it would be difficult for the man, as the “breadwinner,” to find a stable, well-paying job before completing it. The cheerful pride displayed by the soldiers in these portraits might then also be regarded as an indicator of self-assertion: through these portraits, they are finally becoming “men,” fully accepted in Turkish society.

As I have argued in this section, military portraits of joyful soldiers constituted a key component of the normative Republican masculinity, reinforcing the branding of the Turkish nation as a military-nation. Since the early days of the Republic, nationalism and the military have been two tightly knit elements defining the identity of the new Turkish citizen. As women were largely excluded from the military, the military-nation myth essentially gave the Kemalist nation-building process a masculine character.

The large volume of portraits of soldiers and soldiers-in-the-making among Turkish family photographs reveals that photography served to perpetuate the military-nation myth across the country, with soldiers from all classes sending pictures of themselves in uniforms home during their compulsory military service, which consolidated their identity as modern Turkish citizens. These soldier portraits contributed to the standardization of representations of male subjectivity, serving to bridge the class divide in the emerging Turkish nation. Thus, soldier portraits reinforced and promulgated the image of the modern male citizen across geography, class and age.

In the next section, I will explore how the more specific, non-universalized Republican masculinity of the Turkish gentleman was performed among the urban middle classes in the emerging modern public spaces of the Republic.
As Gökarıksel and Secor (2017: 5) argue, “masculinities (just like femininities) are formed within broader socio-economic, political and moral contexts through the body and its comportment as part of everyday life and across quotidian spaces.” In Figure 2.9, an alaminüt photograph from 24 July 1929, three men are sitting on a bench in Suadiye Park on the Asian side of Istanbul. The Ottoman Turkish inscription is partially legible: “With [Fikri or Firka?] in the Suadiye Park.”

The men in this photograph seem to have been caught slightly off guard; their gazes point in different directions, conveying a sense of spontaneity. 24 July 1929 fell on a Wednesday, which may indicate that these men went to the park for a break during their workday. All three men have a cigarette in their hand, publicly displaying a habit that would still have been considered inappropriate for young women at the time. It could have been the itinerant photographer who approached the men asking if they were interested in having their photograph taken, or it could have been any of the three men who called upon

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71 Alaminüt (itinerant) photographers had makeshift studios set up in cities, towns and villages across Turkey. See Chapter Five for a detailed analysis of the work of alaminüt photographers in the 1920s and 1930s.

72 In Turkish: “24 Temmuz 929 Sah (Fikri or Firka?) ile Suadiye parkında. Here, the Ottoman script is still used despite the official change of the alphabet on 11 November 1928.”
the photographer as he was passing by.

This impromptu photograph reveals some of the key features of the desired image promoted for the new Turkish man among the ruling elites and in the press: a Western appearance complemented by elegant three-piece suits, pocket watches (as worn by the man in the middle), round glasses, carefully knotted ties, pocket squares, and lace-up boots and cap-toe shoes, all of which reflect European and American men’s fashion trends of the era. The mustache is either absent or trimmed in the à la mode toothbrush style. The desire to perform a modern self is reflected in the demeanor of the men, and in the way they are careful not to spread their legs but cross them, as a gesture of politeness and civility. The brimmed Fedora hat, carefully laid on the bench, like a fourth person joining the group, complements the fashionable three-piece business suits. The appearance of only one hat in this portrait suggests that the strict 1925 Hat Law, which banned the fez and enforced the wearing of a Western hat by men as part of their daily attire, might have been relaxed by 1929.73

Like the mustache, headgear was a key object of political tension for both the Ottoman and Turkish elites. For late nineteenth-century Ottoman intellectuals and bureaucrats who supported Westernization, the European-style hat represented an embodiment of the European modernity to which the Ottoman state aspired, just like speaking French or buying European-style furniture did, so much so that Sultan Abdülhamid banned the European hat in 1877 and ordered Ottoman subjects to continue to wear the fez as a symbol of the common Ottoman identity (Yılmaz 2013).

The 1925 Hat Law, which reversed the relationship between the fez and the European hat, “drew upon this nineteenth century Ottoman state tradition of imposing and defending a common national headgear through state mandate and control, in the cultivation of a new Turkish identity,” free from any visible markers of ethnic, tribal, religious, class or professional differences (Yılmaz 2013: 25). For the Republic, just like the veil, the fez signified “the backwardness” of the Ottoman Empire, helping the Kemalist regime to break away from the Ottoman past. In textbooks, the fez and the turban were associated with the traditional Ottoman school, which used physical punishment, especially the frightening bastinado (falaka). In contrast, “the new, modern Turkish teacher, depicted in his European style suit or in her modern dress, was more approachable and friendly, and did not use physical punishment” (Yılmaz 2013: 56). As Figure 2.9 suggests, by the 1920s, the trimmed mustache and the European hat, once criticized symbols of excessive Westernization, had been absorbed into the new idealized and hegemonized masculinity envisioned for the new Turkish man.

Ironically, the fez was a relatively recent Ottoman innovation, introduced by Sultan Mahmoud in the 1820s to create a common “Ottoman identity” by eroding ethnic, religious and other class and rank-related differences. Despite Sultan Mahmoud’s 1829 decree mandating the fez for all men, however, its adoption remained limited to government officials, soldiers and upper-class urban Ottoman men. In the 1920s, outlawing the fez similarly served to create a monolithic secular identity for the Turkish nation, free from any religious, ethnic and cultural differences. The Western hat soon became a symbol of loyalty to the Republican regime and Atatürk’s Westernization reforms; those who refused to wear it faced prosecution (see Kırpık 2007; Koloğlu 1978; and Yılmaz 2013).74

As Yılmaz (2013) points out, the hat reform, which was intended to be a homogenizing measure, in fact deepened urban-rural and class distinctions. Peasants and workers wore the government-promoted cap (kasket), whereas government officials and educated urban men wore European hats.

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After the Tanzimat reforms, the East-West conflict and excessive Westernization became popular themes among Ottoman novelists, who created variations of the comical “effeminate” dandy (alafranga züppe) character to address the negative consequences of “wrong” Westernization (Türkeş 2003). In these stories, the dandy is depicted as someone who imitates the Western lifestyle and consumerism without really absorbing Western culture, history, science and technology. He is shallow, arrogant, immature, flamboyant and extravagant. As he tries to keep up with the dynamic social life of the predominantly non-Muslim Beyoğlu, he squanders his family money in Western-style cafes, restaurants, taverns, theaters, barbers, tailors and shoemakers. He is lazy and lacks discipline. Rather than focusing on education or hard work, he is busy showing off his luxury clothes and his broken French on the Grande Rue de Pera. Aspiring to be Western, the dandy has lost the “essence” of his “real” identity as an Ottoman Muslim man.

In fact, the desired image for the Ottoman Muslim man depicted in the Tanzimat novels was a new, modern ideal of masculinity that took shape in the nineteenth century. Prominent author Yahya Kemal (Beyatlı) associates this shift with the disbandment of the centuries-old Janissary corps in 1826, dubbed the Auspicious Incident: “Following the Auspicious Event our old customs disappeared completely because of the aim to raise a dignified and well-mannered generation.” For Yahya Kemal, “a foreigner, who would look at the Ottoman generation in this era, would not recognize the sons of the old quarrelsome, strong voiced and manly Ottomans” (1975: 97 in Özoğlu 2016: 92).

Around the mid-nineteenth century, the image of the respectable Ottoman “efendi” emerged as a new masculine ideal, embodied in the Râkım Efendi character in Ahmet Mithat’s famous novel Felâtun Bey ve Râkım Efendi (1875). As opposed to the “wrongly

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75 Some of the more famous novelists dealing with these issues include Ahmet Mithat Efendi (Felâtun Bey ve Râkım Efendi, 1875; Acaib-i Alem, 1882; Dürdane Hanım, 1882), Namık Kemal (Cezmi, 1880; İntibah, 1876), Recaiзадe Mahmut Ekrem (Araba Sevdası, 1898), Mehmet Rauf (Eyül, 1901), Nabizade Nazım (Zehra, 1894), Samişapızadзе Şezai (Sergiczest, 1889), Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil (May ve Siyah, 1897; Aşk-i Memnu, 1900), and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar (Şik, 1889; Şpsedvi, 1911; Mürребiye, 1895; Nimetşınas, 1911).

76 One of the terms used to refer to the dandy type is tatlı su frengi, or sweet water Frank, which was initially a pejorative term for the Levantines of the Ottoman Empire, since they were not seen as “real” or “salt-water” Franks. Koçu (1969: 97) also uses the word didon, from the French dis donc (well, wow, or goodness), which was apparently picked up from the conversations of French sailors visiting Turkish shores. He defines didons as “those who adapted their appearance to foreign fashions.” After 1909, during the Second Constitutional Era, the didon types were given different names, including monşerler (from French: les mon chères), bobstiller (the Bob styles) and Čarlistonlar (the Charlestons).

77 For studies on the alafranga züppe character in literature, see Gürbilek 2004; Moran 1991; Saraçgil 2005; and Somay 2001.

78 The Janissaries were an elite infantry corps in the army of the Ottoman Empire from the late fourteenth century to 1826. Considered the first modern standing army, they were highly respected and feared for their military prowess in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Kinross 1977). The Janissary corps was originally chosen from among the ablest Christian youths from the Balkan provinces, who were converted to Islam to be trained for the Ottoman service. They were subject to strict rules, including celibacy, which were relaxed in the late sixteenth century. By the early eighteenth century the original method of recruitment was abandoned. Having become a powerful political force within the state, the Janissaries came to be known for engineering a series of palace coups in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the early nineteenth century they resisted army reforms. When the Janissaries rebelled against the formation of new, Westernized troops, Sultan Mahmud II declared war on them, abolishing the corps in June 1826 in the so-called “Auspicious Incident” (Vaka-i Hayriye), in which around 6,000 Janissaries were killed (Accessed August 16, 2020. britannica.com/topic/Auspicious-Incident).
Westernized” dandy Felâtnun Bey, Râkım Efendi adopts Westernization in the “right” way: he is responsible, hardworking and reliable. Even though he comes from a poor family, with hard work and thriftiness he improves his living conditions. He treats women kindly and with respect. He values the strengths of Western civilization, learns French, makes friends with Englishmen and goes to the theater, yet is also well versed in the Quran and Hadith, and upholds Ottoman and Muslim traditions and customs. Berna Moran (1991) writes that, through the character of Râkım Efendi, Mithat defined the ideal Ottoman man. The image of the Efendi reclaims masculinity, albeit in a changed form, while the dandy was often associated with effeminate behavior, marked by his irresponsible and lazy comportment, and his penchant for wearing flashy clothes, excessive accessories or makeup (kohl on his eyes or powder foundation on his cheeks), all of which were thought to alienate him from his “true” Ottoman self (Moran 1991).

In the early Republican era, novelists like Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Peyami Safa and Reşat Nuri Güntekin featured Kemalist characters who were loyal to the revolution but expressed anxiety about losing the “essence” of one’s cultural identity in the process of excessive modernization (Güneş 2005: 9). “Misunderstood Westernization” was a recurring theme in many works in the literary canon of the time. In *The Rented Mansion* (*Kiralık Konak*, 1922), for example, Karaosmanoğlu criticized blind admiration of the West through the depiction of his characters’ dandy lifestyle. Servet, the father, is the son of a military judge, yet he hates Islam and his Turkish identity:

> Somehow, knowing French from a young age, having attended the Galatasaray High School⁷⁹ and having spent some time with the sweet water Franks of Beyoğlu had given him the right to withdraw to a private place in a pious house with pictures of nude women, volumes of French books, vases and figurines and in this seclusion to spend hours lying in a long chair, staring at the ceiling with his legs up, smoking a Dutch cigar, while singing along to some opera pieces with a wild and miserable voice. Among Turks nobody is as enthusiastic and zealous about European ways as Mr. Servet has been. (Karaosmanoğlu 2004: 14–15)

By critiquing undesirable personality traits for men, such as pretentiousness, arrogance, egocentrism and disinterest in politics, Republican authors revealed the ideal image they envisioned for the new modern Turkish man: as the breadwinner, the man should be serious, reliable, hardworking, polite, honest and loyal. Yet, he should perform this identity by embracing a Western appearance and lifestyle. The modern Turkish man is devoted to his country, and would fight for it not in the name of religion or for personal gain, but for the honor of his homeland.

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⁷⁹ Founded in 1481 as the Ottoman Imperial School, the prestigious Galatasaray High School is the oldest high school in modern Turkey. In 1868, influenced by the French Lycée model, the school was reestablished as the “Lycée Impérial Ottoman de Galata-Sérail” (Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultanisi). French was the main language of instruction, and many teachers were European. The students came from a large variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds. Today, education at the school consists of a blend of Turkish and French curricula, and is provided in both languages (Accessed August 16, 2020. gsl.gsu.edu.tr).
As a man of honor, the modern Turkish man should fulfill his social responsibilities, including having a successful marriage and taking care of his family (Saraçgil 2005: 56). He is critical of arranged marriages and of old-fashioned men who have concubines or multiple wives. He is also against marrying women who are much younger than him (Sirman 2000). In the eyes of the modern man, the family is built on the model of a European bourgeois family, where the relationship between the man and the woman is established through love. The family tasks itself with securing privacy, raising the children in a healthy social environment. The modern man should avoid pursuing affairs and fantasies that will destroy him and should respect a woman’s chastity (Saraçgil 2005: 149).

In early Republican novels, this ideal image often manifests itself in the figure of the “gentleman of Istanbul” (İstanbul efendisi). In Resimli ve Mükemmel Âdâb-ı Muâşeret (Illustrated Perfect Etiquette), Abdullah Cevdet (1927 in Meriç 2007: 292–93) writes that the new social order requires the man to show kindness and politeness towards women in the public sphere, and that the man’s appearance should be respectable. Men meeting these requirements are called “gentlemen” (beyefendi). A gentleman is friendly, modest, courteous and noble-minded. A man’s kindness stems as much from love for other human beings as it does from fear of upsetting or hurting other people. He respects others more than he respects himself. A true gentleman should be charitable, patriotic and work hard to make Turkey rise to stand “at the level of developed nations” (Abdullah Cevdet 1927: in Meriç 2007: 292–94).

Abdullah Cevdet explains that a gentleman’s most important quality is to “have high moral standards when it comes to relations between men and women.” “Until everything is certain,” it is inappropriate for a man to talk about the woman he wants to marry. He should avoid giving gifts to women other than his mother, sister and wife. On the street, he should not greet a woman accompanied by a man before the woman greets him. He should never ask a woman about her age (Abdullah Cevdet 1927 in Meriç 2007: 399–402).

The image of a modern gentleman is also associated with the image of “a young man from a good family” (iyi aile çocuğu), a courteous eligible bachelor, soon to be transformed into a mature gentleman who prides himself on being a good husband and a good father. A desirable young man should be hard-working, honest, trustworthy, patriotic and of high morals. He should focus on his work and family, and avoid “bad habits” such as alcohol, gambling, womanizing or swearing. Occasionally, the phrase temiz yüzülü (which translates as clean-faced) is used for polite, well-behaved young men, indicating that a clean-shaven face was preferred over facial hair for the ideal man.

Parla (2004) explains that the changing norms of masculinity created a sense of fear and anxiety among Republican men, as discussed in the works of writers like Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar. Modern men wanted marriages based on romantic love to well-educated women who shared a similar worldview, but they did not know how to handle such a relationship: they were afraid of becoming or being deemed effeminate if they did not try to control women. Over-Westernization was still considered a very real “danger” (Parla 2004).

Figure 2.9 is striking in the way it captures a spontaneous moment in a public space; these three men probably had little time to prepare for the poses they perform in this
picture. Meriç (2007: 98) explains that parks, similar to theaters, patisseries and museums, played an important role in expanding the definition of public space and transforming social life in the late Ottoman era and the early Republic. Centrally located in cities, parks quickly became part of modern urban life. Indeed, praising the parks in metropoles like Paris, London, Berlin and Vienna, Abdullah Cevdet (1927 in Meriç 2007: 98) advises men and women to go on “healthy walks” in parks. As spaces where strangers coexist and interact, a respectable appearance and gracious behavior are crucial. Putting emphasis on the health aspect, Abdullah Cevdet (1927 in Meriç 2007: 98) defines those who are seen in parks as “men of virtue” who “discuss new fashions.”

With their formal daily attire, the three men in Figure 2.9 embrace a classed and gendered self, displaying the image of a modern Turkish gentleman by reflecting the global men’s fashion trends of the 1920s and 1930s, influenced by Hollywood stars such as Rudolph Valentino and Clark Gable. The three men perform a modern masculinity that does not emphasize sexuality, similar to the representations of modern Turkish femininities I discussed in Chapter One.

In this section, I have discussed how the modern Turkish man was devised as an urban gentleman in the 1920s and 1930s, building upon the much-respected late Ottoman-era efendi ideal. The image of the secular gentleman, pertaining to both appearance and behavior, prevailed as the most desirable image among the urban middle classes in the formative years of the Turkish Republic. In the next section, I will explore how the ideal image of the modern Turkish gentleman is represented in family portraits, in which men perform their best selves as modern spouses and fathers, while reflecting the rapid transformations in family life in the early Republican era.
Figure 2.11 A family portrait, Foto Refik, Balıkesir, 29 January 1939. 29.2 x 18.4 cm. Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography. 80

80 The note that reads “K17” on top refers to a pricing system created by the seller.
Figures 2.12 & 2.13 (recto & verso) A portrait of a couple, Türk Foto Evi (Türk Fotoğraf evi), R. Koro, Istanbul, 15 August 1934. 22.8 x 24.4 cm.

Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.

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Figures 2.16 & 2.17 (recto & verso) A wedding portrait, Türk Fotoğraf evi (Türk Foto Evi), R. Koro, Istanbul, 19 July 1934. 8.8 x 13.9 cm.
Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.
In this section, I use the five images above to study the representation of Republican masculinity in the context of modern Turkish family life. Albeit quite similar in terms of pose, composition and purpose, each portrait highlights a different element of the visual language signaling the new modern Turkish family structure. Figures 2.11–2.18 show five young couples. The couples in these portraits seem to be husband and wife, except for the couple in Figure 2.14, who might be engaged. The images were taken in different studios.

“2562” refers to a cataloging number added by the studio/photographer.
in the 1930s.

Figure 2.11 from 1939 was taken in a studio called Foto Refik in the Western province of Balıkesir, around 200 kilometers south of Istanbul. It shows a family of three, a wife, a husband and a toddler, most likely a boy given the dark colored one-piece attire he is wearing. In the absence of any inscriptions, we do not know the occasion for this image. Yet, outside birthdays, weddings and engagements, the most common occasion for having a family portrait taken would have been the religious holidays (bayram), including the Feast of Breaking the Fast (Ramazan Bayramı/Şeker Bayramı in Turkish or Eid al-Fitr in Arabic) and the Feast of the Sacrifice (Kurban Bayramı in Turkish or Eid Al-Adha in Arabic). Families that had purchased new clothes called bayramlık and dressed up for the occasion of bayram (Koçu 1969: 30) would drop by a nearby studio to have their photo taken, particularly on the first day of the holiday before or after the habitual visits to relatives and family graves (Tunç 2003: 350).

In Figure 2.11, all of the family members are elegantly dressed. Their clothes are carefully ironed and their shoes polished. The woman wears a fashionable dress and a wavy hairdo to reflect the fashion of the 1930s, in line with the images of women I discussed in the previous chapter. She also wears jewelry and makeup, and seems to have shaped her eyebrows. The man wears a neatly ironed suit and a carefully knotted necktie. The toddler too is wearing matching clothes, which look brand new, along with a beret, implying a cold winter day outside the studio.

29 January 1939, the date on the print, would have been just before the Feast of the Sacrifice. If the date reflects the day this picture was taken, 29 January fell on a Sunday (even though the day is written as “Friday” on the print), in which case the family might have done their bayram shopping that weekend and gone to the studio afterwards. However, as Tunç (2003: 348) writes, normally families would not allow children to wear their bayramlık before the first day of bayram. If the date refers to the day the print was delivered to the family, the photograph would have been taken a few days earlier, which makes it less likely that it is a bayram picture. Perhaps it was taken on the occasion of the child’s birthday, another common occasion for family portraiture at the time.

An important provincial city within the Ottoman Empire, Balıkesir had a sizable population adding up to 481,372 according to the 1935 census, making it the fourth biggest Turkish city after Istanbul (877,106), İzmir (594,560) and Konya (539,257) (Erdem 2016). Balıkesir was a major front between the Greek and Turkish army during the Turkish War of Independence. After the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923, Balıkesir lost its Greek population and served as a hub for the resettlement of the Balkan populations in Turkey (Bayındır Goularas 2012). Balıkesir remained an important city for the RPP’s political organization in the 1930s.

In Figure 2.11, the husband, who appears in a formal suit, could be an employee in the government sector; a teacher, a banker or an office worker, all of which would typically imply an affiliation with the ruling RPP party. While this photograph was probably meant

82 As Yılmaz (2013: 183) notes, while expanding “the repertoire of secular national celebrations,” the state did not attempt to discontinue these two major Islamic celebrations, which facilitated the reception of the new secular celebrations as replacements of the state celebrations of the old regime.

83 In 1939, the Day of Arafah fell on 30 January and the first day of the Feast of the Sacrifice was 31 January.
for circulation among family and friends, the family appears eager to present a public image that complied with the aspirations of the Kemalist regime: an unveiled, elegant, joyful Republican woman; a “gentleman” husband who keeps a respectful distance from his wife and child while leaning towards them in a gesture of protection and care; and a healthy, slightly plump toddler on his best behavior. Together they appear to be a happy, loving and reputable family.

There does seem to be some age difference between the man and the woman, reflecting a common trend since Ottoman times. Traditionally, men would be expected to be economically stable before being able to start a family. As a result, men customarily married younger women, whom they believed would have higher fertility rates. Here, in Figure 2.11, the single child is emblematic of family photographs of the time. As Duben and Behar (2014: 252) explain, despite the Kemalist rhetoric that “motherhood is a woman’s most sacred duty,” Istanbul’s birth rates continuously dropped in the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1930s, families increasingly wanted only “enough” children to “reproduce their bloodline.” Indeed, urban middle-class family portraits from the 1930s rarely feature more than three children. As the nuclear family gained more importance, the average marriage age among women increased to 23 and most women stopped having children after they turned 30 (Duben and Behar 2014: 247).

Other than changing economic and political conditions, including women’s increased participation in the workforce, lifestyle changes such as people moving into smaller apartments in cities, and various birth control methods that were already in use in the late nineteenth century could explain the declining birth rates (Duben and Behar 2014). While Duben and Behar focus on Istanbul households, a large body of family photographs from across Turkey, like Figure 2.11, indicates a similar trend among educated middle-class families living in other cities. Some of those portrayed may have been Istanbul-educated employees who were sent to smaller cities across Anatolia by the RPP regime as governors, doctors, nurses, administrators or teachers.

Sancar (2017: 317) argues that the success of the Turkish modernization project was due to its “family-centered modernity” strategy, which managed to effectively reconcile the demands of modernists, nationalists and conservatives. Within this strategy, the family was defined as the key moral unit of the nation (Durakbaş 1998: 36), with the modern Turkish woman not seen as an individual who should strive for personal freedom but, rather, as a collective subject who existed to support her family and nation (Sancar 2017: 209). As future mothers, Turkish women were expected to have healthy and strong bodies to bolster their reproductive capacity, and to raise robust children “as healthy, educated, loyal, and disciplined citizens” (Yılmaz 2013: 186). Accordingly, “the image of the robust child, or gürbüz çocuk, came to represent the ideal Turkish child, and became a powerful symbol of the nation itself” (Yılmaz 2013: 186).

Family-centered modernity was adopted by both men and women despite its inherently conservative nature, which codified women as proper wives and dedicated mothers. While

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84 In reality, the nation faced massive problems with regard to the economic and health conditions of children and youth. Key challenges included “high rates of infant and child mortality, large numbers of orphans and abandoned children, poverty, malnutrition, homelessness, and begging” (Yılmaz 2013: 186).

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the modern woman faced the dilemma of essentially having to choose between her sexuality and respectable motherhood, the man was exempted from any punishment if he acted outside the norms (Sancar 2017: 317). As for the role of the man in the family, Sirman (1998: 37) writes:

Before the Civil Code, the men who were respected the most were the owners of the large households, the governors, and the pashas. Their children, their sons-in-law, or their poor relatives who lived with them were not in possession of property. [...] The Civil Code therefore introduced equality not only for women but also for men, who would now be entitled to be the breadwinner, own property and head a family regardless of where they come from and whose family they belong to. By enabling the privileges of pashas to all men, the new regime thus turned all men to pashas.85

In accordance with Kemalist gender norms, the modern husband in Figure 2.11 is made to appear taller and seen to embrace his family as the breadwinner. On the other hand, the mother is the one who holds the baby, as if to assert her role as the main caretaker of her child. Her head only reaches to her husband’s shoulder, which she barely touches. The chair helps to create an intimate setting for the three of them, with the man sitting on the very edge.

Figures 2.12, 2.14, 2.16 and 2.18 introduce the element of intimacy in a more explicit way than Figure 2.11. The composition of each portrait, with the exception of that in Figure 2.14, is the same: the man is on the right, the woman is on the left, their heads slightly touch each other, indicating the love the couple has for each other. As in Figure 2.11, the man appears taller in these portraits, with the exception of Figure 2.18, although the woman in this image might be standing up to create a balance in terms of height. As a result of this, Figure 2.18 is the only one where the couple poses cheek to cheek.

From Figure 2.11 to Figure 2.18, we see the couples smile. The men are shaved, and wear either a suit (Figures 2.12 and 2.14) or a military uniform (Figures 2.16 and 2.18), indicating their social and professional status. Unlike Figure 2.11, Figures 2.12–2.18 were taken in the popular Beyoğlu studios of Istanbul in the summer months, a popular time for weddings and engagements.

In couple portraits from the 1920s and 1930s, we observe that a certain degree of intimacy is allowed. As Duben and Behar (2014: 236) write, between the 1880s and the 1930s, the average age difference between husband and wife dropped from 10 to 6 years, transforming marriages into more intimate and democratic partnerships. Couples started to call each other by their first names, went out, played cards or made music together, and shared more things in common in daily life. By the 1920s and 1930s, mixed gender socialization had become common among the middle-class Muslim families of Istanbul, although this would still be considered a new idea among the lower classes and in many

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85 At the same time, the state promoted Bay (Mister, Sir) as a new male title of respect to be used regardless of class, education or family status after the abolition of titles such as Paşâ (Pasha) and Bey (Mister, chieftain; traditionally used for Ottoman governors) (Yılmaz 2013: 61).
other parts of the country (Duben and Behar 2014: 223).

The modern Turkish man and woman were encouraged to fall in love, as long as their love was “pure” and the couples saw each other “under the control of their families” (Duben and Behar 2014: 258). The love expressed in the portraits of the fiancés and newlyweds is thus permissible, since it is regulated by the institution of marriage. Eventually, the spouses’ love for each other would be channeled through or replaced with love for their children. In family portraits with children, as in Figure 2.11, the child becomes the connecting element between a mother and a father, rather than a husband and a wife.

For Sancar (2017), the construction of the modern Turkish family meant the construction of the modern middle-class family. This state’s strategy was to promote the modern middle-class family as a role model for the rest of the society. Rather than as a “natural” or “private” institution, this type of family was seen as an instrument for modernization and a founding element of the nation-building process.

Because of a growing emphasis on children’s education and children’s health, families started to focus on raising their children “well” at the turn of the century (Duben and Behar 2014). Duben and Behar (2014: 247) ask if families had fewer children because they became more child-oriented or if they became more child-oriented because they were having fewer children. In either case, fathers increasingly adopted the idea that both parents were tasked with raising their children rather than only the mother, and became more involved in their children’s education as part of the overall process of Westernization.

As Yılmaz (2013: 112) points out, progressive Turkish fathers, as exemplified by Mustafa Kemal, “valued their daughters (or adopted daughters), nurtured them, and supported their education, employment, and participation in social life.” The notion of the modern middle-class family, then, is in fact constituted by the “discovery of the child” and marked by the complete transformation of childrearing (Aytaç 2007: 82). The image of a distant, authoritarian father became undesirable and started to evolve into that of a more loving and caring father figure at the head of the “new family” (Duben and Behar 2014: 249–50). This is reflected in studio portraits of the 1920s and 1930s in which fathers pose with their children in an affectionate manner, at times holding them in front of the camera.

In Figure 2.18, taken on 22 August 1939, the woman joyfully wraps her arms around her husband and holds him tightly. The husband’s shy smile implies a reciprocal love and happiness. As she embraces her husband, the woman shows off her wedding ring and ostentatious golden bracelets, which remain popular wedding gifts until today. She is well dressed and her makeup and hair have been carefully done. This portrait was taken in Bedros İskender’s studio after he took over the famous Sébah & Joaillier studio in 1934 and moved to Istiklal Street no.289, where he operated until he closed down his studio in 1952 (Özendes 1999).

Figures 2.12 and 2.16 present striking resemblances in terms of composition, pose and posture. Not surprisingly, they were taken in the same Beyoğlu studio, R. Koro’s Türk Foto Evi (also known as Türk Fotoğraf Evi), located on Istiklal Street no.113, less than a month apart. The man and woman keep the same distance to each other, tilt their head in
the exact same manner and look straight into the camera with a faint smile.\textsuperscript{86}

Figure 2.14 was taken in Foto Rekor in Beyoğlu. This couple performs their happy selves in this portrait, arm in arm, with their heads tilted towards each other. The lack of a wedding ring on the man’s hand could indicate that it is an engagement portrait. Although the image is from 1933, five years after the change of the alphabet from Arabic to Latin, the inscription on the back still includes the Ottoman script, which reads: “Feride’ye,” to Feride, a popular woman’s name at the time.\textsuperscript{87} The note was written by Şermin, the woman in the portrait. Feride could be a relative, perhaps Şermin’s sister.

Figures 2.12 and 2.14, on the other hand, show married couples, per the inscription on the back. The signature in Figure 2.12 reads “Feriha İrfan,” which suggests that the inscription was written by the woman (named Feriha) in the photograph, also on behalf of her husband (possibly named İrfan), dedicated “to my truehearted mother-in-law and father-in-law,” as “a souvenir from us.”\textsuperscript{88} This indicates that the portrait was given to one of their parents as a gift. The performance of happiness, compatibility and grace is at the core of this portrait. Simultaneously, the man performs the image of a Republican gentleman with his starched white shirt, his pristine suit, his pocket square and perfectly combed hair. He embraces his role as a modern husband who loves, respects and supports his wife as an equal partner in the marriage.

The similarities between the poses on photographs taken in the same studio (Figure 2.12, Figure 2.16), in other studios within the same metropole (Figure 2.14, Figure 2.18) and in a provincial studio outside Istanbul (Figure 2.11) show the commonalities in studio practices across Turkey. The ways in which photographers directed the poses and the degree to which these directions seem to have been welcomed and followed by the clients signal the creation of a collective visual culture that reinforced specific gender norms and a specific notion of the Turkish family.

Notably, Foto Rekor and Türk Foto Evi belonged to two members of the same family: two Muslim brothers from Kosovo, who had emigrated to the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan Wars in 1912–1913. They opened a studio adjacent to the famous Galatasaray High School called Photo Koro in the 1920s.\textsuperscript{89} In the following years, the two brothers went their separate ways, opening separate studios in Beyoğlu (Serttaş 2011). Raif Koro opened Türk Foto Evi, while Şerif Koro established Foto Rekor with Vahit Kutsal (Akçura 2003). Both of these seem to have thrived as reputable studios through the 1930s and

\textsuperscript{86} While the dates on which these two portraits were taken are close to each other, the logo on the print is different. Indeed, based on other portraits from this studio, it appears that both logos were used in the 1930s. The signature, too, varies between R. Koro and R.C. Koro, depending on the print.

\textsuperscript{87} Added by the vendor, the note “5 ₺” refers to the price of the photograph, 5 TRY (Turkish lira).

\textsuperscript{88} In Turkish: “Hakikatlı hanımmannem ve beybabama Hatıramız.” Added by the vendor, the “25” on the top right refers to the price of the photograph, 25 TRY (Turkish lira).

\textsuperscript{89} The name Photo Koro appears on an invoice from 1928, which is part of the Gigord Collection at the Getty Foundation. I was not able to find any photographs bearing the Photo Koro name or logo. The address of the original studio listed on the invoice was Grande Rue de Pera No. 265. According to Tayfun Serttaş (2011), in 1933, Maryam Şahinyan’s father took over his original studio (Foto Galatasaray) from these two Kosovar brothers who had a studio on the top floor of the Galatasaray Han, which was later demolished. The address on the Photo Koro invoice is consistent with the address on the Foto Galatasaray logo. Photo Koro is also listed in the Annuaire Oriental yearbook from 1930, registered to Raif Koro (Accessed May 25, 2020. archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/2913). After Photo Koro stopped operating, Raif Koro appears to have operated briefly under the name Foto Alman in the early 1930s.
1940s, given the abundance of family photographs from these two studios on the market. Although the poses in Figures 2.12, 2.14 and 2.16 reflect popular approaches among studio photographers at the time, it is likely that the two brothers, who had worked together on developing a distinct style for their studio, kept using the same “tricks” when they opened their respective businesses.

Figure 2.16 stands out as a rare wedding portrait from the 1930s in which the bride wears an expensive wedding dress with a veil. The note on the back reads: “The day we got married, 19 July 1934.” Given the economic hardships and technical constraints, wedding portraits taken outside the studio remained scarce until the late 1930s and early 1940s. Family photographs taken at a wedding ceremony started to emerge in the 1940s. Portraits with the extended family or portraits of newly-weds with flower garlands surrounding them also surfaced in the 1940s. The wedding dress, made mostly of silk or chiffon, was simple and unassuming in the post-war 1920s and 1930s (Özbey 2014). Therefore, the white wedding dress with ornate veil in Figure 2.16 implies not only a highly Westernized but also a very well-to-do couple.

Ayfer Tunç (2003: 226) notes that engagements and weddings were very important occasions for couples and families to have their photographs taken. By the 1970s, it had become a common practice for the bride and groom to go to a photo studio with close relatives “once her hair was done.” The photographer would direct the couple into finding the best pose, using some of the “standard” poses popular at the time. The “best” wedding picture taken in the studio would be enlarged and hung on the wall in the family home (Tunç 2003: 226).

The clear handwriting on the back gives us more clues about Figure 2.16. The signatures reveal the identity of the bride and groom as C. Yenicioğlu and S.C. Yenicioğlu. The man in the picture is Cavit Yenicioğlu (1910–2009), who graduated from the Turkish Military Academy (Kara Harp Okulu) in 1931, when he was promoted to lieutenant, the rank shown on his military uniform. He served in the Turkish army in various capacities throughout his life, including as Brigadier General, until he was forced to retire by the National Unity Committee that organized the 1960 military coup. He and his wife Sabahat Yenicioğlu were married for 65 years until she passed away in 1999. Sabahat Yenicioğlu was only 17 when she got married. A graduate of the renowned Istanbul Girls High School, she worked as a teacher until her retirement. She was one of the founding members of the Association for the Development of Early Childhood Education in Turkey.91

Capturing the marriage of a life-long soldier and a life-long teacher, Figure 2.16 presents the embodiment of a modern Turkish family as envisioned by the Kemalist regime. The couple performs their best selves to announce their happiness on their wedding day. They simultaneously highlight their modern, secular, educated, urbane selves and their status as a loyal Republican couple.

Together, Figures 2.11–2.19 show some of the key visual elements through which the

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90 In Turkish: “Evlendiğimiz gün.” The “K12” below the signatures refers to a pricing system created by the seller (see Figure 2.11).
figures of the modern Turkish husband and the modern Turkish father were constructed. I consider these images as five variations within an emerging genre of family portraiture that features young married or engaged couples in the 1920s and 1930s. Within this genre, each figure tells a specific story: a nuclear family from a provincial town (Figure 2.11); a husband and wife who pose with their parents-in-law in mind (Figure 2.12); two young fiancées who express their love and affection, arm in arm (Figure 2.14); an educated, elite couple on their wedding day (Figure 2.16); and a jovial couple comprised of a soldier husband and a wife who passionately holds him, showing off her expensive jewelry in the process (Figure 2.18).

In this section, I have shown how the understanding of a new modernity for men was incorporated in family photographs in which men performed their desired selves as modern, loving and caring fiancées, husbands and fathers, negotiating the emergence of women as equal partners in marriage. For Kemalists, the image of the modern husband and father was built upon the image of the modern urban gentleman, as repeatedly enacted in family pictures in the 1920s and 1930s. As the poses in Figure 2.18 suggest, in the 1920s and 1930s, Turkey was transforming rapidly, creating ever shifting social and cultural boundaries. Certain types of gendered and classed social behavior that would have been unacceptable or even illegal before the Kemalist era were now encouraged and promoted by the regime, as highlighted by these images. However, this does not diminish the importance of the agency of the people performing in family photographs in expediting social change and challenging traditions, as Figure 2.18 might suggest through the intimacy and apparent spontaneity of its pose.

Given that overt displays of public affection would be considered inappropriate (ayıp) in the 1930s, it is possible that the woman in Figure 2.18 was being daring in the way she held her husband in the studio, pushing the boundaries of socially accepted norms for family photographs. What we interpret as conformity through the contemporary gaze could include forms of subversion as subtle as a slight change in the standard pose. Similarly, what appears as subversion could have been the manifestation of a form of conformity. As Butler (2007 [1990]: 191) notes, “the illusion of an abiding gendered self” is “structured by repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional discontinuity, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this ‘ground’” (Butler 2007 [1990]: 192). In the next section, expanding on the final part of Chapter One, I will further explore the ways in which such occasional discontinuities in the performance of seemingly abiding gendered selves appear in vernacular photography. This allows me to examine the potentiality of queer readings of vernacular photography and to discuss the kinds of challenges the ambiguity and anonymity of vernacular photographs may pose for the study of gender performativities.
Modern Forms of Gender Play

Figure 2.20 A hand-colored individual portrait, 18 December 1940.
13.4 x 8.7 cm. Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.

As Yaraman (2011: 41) argues, “it is impossible to conceive ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’ in pure forms, detached from all cultural conditioning/codes. The so-called feminine characteristics we know are those inscribed by the male-dominant system.” The selves represented in the family portraits I have discussed so far generally comply with the imposed official visual vocabularies for men and women in the 1920s and 1930s. These portraits are representative of the majority of family portraits from the era in terms of composition, pose, posture, props and dress code. Yet, there are also photographs that do not fit common patterns, making it necessary to ask what potential forms of subversion can be detected in vernacular photographs that appear to present queer or gender-bending subjects. How can we negotiate the contemporary gaze in our attempt to locate subversion in orphan photographs from decades ago?

In Figure 2.20, a highly retouched studio portrait offers a suggestion of gender play to our contemporary gaze. The hand-tinted Figure 2.20 portrays a youth with green eyeshadow, red lipstick and a sweater hand-colored in violet. The heavy retouching in the face makes the already refined features of this young person even more delicate, creating
a romantic, dreamy appearance. Could Figure 2.20 be interpreted as a form of cross-dressing, homoeroticism or gender-bending that managed to carve out a space for itself in spite of the official Republican discourses on gender? Or is this a variation of a gender manifestation that still conforms to these discourses? Did the subject intend to be photographed in this way as a form of self-expression, or was it the photographer who produced the ambiguity in this image through retouching and hand-coloring? Perhaps the photographer and/or the retouching artist were simply showing off their artistic skills in an attempt to present a beautiful image that would satisfy the demands of their client.

Özbay (2015: 870) writes that, although the Kemalist regime worked hard to construct the new nuclear family, the role of women and the gendered politics of representation, “the modern revolution in Turkey was seemingly too busy to deal with, cure, ban, or intervene into homosexuality. Same-sex sexual activities became a significant part of the abject, invisible yet connived urban underground culture,” some of which can be traced through works like Kemal Tahir’s (1910–1973) novels and stories, and Koçu’s (1905–1975) unfinished Encyclopaedia of Istanbul.

Schick (2018) notes that the understanding of gender was quite fluid in the Ottoman Empire until the arrival of Western-influenced heteronormativity in the nineteenth century, with the criminalization of homosexuality in 1858. Schick (2018) suggests that in the classical Ottoman period one could speak of three distinct genders, namely men, women and “boys” rather than a male/female dichotomy; and two sexualities, defined by “penetrating” and “being penetrated” rather than a hetero/homosexual dichotomy. According to Schick (2018), “For a man who penetrates, whom he penetrates was considered to be of little consequence and primarily a matter of personal taste.” Boys were not deemed “feminine” or seen as “mere substitutes for women” despite sharing certain characteristics with women, such as the absence of facial hair: “Furthermore, since they grow up to be men, gender is fluid and, in a sense, every adult man is ‘transgender’, having once been a boy” (Schick 2018).

A well-known manifestation of gender fluidity in the Ottoman Empire was the long tradition of cross-dressed performers, including köçek, boys who danced and sang in female dress, pushing the boundaries of gender identities from the sixteenth century onwards (Öztürkmen 2011). Starting out as an embodiment of divine love and an ideal young male beauty capturing adult men’s desire, perceptions of the köçek changed in the nineteenth century. The köçek came to symbolize the effeminate, lascivious and morally degraded Oriental Other who was sexually available and could easily be penetrated by the Western masculine. As a result, the practice was banned in the mid-nineteenth century by the modernized Ottoman elites. These elites, influenced by the Orientalist gaze of European travelers, increasingly adopted Victorian heteronormative discourses on sexuality and made efforts to hide other preferences, including “boy-lovers” (Haynes 2014).

In the early years of the Republic, the heteronormalization of love and sex by the Kemalists became “a condition of ‘achieving modernity,’ a project that called for

heterosocialization of public space and a reconfiguration of family life” (Haynes 2014: 12). Heteronormativity was seen as essential to the evolutionary success of Western civilization, which depended on sexual difference and monogamous reproduction. Thus, homoeroticism and same-sex practices were deemed “savage,” “backward” and “uncivilized,” and were shunned (Najmabadi 2005; Haynes 2014).

Associated with promiscuity and prostitution, the köçek as an ambiguous sexual figure was excluded from the national imagination of modern Turkey. Instead, the Republican People’s Party selected and reinvented its own set of Anatolian folk traditions (positioning wrestling as a “national” sport, for instance) as suitable support for its nation building process (Potuoğlu-Cook 2006).

Cross-dressing existed in Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt and Lebanon, as a form of play or an act of dissidence in the 1920s and 1930s (Barak 2017). This included middle-class girls having themselves photographed in male garb as “efendiyya,” wearing suits and tarbouches/fezes, both at home and in studios. In Turkey, there is not enough evidence to suggest that this was also a popular trend there. In fact, an article in Aksam entitled “Men’s Clothes! What a girl did in Izmir” from 29 December 1929 tells the story of an “odd soul,” a 16-year-old girl, who dressed up as a man and, along with a few young boys, “hooked up with young women in brothels” of Izmir. She was sent home by the police once her gender was discovered, after spending the day drinking rakı with her guy friends. This story implies that in Turkey cross-dressing was seen as an oddity that challenged gender normativities. Mostly written out of official Turkish history, this “oddity” was deemed worthy of a newspaper article.

Cross-dressing may have been deemed “odd,” but there are a number of women, including prominent figures like Atatürk’s adoptive daughter Sabiha Gökçen, who appear in photographs from the late 1920s wearing a necktie.93 Similarly, the marine costume appears in photographs from the 1920s and 1930s as a fashionable outfit for girls and some young women (Baydar and Özkan 1999).

In Figure 2.20, gender ambiguity is created through the hand coloring, which remained a popular practice as the easiest and most effective method to produce color images until color film became popular as late as the 1970s (Tunç 2003).94 When coloring photographs, Turkish studio photographers were undoubtedly inspired by romantic European postcards in which couples hold and kiss each other passionately, or are shown longing for each other when they are apart through illustrations of dream scenes. Red lips and pink cheeks were used for both men and women. Vivid colors such as turquoise, green or orange were popular for women’s dresses, while for men, who typically wore a suit, brown was predominantly chosen.

93 A common trend was to wear neckties with skirts. Trousers entered women’s wardrobes in the 1930s. From the late 1920s onwards, we encounter images that show women on horseback, wearing trousers and neckties (Baydar and Özkan 1999). In a story on 9 April 1933, Milliyet announced that Marlene Dietrich had introduced men’s fashion for women, but the newspaper also questioned the appropriateness of this trend.

94 Kodachrome, the first color film, was introduced as a 16 mm motion picture film in 1935 before it was released as a 35 mm still photography film by Eastman Kodak. This was followed by Agfa with Agfacolor Neue in 1936, Kodak’s Ektachrome in 1946, as well as other European and Asian brands like Ferrania, Fuji and Konica (Lavêdrine, Gandolfo and Frizot 2009: 86).
The green eyeshadow is perhaps the most puzzling visual element in Figure 2.20. The hand coloring itself is not impeccable: the red lipstick brims over to the right cheek and the purple strikes around the neck appear to have been hastily done. It is possible that the retouching and hand-coloring were done separately. The coloring may have been done by a non-professional, perhaps even by the person in the portrait after the print was produced. Regardless, it can be assumed that the person in the portrait was happy with the result, given that the print was signed and given to someone referred to as “Hikmetim,” or “my dear Hikmet.”

Hikmet, although predominantly a male name today, was a unisex name at the time. I read the name in the signature as “T. H. Durupınar,” which doesn’t reveal much about the gender of the inscriber. If the coloring was done after the delivery of the black-and-white print, the hand-painted version could have served as a form of gender play for this person, meant for circulation among a small group of friends or relatives. Perhaps the hand coloring helped this person, queer or not, to perform a desired self-image that it would not be possible to project in a black and white photograph.

In this section, taking an ambivalently gendered portrait from 1940 as a starting point, I have discussed how gender was coded as a strictly binary construct to determine the boundaries of modern Turkish heteronormativities in the early Republic. In contrast, sexuality in the earlier periods of the Ottoman Empire was much more fluid; yet, in the nineteenth century, this fluidity evolved into a Victorian understanding of heteronormativity which modern Turkey adopted. In looking at the portrait, it was my aim to examine the potential fluidity of gendered performances and the complexity of reading representations of gender in historical vernacular photography.

Browne and Nash (2016: 132) note that, “Looking ‘queerly’ for the non-conformative sheds light on the possibilities and potentialities for lives lived in incongruent and conflicting relationships with normative systems of meaning – neither within nor without – but as a form of fluidity; a mobile instability in experiences, behaviors and practices of the self.” For Deitcher (2001: 156 in Rogerson 2015: 109–10) images of same-sex affection or gender variance include “the act of historical reclamation, which shows persistence of evidence.” However, how can we read queerness in a photograph, particularly an individual portrait like Figure 2.20, when there is “no apparent counterpart to ‘prove’ desire” (Rogerson 2015: 143)? In anonymous vernacular photographs it is difficult to know whether looking queerly is justified, because of the complexity of deciding what certain elements are evidence of. For instance, in Figure 2.20, the apparent makeup could be evidence of retouching that was conventional at the time, or, a gender-bending that went against the norms. In anonymous photographs it may not be possible to be sure whether a perceived queerness was an actual queerness.

Similar to Nebahat Hamit’s portraits discussed in the Introduction to Part 1 and at the end of Chapter One, Figure 2.20 offers us an opportunity to rethink the way we read gender normativities in vernacular photographs and the challenges we face when placing such images in their historical context. These challenges resonate with the ambiguity of gender performativity itself. As Butler (2007 [1990]: 192) notes, gender is “a norm that can never be fully internalized” as gender norms are “phantasmatic, impossible to embody.” Looking at people’s agency with respect to how they perform gender, Butler
(2007 [1990]) suggests that some room for maneuvering is created precisely due to the fact that the norm of the ideal man or woman can never be fully enacted and requires the constant exclusion of the non-normative, which, paradoxically, is also needed to confirm the norm.

Addressing the complexities of queer representation and the issue of “evidence” in photographs, Rogerson (2015: 109) concludes that “unknowables do not mean there is nothing to know.” Indeed, in Figure 2.20, rather than seeking to resolve the uncertainty as to whether this image challenges the Kemalist gender norms or confirms them, I want to leave this uncertainty in place, precisely to emphasize the fact that gender norms, even when not as explicitly formulated and disseminated as the Kemalist ones, are never all-encompassing and always offer potential for resignification, in this case either by the sitter, the photographer and/or retoucher, the receiver of the photograph or us, as the readers of the photograph in the present.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at some of the key components of portrait photography that helped construct the normative masculinities of modern urban middle-class Turkish men in the formative years of the Republic. Unlike the image of the new Turkish “Republican Woman,” that of the Turkish “Republican Man” was not as explicitly defined and disseminated by the Kemalist regime. While the moulding of the new man may have been less radical than that of women, it still meant that men, too, had to adjust their sense of what was a desired self-presentation.

As I have argued in the chapter, the moulding of the Republican Man shows up clearly in vernacular photographs. A major component of Turkish male identity was military service, which remains compulsory for men until today. By the time the Turkish Republic was established in 1923, the nation had suffered from a decade of devastating warfare, including the Balkan Wars (1912–1913) and World War I (1914–1918), followed by the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1923). In this context, “the myth of the military-nation” played a crucial role in effecting the transition from “military service as a citizenship obligation to military service as cultural essence” (Altınay 2004: 8). The creation of this myth was bolstered by the image of Mustafa Kemal, who established himself as a victorious Turkish military leader, next to the other army generals he appointed to key government positions. In the military photographs I have discussed in this chapter, young soldiers express a sense of pride and joy in their status as soldiers, affirmed by the inscriptions they write, thus contributing to the making of the military-nation myth through self-representations.

As the public and private spheres were being redesigned for modern Turkish women and men in the 1920s and 1930s, photography became a popular medium to capture significant milestones in the lives of modern families such as religious holidays, engagements, weddings, births, birthdays and circumcision ceremonies. Just like women, urban middle-class men welcomed photography as an opportunity to perform their rapidly changing gendered and classed identities as well-bred youths, true gentlemen, liberal
husbands or loving fathers, negotiating their male subjectivities within the restrictions of the hegemonic masculinities and state feminism imposed by the Kemalist regime.

Formulating gender “as a constituted social temporality,” Butler (2007 [1990]: 191) writes that “gender ought not to be constructed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts.” Given that it takes time to enact the gender norm in such a way that the body comes to “naturally” inhabit it and it no longer feels like an “act,” a case like the early Republican era, in which gender norms were rapidly transformed, offers an important opportunity to highlight gender as a performative process rather than a given state.

At the same time, when discussing the performance of the new Republican gender roles, I have been cautious not to “overread” gender representations in photographs, especially seemingly unconventional or transgressive ones. The fact that certain images that to our eyes appear to show gender-play may reflect common photographic practices of the time, the scarcity of oral histories and personal narratives pertaining to a fast disappearing generation, and the absence of photographs that might have been destroyed or were never taken due to social and political taboos in the 1920s and 1930s, all urge us to be cautious in drawing conclusions about specific images and the overall prevalence of both conformity to and subversion of the new Republican gender norms.

Part II will expand on the representation of female and male subjectivities with a focus on the making of new Turkish bodies in 1920s and 1930s. Accordingly, in Chapters Three and Four, I will explore how urban middle-class women and men performed and negotiated a modern body image through pose and posture in photographs, and how modern Turkish manhood and womanhood were constructed through the emergence of distinct photographic genres, from birthbed pictures to circumcision ceremonies. The notions of photography as a theater of the self and a form of worldmaking will help me to understand how Turkish citizens used pose, posture and props to create worlds in which to perform their new classed and gendered selves.